

Mitigating and Extenuating Circumstances Policy

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1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear, transparent and equitable framework for considering requests from candidates whose examination attendance or performance in Dental Examination Executive examinations has been adversely affected by exceptional circumstances.

1.2 Specifically, the policy aims to:

- 1.2.1 Define the difference between mitigating circumstances and extenuating circumstances;
- 1.2.2 Set out the categories of circumstances that may be considered;
- 1.2.3 Explain the process and deadlines for submitting an application;
- 1.2.4 Identify the types of supporting evidence normally required;
- 1.2.5 Ensure that decisions are made consistently and on a case-by-case basis;
and
- 1.2.6 protect the integrity of the examination process while ensuring that candidates experiencing genuine hardship are considered fairly.

2. Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all candidates entered for examinations administered by the Dental Exams Executive. It covers:

- 2.1.1 applications to withdraw from an examination diet after the closing date, with or without partial or full refund, on the basis of mitigating circumstances; and
- 2.1.2 applications to have an examination attempt discounted where extenuating circumstances have had a direct, substantial and negative impact on a candidate's performance during an examination diet.

2.2 This policy applies only to circumstances that are serious, unavoidable, unexpected and outside the candidate's control, and which are supported by appropriate evidence. It should be read alongside all other relevant examination regulations and policies.

3. Overview

3.1 The Dental Examinations Executive recognises that, in exceptional cases, candidates may experience serious circumstances that affect either their ability to attend an examination diet or their performance during it. This policy sets out the arrangements for candidates who need to withdraw from an examination diet after the closing date because of mitigating circumstances, and for candidates who wish to request that an examination attempt be discounted because of extenuating circumstances arising during the examination diet.

3.2 The policy is intended to ensure that candidates are treated fairly, consistently and compassionately where circumstances are unavoidable, unexpected and beyond their control. It also explains the evidence required to support an application, the timescales for submission, and the principles applied by the Executive when considering such requests.

3.3 For the purposes of this policy, the Dental Examinations Executive (hereafter referred to as "the Executive") includes the Executive's Delivery Team and the Quality Assurance Team, as well as authorised persons responsible for the administration and oversight of the examinations. References to decision-making by the Executive means decisions taken by appropriately authorised individuals.

4. Definitions

4.1 **Mitigating circumstances** are serious, unavoidable, and unexpected events outside a candidate's control that prevent them from attending, or reasonably require them to withdraw from, an examination diet.

4.2 **Extenuating circumstances** are serious, unavoidable, and unexpected events outside a candidate's control that arise during, or have an immediate effect on, an examination diet and have a direct, substantial and negative impact on a candidate's performance.

4.3 **Close family member normally** includes a spouse, partner, parent, child, sibling, grandparent, grandchild, or another person with an equivalent close family relationship.

4.4 **Dependant** means a person who relies on the candidate for care or support.

4.5 **Appropriate documentation** means independent, relevant, and verifiable evidence in support of an application.

4.6 **Medical certification** means written evidence from a registered medical or health professional.

4.7 **Discounted attempt** means an examination attempt that will not count towards the permitted number of attempts, where an application has been approved under this policy.

5. Withdrawal from an examination diet because of mitigating circumstances

5.1 Candidates can apply to withdraw from an examination with a refund after the examination application closing date on grounds of mitigating circumstances as defined above.

5.2 Categories of mitigating circumstances are:

- 5.2.1 Medical grounds
- 5.2.2 Pregnancy-related grounds
- 5.2.3 Bereavement grounds
- 5.2.4 Compassionate grounds
- 5.2.5 Visa refusal
- 5.2.6 Other exceptional circumstances

5.3 All applications will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis and are not automatically approved. Applications must be submitted to the Executive at info@dsfe.org.uk within fourteen calendar days of the relevant examination date. For example, if the exam takes place on Monday 1st March, any applications must be submitted by Monday 15th March.

5.4 Refunds

5.4.1 Where an application is approved, the Executive will normally refund 80% of the examination fee, recognising that costs may already have been incurred by the candidate.

5.4.2 A 100% refund may be awarded in defined circumstances as detailed below or exceptionally where the Executive determines that the circumstances justify a full refund. 100% refunds will normally be awarded in the following circumstances, subject to provision of appropriate evidence:

- a. Pregnancy-related grounds;
- b. Bereavement of a close family member.

