

# **Completion of assessments and competences on the Online Learning and Assessment Tool (OLAT)**

**Exceptional Extenuating Circumstances Policy 2016**



## 1.0 Purpose

1.1 This policy is built around the following key principles:

- (i) All trainees are required to demonstrate their work based learning through the completion of a specified number of assessments including observed clinical events (OCEs); directly observed procedures or processes (DOPs); case based discussions (CBDs) and multi-source feedback (MSF). Trainees are also required to complete all of the competences defined within the learning guide for their specialism to a satisfactory standard. All assessments and competences must be recorded in the Online Learning and Assessment Tool (OLAT) and assessed and signed off as satisfactory by appropriately trained personnel within the work based learning environment.
- (ii) In the event of a significant incident or set of circumstances, not of the trainee's own making, which results in the trainee not being able to complete all of the required workplace based activities, there shall be a process by which the National School of Healthcare Science (NSHCS) will be able to recommend the trainee be permitted additional time in which to complete all of the required assessments and competences and record them on the OLAT.
- (iii) All recommendations for extension of time are subject to agreement with both the host employer and the commissioning organisation funding the training. Any extension of time may not automatically attract additional funding and will be dependent on the individual circumstances.
- (iv) No trainee should gain an unfair advantage over other trainees through the exceptional extenuating circumstance process.
- (v) As a consequence of this policy, the standards of the NSHCS awards are safeguarded, for the benefit of current and prospective trainees and employers and service users/patients.

1.2 Where circumstances beyond a trainee's control impact negatively on their ability to complete all of the required workplace based assessments and competences, the trainee may submit a claim for exceptional extenuating circumstances (EEC). If approved, such a claim will normally result in a recommendation of additional time in which to complete all of the required activities and record them on the OLAT without penalty. This recommendation will be subject to both host employer and where there are funding implications, commissioner approval. Any extension of time may not automatically attract additional funding and will be dependent on the individual circumstances.

- 1.3 EEC may apply in one of the following circumstances:
- (i) Where severe circumstances prevent a trainee from completing all of the required assessments and competences including recording them on the OLAT.
  - (ii) Where exceptional extenuating circumstances can be shown to have affected a trainee's performance in activities already undertaken and recorded within the OLAT.
- 1.4 This policy does not apply where a trainee has a disability or existing long term medical condition as this should be reported to NSHCS at application stage, on enrolment, or as soon as possible thereafter, so that it can be properly recorded and appropriate arrangements to support the trainee put in place to ensure that the trainee is not disadvantaged. This policy also does not apply to changes to programme completion resulting from one or more periods of maternity or paternity leave. Maternity and paternity leave is not considered an exceptional extenuating circumstance, and in these cases any required changes to completion date should be managed within local employer policy and any requirements for extension of training approved and agreed by the local commissioner. The NSHCS should be informed of any period of extension resulting from maternity or paternity leave requirements so that the trainee can be considered for completion at the appropriate time.
- 1.5 Claims for EEC will not normally be approved if they arise from matters which are evidently for trainees to control, including but not limited to:
- (i) A trainee's failure to organise her/his time appropriately;
  - (ii) A trainee's own negligence or carelessness;
  - (iii) Circumstances for which a trainee has had ample opportunity to plan;
  - (iv) Circumstances which a trainee did not disclose at the appropriate time (unless they were unable to do so due to circumstance e.g. their mental capacity was impaired).
  - (v) Any failure of computer-related equipment.

Circumstances that are most likely to be considered are outlined in appendix 1.

- 1.6 All claims for EEC must be submitted on the appropriate form (see appendix 2), which must be completed in full by the trainee and accompanied by the required evidence. Claims normally can be submitted at any point in the final year but should not be submitted any later than one month prior to the agreed OLAT completion date. In exceptional cases a claim may be accepted later, provided there is a good reason why it could not be submitted earlier. New

applications received after the September completion deadline will not be considered. In all cases it is the trainee's responsibility to submit the form by the specified deadline.

Trainees should refer to the NSHCS Scientist Training Programme Requirements for Completion policy for details of completion timescales.

