

MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES ADVICE SHEET FOR UG AND PGT STUDENTS

Please read this advice sheet in conjunction with the University's Mitigating Circumstances Policy: <http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=4271>

If you have any questions, please contact your Programme Administrator for advice.

What are the Mitigating Circumstances?

Mitigating Circumstances are personal or medical circumstances which are **unforeseeable and unpreventable** that could have a significant adverse effect on your academic performance. You should only submit a Mitigating Circumstances application if you consider it serious enough, and the timing critical, to have affected your performance in your assessed work and/or examinations.

What types of circumstances are normally accepted or not accepted?

Possible mitigating circumstances include:

- significant illness or injury; or worsening of an ongoing illness or disability, including mental health conditions; (please see the following DASS webpage for examples of disabilities: <http://www.dso.manchester.ac.uk/who-do-we-support/current-students/>);
- the death or critical/significant illness of a close family member/dependant;
- significant family or personal crises or major financial problems leading to acute stress; and
- absence from the University for public service, for example, jury service.

Circumstances that will **not** normally be regarded as grounds for mitigation include:

- holidays, moving house and events that were planned or could reasonably have been expected;
- assessments that are scheduled close together;
- misreading the timetable or misunderstanding the requirements for assessments;
- inadequate planning and time management;
- failure, loss or theft of a computer or printer that prevents submission of work on time; students should back up work regularly and not leave completion so late that they cannot find another computer or printer;
- the act of religious observance;
- consequences of paid employment (except in some special cases for part-time students);
- exam stress or panic attacks not diagnosed as illness or supported by medical evidence; and

- disruption in an examination room during an assessment which has not been brought to the attention of, or recorded by, the invigilators (including instances such as fire alarms or other noise disruption).

Pregnancy: events may arise during pregnancy that may constitute mitigating circumstances, and these need to be judged on a case by case basis. It is recommended by the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU), that, at a minimum, students are required to take two weeks' compulsory maternity-related absence, or four weeks if they are on placement in a factory. This is in line with employment law and is to ensure the health and safety of the mother following birth.

Students who are registered with the Disability Advisory and Support Service (DASS)

If you need to apply for mitigating circumstances due to issues directly related to your disability, you do not need to provide any additional supporting evidence, but you must provide a detailed explanation on the application form of how your disability is specifically affecting your studies at the time. It is not sufficient to indicate only that you are registered with the DASS. Additionally, if you feel that your disability has been exacerbated by an event (such as bereavement or a change of medication) then you must still provide evidence of the event itself. A Disability Advisor from the DASS will be part of the Mitigating Circumstances Committee that will consider your application. When considering your application the Committee may check on your engagement with any support you have been offered by the DASS. If support is available but you have chosen not to engage, this may be taken into consideration and reflected in the Committee's recommendation. If you are registered with DASS but need to apply for mitigating circumstances for an issue that is not directly related to your disability, you must provide supporting evidence (see below for details).

Automatic 1-week extension for DASS registered Students:

As part of your support plan, you may be eligible for an automatic extension of 7 days for assessed written work. The Law and Criminology Disability Co-Ordinator will already have been advised of this, and it will not be necessary for you to apply for mitigating circumstances if you can submit your work within the original deadline. If the circumstances directly relating to your disability mean that you will need additional time beyond the automatic extension of 1 week, you must complete and submit the online mitigating circumstances application form. Please note that automatic extensions do not apply to group-work, presentations or other forms of assessment, and you **must** submit an application if you are unable to meet the deadline for anything other than assessed coursework.

When should I submit my application?

You should submit your mitigating circumstances application **before** your assessment deadline or examination date. The Mitigating Circumstances Committee will not normally accept applications submitted more than 7 days after the assessment/examination date has passed. The final deadline dates for receipt of applications relating to any assessments scheduled during each examination period are listed below, however, you should apply before, or if necessary, immediately after an affected assessment deadline or examination. If you do not do this, your application may be rejected. Do not wait until the final deadline date to submit your application. If you cannot submit your application by the final deadline date, then you should

explain the reasons why, and provide supporting evidence wherever possible, and the Committee will decide if the circumstances warrant the consideration of a late application.

