



ACADEMIC BOARD

(Wednesday 2nd February 2011)

ANNUAL REPORT ON EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES 2009-10

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Executive summary

This paper provides an overview of the use of extenuating circumstances procedures by students in the academic year 2009-10. Data and analysis on equal opportunities monitoring are included.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report covers the operation of the Extenuating Circumstances procedures for the year 2009-10. The current Extenuating Circumstances procedures have been in place since 2004-5.

1.2 There were no changes to the Extenuating Circumstances procedures in 2009-10.

2. Summary of extenuation claims received in 2009-10

2.1 Claims for extenuation are made by individual assessment component. Table 1 provides a short summary of the number of extenuation claims by component that were received during 2009-10 (Semester A, Semester B, and Summer Reassessment). The numbers include claims for coursework and exams. The figures also include 273 applications rejected as ‘technical rejects’ (which usually occurs when a student claims extenuation for a module that has already been capped).

Claims for Semester C (postgraduate dissertations) are not included in the report as the number of claims is relatively small (In 2009-10, 15 students submitted claims for Semester C), and the data is not available at the time when this report is prepared.

| Sem | AVA | RDBS | CITE | EDU | H&BIO | HSS | LAW | PSY | Total |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| A | 41 | 107 | 65 | 97 | 175 | 212 | 115 | 123 | 935 |
| Accept | 20 | 55 | 20 | 70 | 83 | 112 | 86 | 99 | 545 |
| RReject | 21 | 52 | 45 | 27 | 92 | 100 | 29 | 24 | 390 |
| B | 75 | 140 | 59 | 64 | 157 | 242 | 116 | 142 | 995 |
| AAccept | 58 | 97 | 36 | 45 | 99 | 152 | 63 | 107 | 657 |
| RReject | 17 | 43 | 23 | 19 | 58 | 90 | 53 | 35 | 338 |
| R | 0 | 58 | 18 | 36 | 80 | 72 | 48 | 84 | 396 |
| AAccept | 0 | 26 | 13 | 19 | 21 | 27 | 22 | 36 | 164 |
| RReject | 0 | 32 | 5 | 17 | 59 | 45 | 26 | 48 | 232 |
| Total | 116 | 305 | 142 | 197 | 412 | 526 | 279 | 349 | 2326 |
| % Accepted | 67.2% | 58.4% | 48.6% | 68.0% | 49.3% | 55.3% | 61.3% | 69.3% | 58.7% |

Table 1: Total claims by component in 2009-10

2.2 These figures for 2009-10 are consistent with the trends that we have seen in previous years for a rising number of claims and an increasing proportion of claims being accepted by the extenuation panel.

Table 2a and Chart 2b overleaf illustrate the year-on-year rise in the number of extenuation claims.

| Academic year | 2005-6 | 2006-7 | 2007-8 | 2008-9 | 2009-10 |
|---------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| No. of claims | 1499 | 1595 | 1810 | 1788 | 2326 |