<http://www.nshcs.org.uk/for-trainees/assessment>

- 1.7 All applications for EEC must be accompanied by a supporting statement or evidence of support from the current host employer to demonstrate that an extension can be supported with any additional training or assessments that may be required. Any potential extension of time may also have financial implications and as such the relevant commissioner for the training will be notified of the application prior to any decision being taken on extension. Trainees and/or their training department may wish to contact their local commissioner in advance of applying to establish what, if any, financial options may be available to them.
- 1.8 All evidence must be provided by a professional who has specialist knowledge of the circumstance.
- 1.9 In the event that the claim is unsuccessful, the assessments and competences already submitted and completed in the trainee's OLAT profile will be treated as their final submission, and the trainee will then be subject to the consequences that ordinarily apply to incomplete submission.
- 1.10 Where the claim is upheld, the trainee will be informed of a new deadline by which they will have to complete and upload onto the OLAT all of the required workplace based assessments and competences. The panel may recommend extension normally up to a maximum of 3 months, with longer periods only in cases of prolonged sickness or other unavoidable absence. These trainees may then submit their completed OLAT portfolio at any time during the extension period.
- 1.11 Trainees will have the right to appeal against a decision within 10 working days of being notified of that decision. The appeal will be considered by the Head of School and the HEE Director of Education and Quality with responsibility for Healthcare Science, or their nominated representative(s), whose decision will be final.

## **2.0 Process**

- 2.1 In order to submit a claim for EEC, a trainee must use form EEC1 (appendix 2) and the claim must be submitted within the time periods permitted under 1.6 of the policy. The claim must

be supported by appropriate evidence and should indicate the length of extension requested. Applicants should refer to appendix 1 for details.

- 2.2 It is appreciated that it may be necessary, on occasions, to submit a claim whilst waiting for the supporting evidence to become available. Where the evidence is not yet available, the EEC1 must still be submitted by the appropriate time and the evidence then submitted as soon as it becomes available.
- 2.3 Once a claim has been submitted, it will be forwarded to the NSHCS EEC claims panel for consideration. The panel will normally consist of individuals from the School with expertise in Assessment, the OLAT, and the relevant healthcare science specialism, together with HR input and advice. The panel will be required to provide a judgement on each claim within 5 working days of its meeting. It is the responsibility of the EEC panel to ensure that any claim that is upheld is appropriate and the evidence is sufficient and relevant.
- 2.4 It will be the responsibility of the Chair of the panel to ensure that the trainee is notified of the decision.
- 2.5 A trainee will not normally be permitted to submit a claim for the same incidence and reason on more than one occasion. Any request for further extension must outline what additional factors have affected the ability of the trainee to complete the training that were not present or are new since the first application was submitted and approved

## Appendix 1

### Exceptional extenuating circumstances guidance for trainees

#### What are Exceptional Extenuating Circumstances (EECs)?

We know there can be circumstances out of your control - a bereavement or hospitalisation, for example - and when this happens, the EEC process may allow you to be granted additional time in which to complete all of the required assessment activities on the OLAT without penalty. You will need to submit evidence from a professional person with your application.

#### What does the EEC option cover?

Here are some circumstances that the EEC option covers:

- Hospitalisation
- Mental or physical illness (usually in excess of 3 months)
- Bereavement
- Unexpected carer responsibilities
- Sudden return home (abroad) following a family emergency
- Training delivery/capacity or quality issues within the host department

For examples and details of what evidence can be provided for these, see the section on examples, below.

#### What does the EEC option not cover?

Here are some circumstances that the EEC option doesn't cover:

- A trainee's failure to organise their time appropriately
- Circumstances for which a trainee has had ample opportunity to plan
- Technical failures of computers/equipment
- Negligence or carelessness by the trainee
- Circumstances which a trainee did not disclose at the appropriate time (unless the trainee were unable to do so e.g. due to hospitalisation)
- Maternity or paternity leave

#### What do I need to do?

##### Step 1

You will need to download the EEC1 form and complete ALL the required information

The form can then be submitted by email to [nshcs@wm.hee.nhs.uk](mailto:nshcs@wm.hee.nhs.uk). Your supporting evidence can be submitted with your EEC1 form if you are able to scan it. If not, you should send it via post to National School of Healthcare Science, Health Education West Midlands, St Chad's Court, 213 Hagley Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B16 9RG.

Remember to highlight in your application how your circumstances have impacted on your ability to work and complete your assessment activities on the OLAT.

## **Step 2**

Your application will be considered by the NSHCS exceptional extenuating circumstances claims panel.

## **Step 3**

Once the panel have met and reviewed your application, you will receive a decision by email within five working days of the panel. There are three possible outcomes:

**Approved:** If your application is granted you will normally be given an appropriate amount of additional time (which the panel will decide) within which to complete all of the required OLAT activities without penalty.