Deadlines for receipt of applications relating to assessments scheduled in Examination periods during 2020-21:

Semester 1

- 4 pm on Friday, 22 January 2021 for circumstances affecting teaching/assessments during semester one
- 4 pm on Monday 08 February 2021 for circumstances arising during the semester one assessment period affecting semester one assessments

Semester 2:

- 4 pm on Monday, 17 May 2021 for circumstances affecting teaching/assessments during semester two
- 4 pm on Friday 11 June 2021 for circumstances arising during the semester two assessment period affecting semester two assessments

August Exam Period:

- 4 pm on Friday 02 September 2021 for circumstances arising during the August assessment period affecting August assessments.

September Dissertations and Research Paper (2)

- 4 pm on Friday, 10 September 2021 for circumstances arising during the writing up period.

How do I submit a Mitigating Circumstances application?

A link to the mitigating circumstances form can be found on your *programme Blackboard page > Examinations and Assessments*.

You should submit the online Mitigating Circumstances form and medical or other supporting evidence **before** the coursework submission deadline or examination date. If you cannot submit your form before the date of your assessment, you should explain the reasons why on your form. We will normally expect applications to be submitted **no later than 7 days** after the submission deadline or date of examination.

Please note that applications and supporting evidence cannot be carried forward if you have applied for mitigating circumstances in a previous year and your situation/condition is ongoing, although previous applications may be consulted by the Committee if

appropriate. You should submit a new application each year if necessary and in most cases, up to date evidence will also be required. Similarly, applications cannot be made in advance for a whole academic session or semester, you must apply as and when you are affected by the circumstances.

Do I need to submit supporting evidence?

Yes. All mitigating circumstances applications must be supported by independent third party evidence for DASS registered students if your circumstances relate directly to your disability, please refer to the advice above. The nature of this documentation will vary according to the nature of the circumstances; it must be sufficiently independent, relate to the relevant period and confirms the impact of the case you are making. It must also be possible for the University to verify that it is accurate (e.g. a dated letter, document or medical certificate written in English, signed by a verifiable external source e.g. a qualified medical practitioner or internal University source e.g. the Counselling Service). Examples of the type of evidence you should provide:

Circumstances relate to:

Short-term illness or injury (affecting you up to 7 days before a submission deadline/examination)	It is a University policy that the self-certification form must be signed by a GP; we cannot accept forms which have not been signed by a GP or that do not include GP comments.
Long-term/significant illness or injury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • letter from a doctor or other health professional • letter from a counsellor (e.g. University Counselling Service)
Family crises or major financial problems leading to acute stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relevant correspondence from lender or funding body • letter from a doctor or other health professional • letter from a counsellor (e.g. University Counselling Service)
Absence for jury service or maternity, paternity or adoption leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • letter confirming summons for jury service • MAT B certificate or relevant correspondence confirming pregnancy/birth/adoption
The death or critical/significant illness of a close family member/dependant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • copy of the death certificate • copy of the order of service from the funeral

If supporting evidence has not been provided **within 14 days** of the submission of your form and you have not contacted us to advise there may be a delay, your application will be rejected and no further action will be taken.

What happens next?

When appropriate supporting evidence has been submitted, your case will be considered at a monthly meeting of the Mitigating Circumstances Committee. You can normally expect to receive confirmation of the Committee's recommendation via your student email address. Please note that we do not send confirmation to other (ie personal) email addresses. The recommendation of the Committee is provisional and is reviewed by the Board of Examiners at their meeting in June, September and November for PGT students.

Please note that if you are handing in work late, unless your circumstances prevent you from doing so, you should continue working on your assessment, and if possible submit it, whilst you wait for the decision of the Committee.