Table 2a: Total number of extenuation claims since 2005

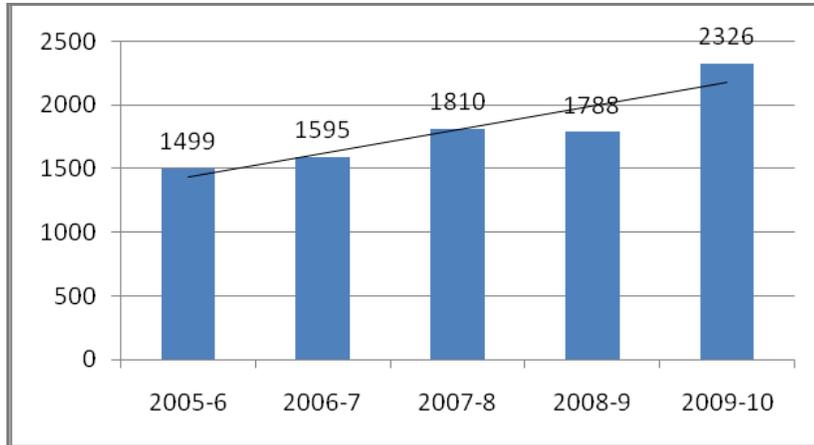


Chart 2b: Total number of extenuation claims since 2005

2.3 In 2009-10 the overall percentage of claims accepted was 58.7%, an increase from last year's figure of 57.5%.

Looking at Semesters A and B, when the majority of claims are submitted, this figure is slightly higher (62.3%). Again, this represents an increase on previous years, as illustrated in Chart 3 below:

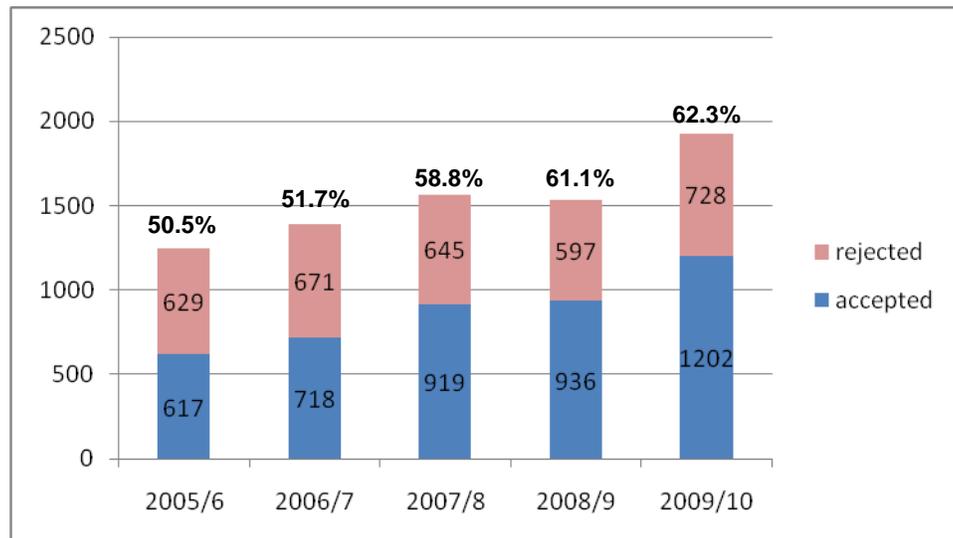


Chart 3: Proportion of successful outcomes in Sems A and B since 2005

2.4 As can be seen from Table 1 above, the number of claims and the proportion of successful claims varies across schools. In 2009-10, as in most previous years, claims from AVA (67.2%), Education (68.0%) and Psychology (69.3%) were most successful, and claims received from CITE students were least successful (48.6%).

2.5 In order to measure the extent of claims in each school, we compared the number of student-modules subject to an extenuation claim to the overall number of module registrations for the school in 2009-10. The results are shown in Table 4 below:

| | AVA | RDBS | CITE | EDU | H&BIO | HSS | LAW | PSY | Total |
|----------------------------|------|-------|-------|------|-------|-------|------|------|-------|
| Module claims | 89 | 220 | 115 | 149 | 291 | 404 | 212 | 197 | 1677 |
| Total module registrations | 6256 | 13794 | 11096 | 7186 | 10821 | 16173 | 6528 | 6146 | 78000 |
| % | 1.4% | 1.6% | 1.0% | 2.1% | 2.7% | 2.5% | 3.2% | 3.2% | 2.2% |

Table 4: claims by module and as a percentage of total module registrations 2009-10

The variability shown across schools is typical of the trends we have seen year on year, with the highest percentage of claims being made in Psychology and Law, and lowest in AVA and CITE. This trend is illustrated in Table 5 below.

