

Policy on Mitigating Circumstances and Coursework Extensions

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Policy on Mitigating Circumstances and Coursework Extensions

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Effective from the start of the 2023/24 academic year

1.0 Introduction and Purpose

- 1.1 During their studies, students may experience significant events which negatively affect their ability to submit work, attend an assessment or perform to their usual standard in an assessment of any type.
- 1.2 If significant events, usually related to students' health, individual circumstances or personal issues, are unforeseeable and unpreventable, they can apply for mitigating circumstances.
- 1.3 The aim of accepting and applying mitigation aims to reduce the negative effects on a students' academic outcomes.
- 1.4 This Policy sets out the University's arrangements for considering requests for mitigation in such circumstances. It includes requests for extensions to pieces of coursework/assessments, as well as requests for mitigation for other forms of assessment, such as exams.
- 1.5 The Policy intends to provide inclusive support to all students regardless of programme, level or mode of study; and recognises the diversity of our students and their responsibilities with an aim to respond in a respectful and inclusive manner.

2.0 Scope and Definitions

- 2.1 This Policy applies to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught students. It will only apply to Postgraduate Research students when they are studying the taught elements of a doctoral programme of study. The policy which deals with mitigating circumstances affecting Postgraduate Research students is the [Policy on the Circumstances Leading to Changes to Postgraduate Research Study](#). Students on Degree Apprenticeships, including higher apprenticeships, should refer to the [Procedure on Break in Learning for Degree Apprentices](#).

- .2 This Policy should be read alongside the [Mitigating Circumstances Procedures](#) and the [Procedure for Extensions](#).
- 2.3 The University defines mitigating circumstances as 'unforeseeable or unpreventable circumstances that could have, or did have, a significant negative effect on the academic performance of a student'. Accepting and applying mitigation aims at reducing the negative effects on a student's academic outcome.
- 2.4 The assessment period is defined as the set time during which students' exams and coursework usually take place.

3.0 General Principles

- 3.1 Students are responsible for submitting their own requests for mitigation or extensions, unless a significant event prevents them from doing so, and on those occasions a third party may submit on their behalf.
- 3.2 Students must inform their School as soon as they are aware of any possible issues that may affect their progress or assessments. A range of support resources for students are available within the University (please see 'Sources of support and advice' below). Please see 4.4-6 regarding longstanding and chronic health conditions.
- 3.3 Schools must publicise their deadlines for submission of requests for mitigation and extensions. There will be a number of deadlines set across the academic year; and deadlines may vary within a School due to the nature of delivery of our programmes.
- 3.4 Schools must ensure students are aware of how to submit such requests and that students have a realistic understanding of the different options available to deal with a request for mitigation.
- 3.5 Retrospective mitigating circumstances can be submitted up to five working days/one week following the date of assessment or deadline.
- 3.6 Requests for mitigation must be processed formally and considered impartially. Schools must develop processes that properly document each case. The procedures need to be applied consistently and in line with this Policy, but with enough flexibility to apply equally to undergraduate and taught postgraduate students, and to allow Schools to meet any discipline-specific or professional requirements. Arrangements must also be proportionate, so that requests for mitigation can be dealt with in a timely manner. The [Mitigating Circumstances Procedures](#) provide further guidance on this.

3.7 Schools must inform students of the progress and outcome, as appropriate, of their request for mitigation, in good time, and as soon as possible after a decision has been made.

4.0 Grounds for Mitigation

4.1 Possible mitigating circumstances include (but are not limited to):

- *Health Issues;*
 - significant illness or injury; or worsening of an ongoing illness or disability, including mental health conditions; (please see the [Disability Advisory and Support Service \(DASS\) website](#) for examples of disabilities;
- *Personal Issues;*
 - the death or critical/significant illness of a close family member/dependant;
 - significant family or personal crises, unpredictable changes relating to caring responsibilities, or major financial problems leading to acute stress;
- *IT related issues:*
 - Some IT issues such as a network or hardware fault at the point of submission (please see [Guidance for Schools on mitigating circumstances related to IT Issues](#) and information for students on [help with assessment issues \(including IT matters\)](#)); and
- *Public service;*
 - absence from the University for public service, for example, jury service.

4.2 Events that will **not** normally be regarded as grounds for mitigation include (but are not limited to):

- *Personal Issues;*
 - holidays, moving house and events that were planned or could reasonably have been expected;
 - 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; ([Guidance for Schools on mitigating circumstances related to IT Issues](#) is available. Information is provided for students on [help with assessment issues \(including IT matters\)](#));
 - the act of religious observance (please see the University's [Policy on Religious Observance](#) for more information on religious observance);
 - consequences of paid employment (except in some special cases for part-time students);
- *Time management or organisation/administrative Issues;*
 - assessments that are scheduled close together;
 - misreading the timetable or misunderstanding the requirements for assessments;
 - inadequate planning and time management;

