

# Troubleshooting Course Challenges: Deferred Exams and Extenuating Circumstances Withdrawal

Welcome to the Troubleshooting Course Challenges Series from the Student Success Centre. In this video, we meet Caleb, who has been experiencing mental health concerns this semester and is considering deferring his final exams or requesting extenuating circumstances withdrawals from all his courses, while he adjusts to his medication.

## Overview

This video will introduce what Caleb's advisor, who can advise Caleb in order to find out his options, and any important dates he should keep in mind regarding when he should take action. We will also share how Caleb can access support and complete his requests for final exam deferral or extenuating circumstances withdrawal. Last, we will share why it is important for Caleb to explore these options under his circumstances.

## What is the Situation?

Caleb says. 'I began experiencing some mental health concerns early in the term. I've been seeking support and have been taking a new medication. I'm adjusting to it, but it is making me feel very tired and disoriented right now. I'm feeling very overwhelmed and I'm having difficulty studying for more than a short time each day. I don't think I can be ready for my final exams in the next couple of weeks'.

## What are Caleb's Choices in this Situation?

Caleb can first consider a request for deferral of his final exams. If he is concerned that he will not be feeling well enough to write deferred exams, he should instead consider requesting an extenuating circumstances withdrawal from his courses. Let's take a moment to look at each of these options, beginning with a request for deferred finals.

## How Does Caleb Apply for a Deferred Exam?

If Caleb chooses to request deferred final exams, these requests go through the Registrar's office, since final exams are scheduled by the Registrar. There is a form available in his Student Success Centre that must be submitted. If he is able to provide documentation to support his request, this should be attached. We will talk more about documentation in a moment, but for example, in Caleb's situation, a note from his healthcare provider would be a possible form of documentation that he could submit.

## When Should Caleb Take Action?

When a student knows in advance that they will need to defer a final exam, the request should be submitted two to ten days after the final exam schedule is published or as soon as possible. When the need for a deferral is unexpected, the request should be submitted within 24 hours of the exam time, either before or after the exam occurs. Students who are unable to do so, for example, who are prevented for a medical reason, should contact the Registrar's office as soon as they are able to do so.

## When will Caleb Write the Exam if he Defers?

The deferred exam period is about a month past the end of the regular final exam period. Students who are registered to write deferred exams will be sent the exact date and time for each exam. The Registrar's website provides a list of dates on the deferred exam website. We have included this link alongside the video in the resources section. This is the only opportunity to write the final exam. Once a deferred exam has been set, it is no longer possible for a student to withdraw from the course, unless a special appeal is permitted and granted. A second deferral date will not be provided.

## Reasons for deferral

As well as physical or mental illness, reasons for deferral include a religious observance that prevents or prohibits an exam on that day, or having three exams scheduled within 24 hours, or less usual reasons such as being called to jury duty or being an athlete in a high-level competition.

## What is an Extenuating Circumstances Withdrawal?

After initially considering deferrals of his finals, Caleb realizes that he is not likely to do well on his exams even with more time to study, since he has missed so much class time. He decides to withdraw from his courses this semester. When there are extenuating circumstances, a student can appeal to have the W, withdrawal, on their transcript change to an E.W. Extenuating circumstances withdrawal. Extenuating circumstances include unexpected personal or family events, such as illness, a death in the family, severe financial hardship, or a disaster in your country, that prevented you from completing the semester. It is possible to appeal for extenuating circumstances withdrawals, EWs, in all the courses in the semester or to request that only one or some courses be given that status.

## Why Might Caleb Request an Extenuating Circumstances Withdrawal?

When making this appeal, it is important to demonstrate that the circumstances could not have been anticipated or were beyond your control. EWs are helpful because they indicate that there was an appealable reason for withdrawal and they do not count as part of the 10

withdrawals permitted in the degree. However, the details of your reasons for withdrawal will not appear on your transcript. Students can withdraw from their courses in the usual way, speak with their faculty if approval to withdraw from courses is needed, and then submit the appeal for EWs.

## When Would Caleb Take Action?

Caleb would need to withdraw by the withdrawal deadline, which is normally the last day of classes in the semester. He can then apply for EWs, preferably within two weeks of withdrawing from his courses. It may take some time for the designation of EW to be changed on his transcript, since appeals are usually considered once the semester has ended.

## A Word about Documentation

In situations of deferred exams or extenuating circumstances, withdrawals or in other exceptional situations, students may be asked for supporting documentation. This refers to documents such as medical documents, a reference from a relevant party or a statutory declaration. Students cannot be required to submit a specific form of documentation. Instead, students are encouraged to submit documentation that supports the circumstances of their request. More details on documentation are provided in the resources section alongside this video.

## Why Should Caleb Take Action?

Various circumstances can impact your ability to succeed, or, as in Caleb's case, complete a course with a satisfactory grade. If you have an unanticipated issue like Caleb did, the university has student services and processes in place to support you. Accessing help is an important step to support your ongoing learning and academic success. We encourage you to reach out to one of the many resources on campus for support. If you are not sure where to start, drop by the Student Success Centre in the Taylor Family Digital Library, book an appointment at [elevate.ucalgary.ca](http://elevate.ucalgary.ca) or email us at [success@ucalgary.ca](mailto:success@ucalgary.ca).