**Declined:** If your application has not been successful, the activities already submitted and completed in your OLAT profile will be treated as your final submission, and you will then be subject to the consequences that ordinarily apply to incomplete submission.

**Further evidence required:** If it is requested, you must submit further professional evidence within 10 working days of receiving your outcome and instructions on how to do this will be provided in the email.

## **Timescales**

Typically it is expected that the EEC panel will consider applications for trainees in their final year of training where the following timescales will apply:

Extenuating Circumstances Requests (EEC1) and evidence submitted to the School at least 5 working days prior to panel review (this does not include the day of the panel)

Panel review held – typically meetings will be held on a monthly basis from the spring of the completing year – see below for dates for 2016.

It will be important that trainees submit their applications in a timely manner to ensure sufficient support can be put in place for those granted extensions and to ensure those

requests that are declined still have sufficient time to complete the programme within the original deadlines.

**Table 1 EEC Panel Meeting and Application Submission Dates 2016**

| <b>Date of EEC Panel</b> | <b>Latest Submission Date</b> | <b>Likely outcome date</b> |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 29/04/2016               | 22/04/2016                    | Week commencing 02/05/2016 |
| 27/05/2016               | 20/05/2016                    | Week commencing 30/05/2016 |
| 24/06/2016               | 17/06/2016                    | Week commencing 27/06/2016 |
| 29/07/2016               | 22/07/2016                    | Week commencing 01/08/2016 |
| 26/08/2016               | 19/08/2016                    | Week commencing 29/08/2016 |

The panel's decision will be communicated within 5 working days to the trainee, training department and the relevant commissioner.

**Examples of circumstances & the types of evidence that may be required**

- Hospitalisation (supported by medical evidence/doctor's note or supporting statement from a Supervisor, Training Officer, Counsellor or person of Religious authority)
- Mental or physical illness (supported by medical evidence/doctor's note or supporting statement from a Supervisor, Training Officer, Counsellor or person of Religious authority).
- Bereavement (supported by a death certificate or supporting statement from a Supervisor, Training Officer, Counsellor or person of Religious authority)
- Unexpected carer responsibilities (supported by medical evidence/benefit entitlements or supporting statement from a Supervisor, Training Officer, Counsellor or person of Religious authority)
- Sudden return home (abroad) following family emergency (supported by medical evidence - if applicable - or supporting statement from a Supervisor, Training Officer, Counsellor or person of Religious authority if relevant)
- Training delivery (supported by evidence of levels of supervision, planning and support available to the trainee or any other documentation relating to the training that would demonstrate potential barriers to completion). For this circumstance the views of the Training Officer and/or Head of Department would be relevant.

## **EEC examples**

### Hospitalisation example:

Trainee A was involved in a car accident which meant he was in hospital. He was absent from the workplace for some time and unable to study and because of this he could not complete all of his required OLAT activities. He applied for an EEC and attached a letter from his doctor as well as medical certificates as proof of his circumstances.

### Mental or physical illness examples:

Trainee B has recently suffered from severe depression and anxiety. This has meant he has not been able to concentrate on his work and hasn't been able to complete all of his required OLAT activities. He has applied for an EEC and attached a doctor's note confirming his situation.

Trainee C has been seriously ill for the past twelve weeks which has meant she has not been able to complete all of her required assessment activities on the OLAT. When she returned to work and study she filled out an EEC application and attached a doctor's note stating how long she was ill for.

### Bereavement example:

Trainee D has suffered the death of her father. She has been deeply affected by this loss and it has affected her ability to work and study and complete all of her required OLAT activities. Trainee D applied for an EEC and attached her father's death certificate as evidence.

### Unexpected carer responsibilities example:

Trainee E has been affected by the recent news that her mother has cancer. She has become the sole carer for her mother and has found this both emotionally and physically draining, leaving her with a lack of concentration and her ability to prioritise her work has been compromised. She feels she's not been able to give as much effort to completion of all of her required OLAT activities as she would have liked. She submitted her EEC with medical evidence of her mother's condition, as well as a supporting statement from her supervisor and now awaits a panel decision.

### Sudden return home (abroad) following family emergency example:

Trainee F has received the news that her father in her home country has fallen very ill and she needs to return home suddenly to care for him and the rest of her family. She applied for

an EEC and attached a medical letter confirming her father's condition. She also attached her flight tickets as evidence of the times that she was out of the country.