5.4.3 Applications based on the following ground will normally receive an 80% refund, subject to provision of appropriate evidence:

- a. Medical grounds;
- b. Compassionate grounds (e.g. serious illness/injury of a close family member or dependant);
- c. Visa refusal, where the candidate can demonstrate that the application was made in good time and the refusal was outside their control;
- d. Other exceptional circumstances.

5.4.4 The Executive reserves the right to increase a refund to 100% in exceptional cases where the circumstances are particularly serious, unavoidable, and clearly evidenced.

5.4.5 Refunds will not normally be made where the circumstances were foreseeable, avoidable, or arose from a candidate's failure to take reasonable action.

5.5 If candidates have any queries about what constitutes mitigating circumstances or appropriate documentation or have an issue gathering the appropriate documentation in the required timeframe, please contact the Executive at info@dsfe.org.uk to discuss this.

5.6 Candidates who are unable to obtain supporting evidence within the fourteen-day submission deadline should still submit their application within the required timeframe.

5.7 In such cases, candidates must explain the reason for the delay to submitting evidence and provide an indication of when evidence will be submitted.

5.8 The Executive may provisionally consider the application and set a reasonable deadline for receipt of supporting documentation.

5.9 The following circumstance will not normally be accepted under this policy:

- 5.9.1 Minor illness, ailments or short-lived viruses
- 5.9.2 Long-term adverse circumstances/issues (health, anxiety or financial issues)
- 5.9.3 Examination stress
- 5.9.4 Childcare difficulties
- 5.9.5 Family events, travel plans and/or holidays
- 5.9.6 Routine employment commitments
- 5.9.7 Foreseeable transport difficulties or travel disruption
- 5.9.8 Mistaking the date, time and/or location of the examination diet

5.9.9 Oversleeping or alarm failure on the examination diet day

5.9.10 Booking into examination venues in locations that are no longer preferred by the candidate

5.9.11 Visa not applied for in a timeous fashion

5.10 Upon receipt of an application for withdrawal from an examination due to mitigating circumstances, the Executive will acknowledge receipt of this within five working days and provide an outcome to the application within 15 working days of the acknowledgement.

5.11 Candidates should note the Executive operates a 'Fit to Sit' policy. If a candidate attends an examination diet and takes an examination, they are declaring themselves fit to sit the examination and they will not be able to subsequently claim that their performance was affected by mitigating circumstances. Candidates will therefore need to take responsibility for deciding in advance whether they are dealing with significant mitigating circumstances.

5.12 All decisions made under this policy will be made by an authorised member of the Executive acting within delegated authority.

5.13 The Executive reserves the right to seek additional information and to exercise discretion where appropriate.

6. Application to have an examination attempt discounted because of extenuating circumstances

6.1 When serious extenuating circumstances have affected a candidate's performance, a request may be made for an attempt to be discounted.

6.2 Categories of extenuating circumstances are:

6.2.1 Acute, serious & sudden illness/injury during the examination

6.2.2 Pregnancy-related incidents during the examination

6.2.3 Bereavement (close family member/dependent) notified during the examination

6.2.4 Serious illness/injury to close family member/dependent notified during the examination

6.3 All applications will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis and are not automatically approved. Applications must be submitted to the Executive within fourteen days after the examination's commencement and be supported by relevant medical certification and/or other appropriate documentation.

6.4 The following are unacceptable extenuating circumstances:

6.4.1 Existing conditions for which reasonable adjustments or access arrangements are required but were not notified to the Executive ahead of time.

6.4.2 Sitting an examination after an unsuccessful request to withdraw due to mitigating circumstances.

6.5 If candidates have any queries about what constitutes extenuating circumstances or appropriate documentation or have an issue gathering the appropriate documentation in the required timeframe, please contact the Executive at info@dsfe.org.uk to discuss this.

6.6 Upon receipt of an application to have an examination attempt discounted because of extenuating circumstances, the Executive will acknowledge receipt of this within five working days and provide an outcome to the application within 15 working days of the acknowledgement.

6.7 Any applications for discounted attempts that are not approved will count towards a candidate's permitted number of attempts.