| | AVA | RDBS | CITE | EDU | H&BIO | HSS | LAW | PSY | Total |
|---------|------|------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|-------|
| 2005-6 | 0.8% | 1.3% | 0.8% | 2.3% | 1.2% | 2.8% | 4.4% | 4.5% | 2.1% |
| 2006-7 | 0.9% | 2.0% | 0.9% | 2.7% | 2.3% | 2.6% | 2.9% | 4.0% | 2.2% |
| 2007-8 | 0.6% | 1.6% | 1.1% | 2.3% | 2.7% | 2.5% | 3.8% | 3.6% | 2.3% |
| 2008-9 | 0.8% | 1.5% | 0.8% | 2.7% | 2.8% | 1.7% | 2.6% | 3.3% | 1.9% |
| 2009-10 | 1.4% | 1.6% | 1.0% | 2.1% | 2.7% | 2.5% | 3.2% | 3.2% | 2.2% |

Table 5: module claims as a percentage of module registrations – five year trend

Since 2005, the overall extent of extenuation has remained fairly static at around 2% of all module registrations.

2.6 Our annual reports on extenuation have consistently shown that academic schools have very distinctive tendencies in respect of both the likelihood that their students will claim extenuation and the likelihood that these claims will be accepted.

We speculated that these patterns might reflect the gender or ethnicity profiles of the students enrolled in these schools. Therefore, when considering the equal opportunities data for 2009-10, we analysed the data at school level in addition to observing the overall trends.

3 Our findings are presented in Section 3 below.
3 Equal Opportunities Monitoring

3.1 All equal opportunities monitoring data for this report was obtained from DELTA.

3.2 **Gender**

The following table displays information about both the number of components applied for by gender, and the actual number of students who applied for extenuation by gender in 2009-10:

| | Component applications | No. accepted | % Accepted | No. students who applied | No. students enrolled | % Students who applied |
|--------------------|------------------------|--------------|------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Female | 1563 | 966 | 61.8% | 773 | 9836 | 7.9% |
| Male | 763 | 400 | 52.4% | 423 | 8598 | 4.9% |
| Unknown | | | | | 3 | |
| Grand Total | 2326 | 1366 | 58.7% | 1196 | 18437 | |

Table 6: Extenuation statistics 2009-10 by gender

Since we began monitoring extenuating circumstances claims our findings have consistently shown that female students are more likely to claim extenuation than males. This year, 7.9% female students submitted one or more claims for extenuation, as compared to 4.9% male students. Each year, female students submit roughly twice as many extenuation claims as male students, despite enrolment data showing a ratio of approximately 55% female to 45% male students during 2005-2010.

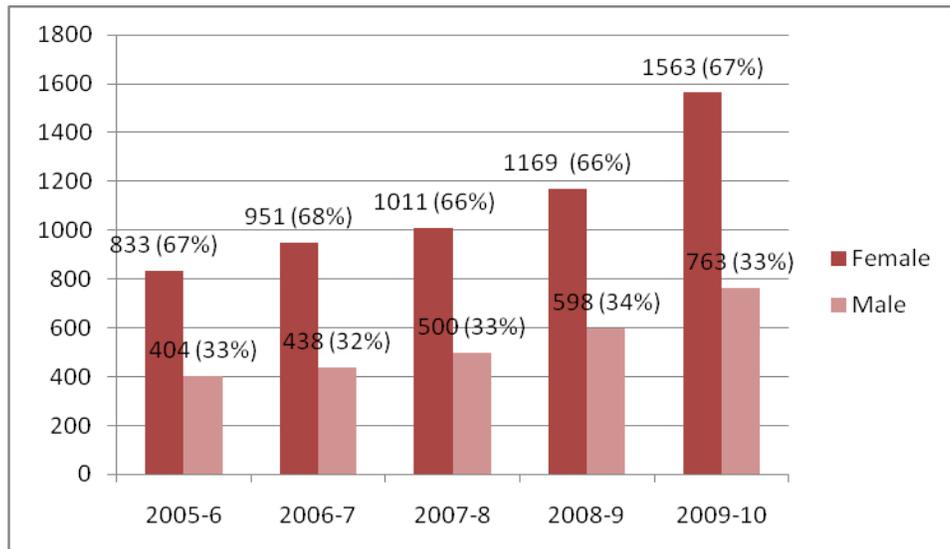


Chart 7: Ratio of male – female extenuation claims since 2005

As usual, extenuation claims from female students were more likely to be successful (61.8%) than claims from male students (52.4%). The table below shows enrolments and extenuation claims for 2009-10 by gender and by school:

| | % Enrolments 2009/10 | No. component claims | % Accepted |
|------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------|
| AVA | | | |
| F | 52.3% | 69 | 67.2% |
| M | 47.6% | 47 | 57.4% |
| BUS | | | |
| F | 46.3% | 183 | 60.1% |
| M | 53.7% | 122 | 55.7% |
| CITE | | | |
| F | 13.6% | 23 | 39.1% |
| M | 86.4% | 119 | 50.4% |
| EDU | | | |
| F | 77.3% | 180 | 70.0% |
| M | 22.7% | 17 | 47.1% |
| H&BIO | | | |
| F | 57.7% | 281 | 49.8% |
| M | 42.3% | 131 | 48.1% |
| HSS | | | |
| F | 62.4% | 348 | 60.6% |
| M | 37.6% | 178 | 44.9% |
| LAW | | | |
| F | 49.8% | 156 | 60.9% |
| M | 50.2% | 123 | 61.8% |
| PSY | | | |
| F | 79.2% | 323 | 69.3% |
| M | 20.8% | 26 | 69.2% |
| Total | | 2326 | |

Table 8: Extenuation statistics 2009-10 by gender and teaching school

It was notable that the school with the lowest overall percentage of successful claims (CITE) also had the lowest proportion of female students, and that the school with the highest overall percentage of successful claims (Psychology) had the highest proportion of female

students. However, there was no exact correlation between gender trends and school extenuation trends. The School of Law, for example, has a fairly even proportion of male to female students, yet has an above average success rate. The School of Health and Biosciences has more female than male students, but a comparatively low success rate.

This year we flagged up any extenuation claims in which the student claimed that assessments had been missed due to the illness of a dependent, to see whether this type of claim was more common for female students. The results of this monitoring exercise are shown in Table 9 below.

| Gender | Number of claims | % of total |
|--------|------------------|------------|
| F | 45 | 1.9% |
| M | 11 | 0.5% |
| Total | 56 | 2.4% |

Table 9: Claims based on student caring for a dependant

We were not surprised to find that female students submitted about 80% of all claims for extenuation on the basis of the illness of a dependent. However, the overall numbers of this type of claim were very low – accounting for only 2.4% of all extenuation claims.

As a result, we concluded that this did not appear to be a significant factor in the persistently higher proportion of extenuation claims submitted by female students.

3.3 Ethnicity

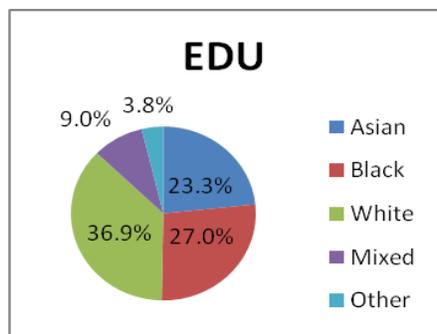
The table below provides a breakdown by ethnicity of the number of extenuation claims received during 2009-10, and the number of students who submitted these claims.