Training delivery/capacity or quality issues within the host department:

Trainee G has been unable to meet regularly with their training officer for the past 3 months due to urgent and compelling clinical commitments, with no suitable individual able to provide alternative support. The projected training plan is insufficient to enable him to fulfil all of the required assessment activities of the programme for one of his modules. He filled out an EEC application with evidence of the areas as yet not covered together with details of the training and supervision plans available from the department.

## Appendix 2

### National School of Healthcare Science

#### Exceptional Extenuating Circumstances Application Form

Trainees should complete and submit this form if they feel that personal, medical, or problems outside their control have negatively affected, or will affect, their ability to complete the required assessment activities on the Online Learning and Assessment Tool (OLAT) within the timescales agreed for the programme.

This form together with any evidence trainees wish to be considered must be submitted a minimum of 5 working days prior to the extenuating circumstances panel being held.

If you require assistance in completing this form or further advice about this procedure, please contact any of the following sources of advice:

- Your Training Officer/lead or Head of Department
- The National School of Healthcare Science [nshcs@wm.hee.nhs.uk](mailto:nshcs@wm.hee.nhs.uk) or 0121 695 2529

| Personal details                       |                                |
|--|--------------------------------|
| <b>Name:</b>                           | <b>Email address:</b>          |
| <b>Training programme:</b>             | <b>Specialism:</b>             |
| <b>Department &amp; employer:</b>      | <b>Training officer name:</b>  |
| <b>Year of entry:</b>                  | <b>Training officer email:</b> |
| <b>Anticipated year of completion:</b> |                                |

| Period and length of time your training has been affected by your circumstances and the length of extension you are applying for |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>From:</b>   | <b>To:</b> |
| <b>Total length of time:</b>   |            |
| <b>Total length of extension requested:</b>  |            |

**Reasons for your application and the evidence provided to support it (tick those that apply) including evidence that the application is supported by the employer**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Hospitalisation</b><br><input type="checkbox"/>                   | <b>Evidence (please enclose any relevant documents):</b> |
| <b>Mental or physical Illness</b><br><input type="checkbox"/>        | <b>Evidence (please enclose any relevant documents):</b> |
| <b>Bereavement</b><br><input type="checkbox"/>                       | <b>Evidence (please enclose any relevant documents):</b> |
| <b>Unexpected carer responsibilities</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Evidence (please enclose any relevant documents):</b> |
| <b>Sudden return home</b><br><input type="checkbox"/>                | <b>Evidence (please enclose any relevant documents):</b> |
| <b>Training Delivery</b><br><input type="checkbox"/>                 | <b>Evidence (please enclose any relevant documents):</b> |
| <b>Other (specify)</b><br><input type="checkbox"/>                   | <b>Evidence (please enclose any relevant documents):</b> |
| <b>Support from employer</b><br><input type="checkbox"/>             | <b>Evidence (please enclose any relevant documents):</b> |

**Describe your extenuating circumstances, how they have affected your ability to complete the assessment activities on the OLAT and what outcome you are requesting from the extenuating circumstances panel**

## Declaration

The information which I have provided regarding my extenuating circumstances is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I give my consent for this information to be disclosed to the relevant extenuating circumstances panel and members of the National School of Healthcare Science who are responsible for considering my case. I also understand that this claim for extenuating circumstances will be kept on my trainee record and may be referred to at any subsequent meetings relating to my training.

**Note that fraudulent claims for extenuating circumstances are taken extremely seriously by the National School of Healthcare Science and could result in your removal from the training programme.**

Signed:

Dated:

FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY:

| <b>Extenuating Circumstances Panel</b> |   |                                     |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Date:</b>                           | <b>Chair:</b>   |                                     |
|  | <b>Attendees:</b>   |                                     |
| <b>Decision:</b>                       | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Application Approved</b>  | <b>Justification:</b>               |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Application Declined</b>  | <b>Justification:</b>               |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Further Information Required:</b>   | <b>Justification:</b>               |
| <b>Recommendation</b>                  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Extend for 1 – 3 weeks</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Extend for 1 month</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Extend for 2 months</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Extend for 3 months</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Defer to following year</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Remove from programme</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Other (specify)</b> | <b>Date Agreed (if applicable):</b> |
| <b>Further Actions</b>                 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Refer to Trainees In Difficulty Policy</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Refer to Work Based Accreditation Policy</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Other (specify)</b>   |                                     |
| <b>Signed:</b><br><b>(Chair)</b>       |   |                                     |