- students who commence their studies later than the expected start date who have missed a portion of teaching/learning.
 - *Issues during exams;*
 - exam stress or panic attacks not diagnosed as illness or supported by medical evidence;
 - disruption in an examination room during the course of 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);
- 4.3 Events may happen during **pregnancy** that may be viewed as mitigating circumstances, and these need to be judged on a case-by-case basis. **Pregnancy** itself does not normally come under mitigating circumstances, but if a student's circumstances (or those of a partner of a pregnant student) result in negative effects on the student's progress or assessment, they are advised to discuss the issue with their School as soon as possible. (A new University Policy on supporting student parents is currently being developed).
- 4.4 Students with longstanding and chronic health conditions that they can foresee will affect their assessments, should already be receiving support from the University, such as through the Disability Advisory and Support Service. These conditions, therefore, usually fall outside the scope of Mitigating Circumstances as any effects are not usually unexpected.
- 4.5 If a student with longstanding and chronic health conditions requires adjustments to their assessments, these adjustments can be agreed with their School in advance, which the student can use as and when required, making such arrangements is advised to avoid the need to submit repeated mitigating circumstances.
- 4.6 At the start of each academic year, and following the generation of the student's support plan, or as soon as possible after any changes to a student's needs or diagnosis, the student should contact their School and arrange to discuss any assessment changes that they may require.

5.0 Sources of Support and Advice

- 5.1 The following areas of the University can be contacted for support and advice relating to mitigating circumstances:
- i. The University Counselling and Mental Health Service - <http://www.counsellingservice.manchester.ac.uk/>
 - ii. Student Support and Advice - <http://www.studentsupport.manchester.ac.uk/> (Student Support Hubs are available on campus; for details of these, students should contact their specific School or Faculty).

- iii. Disability Advisory and Support Service - <http://www.dso.manchester.ac.uk/>
- iv. Occupational Health Service - <http://www.occhealth.manchester.ac.uk/>
- v. Students' Union Advice Service - <http://manchesterstudentsunion.com/advice>
- vi. Students' own programme or School office – please see the following for a list of School contacts - <http://www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/structure/faculties-schools/> and <https://www.studentsupport.manchester.ac.uk/uni-services-az/school-support/> for a list of School Support Offices.

6.0 Monitoring Compliance

- 6.1 Schools must submit reports to the Teaching and Learning Delivery Operational Group on a quarterly basis, to enable consideration of patterns and trends.

Document Control Box	
Policy / Procedure title	Policy on Mitigating Circumstances and Coursework Extensions
Date approved	June 2023
Approving Body	Senate / Academic Standards and Quality Committee (Teaching, Learning and Students)
Implementation date:	September 2023
Version	2.0 June 2023
Supersedes	June 2017 version of the Policy on Mitigating Circumstances
Previous review dates	June 2017, June 2015, June 2014, June 2009, February 2009, April 2006
Related information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigating Circumstances Procedures • Procedure for Extensions • Procedure on Break in Learning for Degree Apprentices • Mitigating circumstances and extension requests (Student Support webpage) • DASS Guidance for Dealing with Disability-Related requests for Mitigation • Guidance for Disability Advisory and Support Service (DASS) Related Automatic Extensions • Student guidance on DASS-related Automatic Extensions • Basic Guide to Mitigating Circumstances
Next review date	June 2027
Policy owner	Director of Student and Academic Services (SAS)
Lead contact	Teaching and Learning Manager (Policies and Degree Apprenticeships), Teaching and Learning Delivery, Division of SAS <i><u>For any queries or questions relating to this document, please direct your email to teaching-policy@manchester.ac.uk</u></i>

Version amendment history: Policy on Mitigating Circumstances and Coursework Extensions		
Version	Date	Reason for change
2.0	June 2023	<p>Updates made to the policy following a review of the Policy and related Procedures on Mitigating Circumstances</p> <p>Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarifying some of the temporary arrangements that had been in place during the Covid-19 pandemic • Putting the document into a new agreed format for teaching and learning policies • Making reference and linking to the new procedure for extension requests, including the inclusion of 'Coursework Extensions' in the title of the Policy.
October 2022	October 2022	<p>Updates between June 2017 – October 2022 versions</p> <p>Updates November/December 2020:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional statement added to the note at the top of the Policy referring to information about arrangements during Covid-19 (Coronavirus) during 2020/21 • Additional sentence about degree apprentices added to the scope section <p>Update January 2021:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference to the new Assessment Pledge in the notes at top of the Policy. <p>Update February 2021:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference to higher apprenticeships added to the scope section <p>Update October 2021:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note added to top of document regarding arrangements under the Assessment Commitments 2021/22 <p>Update July 2022:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update to document control box re Division name and contact details <p>Update October 2022:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference to the Assessment Commitments removed from the note at the top of the page and statement amended to read: <i>"For specific arrangements for Mitigating Circumstances during 2022/23, please see:</i> https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/tlso/policy-guidance/assessment/reaching-decisions-from-assessment/mitigating-circumstances/ or https://www.studentsupport.manchester.ac.uk/study-support/mitigating-circumstances/"