| | No. component apps | No. accepted | % Accepted | Students who applied | Students enrolled | % Who applied |
|-------------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------|----------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Asian | | | | | | |
| Bangladeshi | 135 | 85 | 63.0% | 67 | 1168 | 5.7% |
| Chinese | 5 | 4 | 80.0% | 4 | 193 | 2.1% |
| Indian | 80 | 52 | 65.0% | 46 | 1642 | 2.8% |
| Pakistani | 98 | 52 | 53.1% | 62 | 895 | 6.9% |
| Asian Other | 79 | 47 | 59.5% | 48 | 872 | 5.5% |
| Total | 397 | 240 | 60.5% | 227 | 4770 | 4.8% |
| Black | | | | | | |
| Black African | 655 | 345 | 52.7% | 366 | 4150 | 8.8% |
| Black Caribbean | 336 | 208 | 61.9% | 139 | 1284 | 10.8% |
| Black Other | 66 | 44 | 66.7% | 36 | 377 | 9.5% |
| Total | 1057 | 597 | 56.5% | 541 | 5811 | 9.3% |
| White | | | | | | |
| White - British | 294 | 192 | 65.3% | 147 | 3426 | 4.3% |
| White - Irish | 20 | 12 | 60.0% | 12 | 262 | 4.6% |
| White - Scottish | 7 | 6 | 85.7% | 2 | 45 | 4.4% |
| Other White | 57 | 34 | 59.6% | 32 | 1113 | 2.9% |
| Total | 378 | 244 | 64.6% | 193 | 4846 | 4.0% |
| Mixed | | | | | | |
| White & African | 60 | 42 | 70.0% | 21 | 200 | 10.5% |
| White & Asian | 26 | 16 | 61.5% | 9 | 133 | 6.8% |
| White & Caribbean | 46 | 31 | 67.4% | 20 | 199 | 10.1% |
| Other Mixed | 72 | 39 | 54.2% | 24 | 325 | 7.4% |
| Total | 204 | 128 | 62.7% | 74 | 857 | 8.6% |
| Other | 120 | 64 | 53.3% | 54 | 997 | 5.4% |
| Not Known | 170 | 93 | 54.7% | 7 | 1156 | 0.6% |
| Total | 2326 | 1366 | 58.7% | 1196 | 18437 | 6.5% |

Table 10: Extenuation statistics 2009-10 by ethnicity

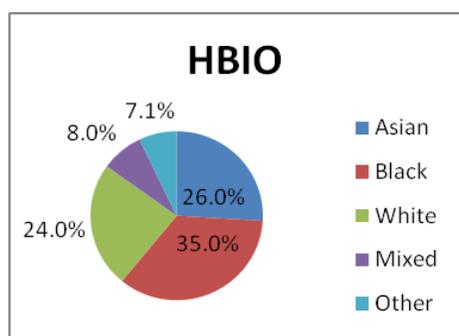
The patterns revealed by these figures are very similar to those found in previous years. Despite an increasing likelihood of applying though white (4.0%), asian (4.8%), mixed race (8.6%) and black students (9.3%) the average rate of success amongst these groups did not vary greatly, with the proportion of successful claims ranging from 56.5% for black students to 64.6% for white students.

We also looked at a breakdown of the ethnicity data school by school to see if the characteristic variations between schools in success rates mirrored the patterns of ethnicity in enrolment data. Two examples are given below.



| EDU | Comp. claims | % Accept | No. students applying | % Students enrolled |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|----------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Asian (23.3%) | 36 | 58.3% | 232 | 4.2% |
| Black (27.0%) | 98 | 70.4% | 47 | 7.8% |
| White (36.9%) | 24 | 58.3% | 18 | 2.1% |
| Mixed (9.0%) | 12 | 58.3% | 7 | 3.5% |
| Other & Not Known (3.8%) | 27 | 63.0% | 13 | 15.3% |
| Total | 197 | 68.0% | 106 | 4.7% |

Table 11a: 2009-10 enrolment trends in the Cass School of Education with extenuation by ethnicity