6.8 The Executive reserves the right to seek additional information and to exercise discretion where appropriate.

7. Evidence to support applications

7.1 While every application will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, the table below details acceptable mitigating circumstances and the evidence required. The time period of all circumstances must coincide with examination preparation/examination diet dates.

7.2 Summary of evidence required for mitigating circumstances

Mitigating circumstance	Example	Evidence required
Medical grounds	Serious illness/injury	A medical certificate from an appropriate, independent medical practitioner confirming illness/injury & dates, detailing an extended, significant illness/injury lasting more than five days, covering the immediate period leading up to the examination diet and examination diet date.
	Sudden worsening of a long-term health condition	A medical certificate from an appropriate independent medical practitioner confirming the long-term health condition, the sudden worsening & dates.
Pregnancy-related grounds	Pregnancy-related problems/illness	A medical certificate/documentation (for example, MatB1 form, letter from midwife, General Practitioner or hospital letter) from an appropriate independent medical practitioner confirming the problems/illness & dates.
Bereavement	Bereavement (close family member/dependent)	- A statement of the relationship with the deceased. - A death certificate.
Compassionate grounds	Serious illness/injury of a close family member/dependent	- A statement of the relationship with the ill/injured person. - A medical certificate from an appropriate independent medical practitioner confirming illness/injury & dates, detailing an extended, significant illness/injury lasting more than five days, covering the immediate period leading up to the examination diet and examination diet date.
	Victim of a serious crime	A police report including the crime reference number & dates as they pertain to the examination diet date.
	Other serious unavoidable issue/major domestic event (house fire or flood, for example)	- Appropriate documentation from a relevant authority. - For a destructive fire, a letter/report from a fire officer. - For a destructive flood, a letter/report from insurers.
	Legal matters of a personal nature	Letters/documents from solicitor/court & dates as they pertain to the examination diet date.

Visa refusal	Refusal of a visa from the relevant country's visa & immigration service	• A refusal letter from the Embassy/Consulate.
Other exceptional circumstances	Unforeseen & unavoidable transport difficulties (wildcat strikes, natural disasters)	• Corroboration from police or other public authority and/or insurance reference number (if involved in a road traffic accident) and dates as they pertain to the examination diet date.
	Jury service	• A letter from the court including the dates of the legal proceedings and confirmation the candidate was not excused from jury service.
	Attendance at court or tribunal	• Solicitor's letter, including the dates of the legal proceedings and the requirement to attend. • A letter from the court/tribunal including the dates of the legal proceedings and confirmation the candidate was not excused from attendance.
	Incorrect information provided by the Executive on date/time and/or location of examination	• A copy of the incorrect information supplied by the Executive.
	Unforeseen representation of county/country at prestigious/significant event	• A letter of confirmation from the relevant organising body and supporting statement from an appropriate professional explaining why the event should be considered prestigious/significant.
	Exceptional employment grounds	• A letter from the candidate's employer stating why previously granted leave was retracted.

7.3 Summary of evidence required for extenuating circumstances

Extenuating circumstances	Evidence required
Acute/serious illness/injury occurring during an examination diet	• Confirmation from a British Council invigilator, Executive examination co-ordinator/examination team member/lead examiner. • If appropriate, a medical certificate from an appropriate, independent medical practitioner confirming illness/injury.
Pregnancy-related problems/illness occurring during an examination diet	• Confirmation from a British Council invigilator, Executive examination co-ordinator/examination team member/lead examiner. • If appropriate, a medical certificate from an appropriate, independent medical practitioner confirming problems/illness.
Bereavement (close family member/dependent) notified during the examination diet	• A statement of the relationship with the deceased. • A death certificate, with relevant dates.
Serious illness/injury of a close family member/dependent notified during the examination diet	• A statement of the relationship with the ill/injured person. • A medical certificate from an appropriate, independent medical practitioner confirming illness/injury & dates.

8. Confidentiality and Data Protection

8.1 The Executive recognises that applications made under this policy may include sensitive personal data including health information, bereavement details, and other special category data.

8.2 All information will be handled in accordance with the Executive's Privacy Statement.

8.3 Information will only be access by authorised individuals within the Executive for the purposes of assessing the application.

8.4 All information will be treated confidentially and retained for as long as necessary to fulfil its purpose.