How will my application be considered?

The Mitigating Circumstances Committee will assess whether to accept or reject your application based on the information and supporting evidence you have provided.

If my application is accepted how will mitigation be applied?

Late submission of coursework (excluding PGT dissertations and research papers):

When coursework is submitted after the deadline, the student should complete the online mitigating circumstances form explaining the reasons for the late submission, together with appropriate third party supporting documentary evidence (e.g. medical or other). Any coursework submitted after the submission deadline will be subject to the penalties outlined in the late submission policy (available in the Assessed Coursework Guidelines) unless the mitigation is accepted. If students have valid mitigating circumstances to explain the late submission and the Mitigating Circumstances Committee accept that the circumstances warranted the length of time taken to submit the work, then the Mitigating Circumstances Committee will recommend that the penalty is waived and full marks are reinstated.

Students are advised to aim to submit outstanding coursework at the earliest opportunity and in any case within ten working days of the deadline. If work is submitted after that date it will receive a mark of 0 regardless of mitigation. If an application for mitigating circumstances is not accepted by the Mitigating Circumstances Committee (i.e. rejected), then late penalties will be imposed.

Late submission PGT dissertations and research papers:

Students are advised to aim to submit outstanding dissertation/research papers at the earliest opportunity and in any case no later than twenty working days after the deadline. Students should liaise with the Teaching, Learning and Student Experience Office regarding difficulties in meeting these deadlines. When dissertations/research papers are submitted after the deadline, the student should complete the online mitigating circumstances form explaining the reasons for the late submission, together with appropriate third party supporting documentary evidence (e.g. medical or other). Any dissertation/research papers submitted after the submission deadline will be subject to the penalties outlined in the late submission policy (available in the Dissertation/Research Paper Guidelines) unless the mitigation is accepted.

If students have valid mitigating circumstances to explain the late submission and the Mitigating Circumstances Committee accept that the circumstances warranted the length of time taken to submit the work, then the Mitigating Circumstances Committee will recommend that the penalty is waived and full marks are reinstated.

If an application for mitigating circumstances is not accepted by the Mitigating Circumstances Committee (i.e. rejected), then late penalties will be imposed.

Mitigation will not result in the changing of any marks.

Instead, the Board of Examiners will note how much of the unit was affected. Normally students will be offered a first sit opportunity. In very serious cases, the Board may also

agree to apply general mitigation to your overall performance for an academic year or offer an opportunity to repeat the year.

Missed examinations or non-submission of coursework:

In the case of a missed examination, this will normally be re-scheduled for the August examination period.

In the case of a non-submission of coursework, you will be issued with a new submission date which will be set by the Board of Examiners.

How will I find out the result of my application?

You will be notified of the outcome of your application by email to your student email address. All marks are provisional until the Final Examinations Board. The Committee will recommend to the Board of Examiners whether or not mitigation should be applied.

Students do not have the right to appeal against the recommendation of a Mitigating Circumstances Committee, although they can appeal against the final decision of an Examination Board, or equivalent body, under regulation [XIX \(Academic Appeals Procedure\)](#) once the results have been published.

What support might I be offered after submitting mitigating circumstances form?

Your Programme Administrator can help you to access the relevant support services within the University. If you have disclosed personal/medical circumstances on your application you may be contacted to ask for your permission to complete a referral to the relevant University support service.

Other useful contacts:

Student Support and Guidance Officer – Sam Green

To arrange an appointment, please email sam.green@manchester.ac.uk

Students' Union Advice Centre

Web: <https://manchesterstudentsunion.com/> Tel: 0161 275 2952

University Counselling Service

Web: <http://www.counsellingservice.manchester.ac.uk> Tel: 0161 275 2864

Disability Advisory and Support Service

Web: <http://www.DASS.manchester.ac.uk>

Tel: 0161 275 7512, email: dass@manchester.ac.uk