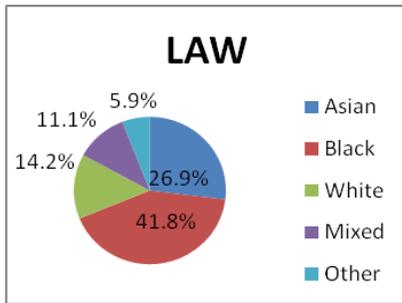


| H&BIO | Comp. claims | % Accept | No. students applying | % Students enrolled |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|----------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Asian (26%) | 83 | 62.7% | 44 | 7.4% |
| Black (35%) | 189 | 40.7% | 116 | 14.5% |
| White (24%) | 58 | 58.6% | 31 | 5.7% |
| Mixed (8%) | 47 | 44.7% | 16 | 8.8% |
| Other & Not Known (7.1%) | 35 | 54.3% | 25 | 6.2% |
| Total | 412 | 49.3% | 232 | 10.2% |

Table 11b: 2009-10 enrolment trends in the School of Health and Biosciences with extenuation by ethnicity

The Cass School of Education has a high success rate (68.0%) and low proportion of students applying for extenuation (4.7%). The School of Health and Biosciences has a comparatively low success rate (49.3%) and higher proportion of students who claim extenuation (10.2%).

Students of all ethnic groups were more likely to apply in the School of Health and Biosciences than in the Cass School of Education. Additionally, the success rates of ethnic groups in these schools did not necessarily mirror the overall ethnicity trends seen in Table 10. For example, black students who claimed extenuation in the Cass School of Education were very successful (70.4% claims accepted) in comparison to black students who claimed extenuation in the School of Health and Biosciences (40.7% claims accepted). Black students in the School of Law also enjoyed a higher than average success rate (60.5%), as can be seen in Table 11c below.



| LAW | Comp. claims | % accept | No. stude applying | % students enrolled |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Asian (26.9%) | 61 | 59.0% | 24 | 6.5% |
| Black (41.8%) | 162 | 60.5% | 70 | 12.2% |
| White (14.2%) | 14 | 71.4% | 12 | 6.1% |
| Mixed (11.1%) | 11 | 72.7% | 6 | 4.00% |
| Other & Not Known (7.1%) | 31 | 61.3% | 15 | 18.8% |
| Total | 279 | 61.0% | 127 | 9.3% |

Table 11c: 2009-10 enrolment trends in the School of Law with extenuation by ethnicity

On the whole, in schools with a higher than average success rate for extenuation claims, all ethnic groups tended to enjoy a higher than average success rate, and vice versa.

3.4 Disability

The table below gives the breakdown of extenuation claims during 2009-10 according to data on the claimant’s disability.

| Disability type | Comp. claims | Accepted | % Accepted | Students applying | Students enrolled | % Who applied |
|-----------------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Autistic Spectrum | 4 | 3 | 75.0% | 1 | 13 | 7.7% |
| Blind/Part Sight | 10 | 3 | 33.3% | 4 | 34 | 11.8% |
| Deaf | 5 | 2 | 40.0% | 3 | 44 | 6.8% |
| Dyslexia | 265 | 162 | 61.1% | 105 | 799 | 13.1% |
| Mental Health | 55 | 37 | 67.3% | 17 | 89 | 19.1% |
| Multiple Disability | 34 | 29 | 85.3% | 17 | 77 | 22.1% |
| Other Disability | 66 | 39 | 59.1% | 14 | 123 | 11.4% |
| Personal Care | 1 | 1 | 100.0% | 1 | 5 | 20.0% |
| Unseen Disability | 65 | 38 | 58.5% | 30 | 159 | 18.9% |
| Wheelchair | 23 | 12 | 52.2% | 12 | 67 | 17.9% |
| Total for disability | 528 | 326 | 61.7% | 204 | 1410 | 14.5% |
| No Disability | 1798 | 1040 | 57.8% | 974 | 17027 | 5.7% |
| Grand Total | 2326 | 1366 | 58.7% | 1196 | 18437 | 6.5% |

Table 12: Extenuation Statistics 2009-10 by disability

As we have only monitored extenuation claims by claimant’s disability type since the 2008-9 academic year, it is not yet possible to identify any clear trends. This year’s figures are very similar to those seen last year, illustrating that students with known disabilities are more likely to claim extenuation than students with no known disability (14.5% compared with

5.7%). Overall, students with known disabilities were slightly more successful than average in claiming extenuation. Similarly to last year, students with hearing or sight problems appeared to attain less successful outcomes. This anomalous result may partially be explained by the very small numbers of students in this category applying, usually with multiple claims. Checks revealed that these weren't the same students with hearing and sight problems who had applied in 2008-9.

This year we flagged the claims of students who claimed that assessments had been missed due to mental health problems such as depression, anxiety and panic attacks for monitoring. When compared with our disability data, it transpired that in most cases the student had not previously declared a disability of any kind.

| | |
|---------------------|-----|
| Dyslexia | 18 |
| Mental Health | 28 |
| Multiple Disability | 4 |
| No Disability | 117 |
| Unseen Disability | 2 |
| Grand Total | 169 |

Table 13: Claims based on mental health issues – analysis by disability

We felt that there may be a risk that the extenuation claim had been the first time at which these students had communicated their health issues to anyone at the university. This was a particular concern because it had not been our practice to correspond with students following extenuation applications.

In addition, the panel had noted that a number of students appeared to be submitting repeat claims for ongoing medical issues or disabilities. As our extenuation procedures are not designed to be a support mechanism for students with long-term issues, we have now designed a letter to be sent to any students who appear to be claiming extenuation for an ongoing or potentially ongoing health or personal issue. The letter includes a list of contact numbers for UEL support services that can offer help to the student in managing long-term issues. Since the letter was introduced in September 2010, it has been sent to 18 students.

4 Late Coursework

- 4.1 Students who hand in coursework late are awarded a mark of zero. However, the granting of extenuation allows students who hand in work up to 7 days late to be awarded the mark achieved for the work. In Semester A and B 2009-10 the panel decided to monitor the submission of late coursework in order to see if there were any patterns related to the submission of late coursework.

As the UEL Student Union had raised concerns that large numbers of students were very narrowly missing hand-in deadlines, we noted the forms which were less than 24 hours late. Conversely, we also noted which forms were exactly 7 days late, to see if the 7 day policy was encouraging students to treat the 7 day period as an extended deadline.

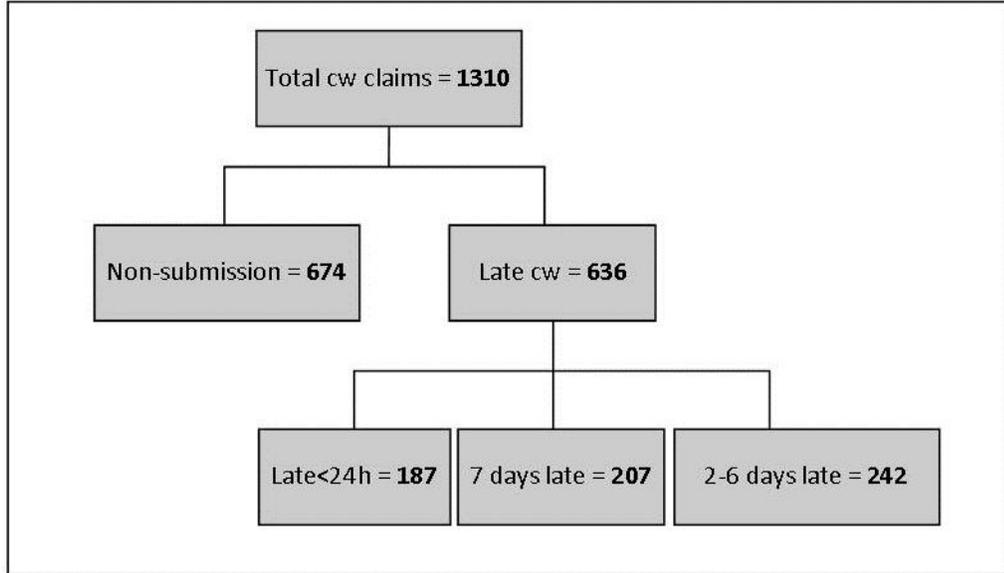


Table 14a: Breakdown of extenuation claims for coursework 2009-10

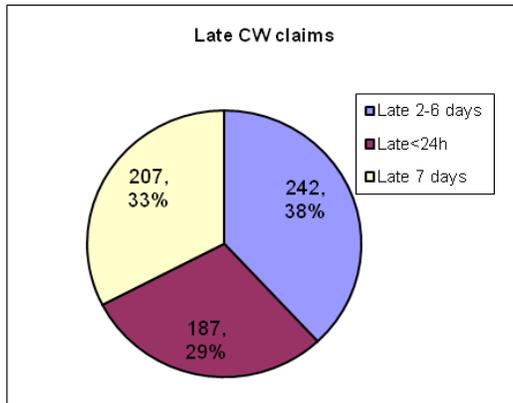


Chart 14c: Breakdown of extenuation claims for late coursework 2009-10

The data reveals that, students who claimed extenuation for late coursework were likely to hand in work at any point during the 7 day period. Coursework which was less than 24 hours late accounted for less than a third of the total.

However, when we drilled down to see the numbers for different schools, it emerged that the School of Health and Biosciences had a

disproportionately large number of claims for coursework that was less than 24 hours late (see Table 15 below).

| School | CW claims | Late <24h | % Late <24h |
|--------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| AVA | 115 | 3 | 2.6% |
| RDBS | 164 | 16 | 9.8% |
| CITE | 76 | 10 | 13.2% |
| EDU | 159 | 22 | 13.8% |
| H&BIO | 187 | 67 | 35.8% |
| HSS | 432 | 49 | 11.3% |
| LAW | 69 | 8 | 11.6% |
| PSY | 108 | 12 | 11.1% |
| Total | 1310 | 187 | 14.3% |

Table 15: Late CW claims by school

It is notable that the schools which have more flexible arrangements for handing in assignments (AVA and RDBS) have the lowest percentage of claims from students who only just miss the assessment deadline.

The School of Health and Biosciences generally sets a 12pm deadline for coursework hand-in. It is possible that the 12pm deadline is a significant factor in the large number of claims for coursework less than 24 hours late in this school - however, our data did not conclusively establish a link between deadline times and the number of extenuation claims for late coursework. For example, in the schools of Law and HSS about 11% coursework claims were for work handed in less than 24 hours late. Despite the similar statistics, these schools have quite different deadline times (9am for Law and 4pm for HSS).

Nevertheless, our findings did lead us to question the parity of current hand-in arrangements across schools, and the general effect of these on the student experience.

5. Risk assessment

- 5.1 As discussed in the body of this report, it was felt that a small number of students might be using the extenuation system to deal with ongoing health or personal issues. It was not clear whether these students realised that there were other options available to them in terms of obtaining support or adjusting their mode of study. Often it appeared that the students concerned had not informed personal tutors or programme leaders of their difficulties, and that no one in their school was aware of the issues.

In order to address this risk, we have designed a standard letter to be sent out to students with ongoing health or personal issues (section 3.4 refers).

From Semester A 2010-11 this letter will also be copied to the relevant programme leader, to ensure that schools are aware of any ongoing issues that are affecting their students. It should be noted that this is a standard letter which does not disclose any details of the student's claim, and that students who specifically do not want any correspondence to be sent to their Programme leader can tick a box on the application form to express this preference.

- 5.2 It was felt that the lack of parity across schools in terms of arrangements for coursework submission might have an impact on the number of claims submitted for extenuation, and may be detrimental to the student experience. We recommend that this issue be taken into consideration in any future review of helpdesk service provision.

6. Equality impact assessment

- 6.1 Equality analysis of extenuation is covered in the main body of the report.

7.1 Recommendation

- 7.1 That Academic Board approve this report.