MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES
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The information in this guide only provides general guidance on academic support and University policy. The leaflet should not be regarded or relied upon as a complete or authoritative statement of University policy or procedures. The University of Manchester Students' Union advice service will not accept any liability for any claims or inconvenience as a result of the use of information in this guide.
What are mitigating circumstances?

Mitigating circumstances is a formal procedure that students can follow to inform the University of any circumstances beyond their control that have affected or are affecting their academic performance. The University (Board of Examiners) will take this information into consideration when they meet e.g. ill health caused a student to miss an exam or perform below their usual standard so the University allowed them to re-sit the examination at a later point in the year, as if for the first time (without a cap on the marks).

Students must show how their performance has been adversely affected for the University to be able to consider their case e.g. a student’s marks are all usually in high 60’s, after feeling very ill during an exam, the student achieves 41%.

This guide aims to give an overview of the procedures and how to apply for mitigation. The full policy is available on the University website (see links at the end of this guide) and we suggest that you read that alongside this information.
What could be classed as mitigating circumstances?

The University considers mitigating circumstances to be *unforeseeable* or *unpreventable* circumstances that could have a *significant adverse effect* on the academic performance of a student.

Examples of some of the grounds that the University may consider to be mitigating circumstances are as follows:

- **Serious ill health** (not already covered by special, pre-arranged examination provision – those with ongoing health issues are likely to benefit from contacting the Disability Support Office for an assessment as these cannot usually be considered under this procedure)
- **Personal accident or injury**
- **Death or serious illness of family members or close friends**
- **Major household problems** e.g. fire
- **Acute personal or financial or emotional trauma**, e.g. acute anxiety or depression, family breakdown, breakdown of close personal relationship
- **Major and unplanned changes to employment circumstances or patterns of employment** (EXCEPT Full Time Students)

- **Impact of natural disaster, civil disruption or other major hazard**
- **Absence for jury service or maternity, paternity or adoption leave.**

The University are not likely to consider colds or known conditions such as hay fever (unless the effects are unusually severe); normal exam stress or anxiety (unless corroborated by medical evidence as a chronic condition and undergoing treatment); moving house; change of job; holidays; weddings; normal job pressure; minor financial difficulties; oversleeping; work commitments (full-time students); study related circumstances (equipment failure including computing/printer difficulties); failure to have taken back up copies for work stolen or corrupted; bunching of deadlines/examinations; missing books; poor time management; misreading the examination timetable; taking the wrong examination.

*If you are still not sure whether you can submit a claim for mitigation, come and see us at the University of Manchester Students’ Union advice service.*
Submitting a claim for mitigating circumstances

Firstly, it is important that you keep your Personal Tutor and Academic Advisor informed if you feel that you are experiencing difficulties which affecting your performance. You should also visit your School or Programme office to discuss your mitigation as they may be able to discuss with you whether an extension or rescheduling of an examination is a more appropriate option for you. If you are unsure how to raise your circumstances with them or feel uncomfortable about doing so then an Students' Union Advisor may be able to help. The advisors offer a confidential service, independent from the University so can discuss your case with you in private.

To submit a claim for mitigating circumstances you’ll need to fill out a ‘Notification of Mitigating Circumstances’ form (see link at end of this chapter), support your claim with appropriate evidence and submit the form at the time that difficulties are occurring and before the formal deadline which should be published in your handbook or contact your School for details. Mitigation submitted after this deadline may still be considered but only with credible and compelling evidence as to why the circumstances where not known or could not have been known beforehand.

How much detail do I need to put in my form?

You should explain your mitigation in as much detail as you possibly can. You should try to include;

What has happened e.g. my grandfather passed away and we were very close. I visited him every term and called him on the telephone regularly. I attended his funeral a week before my submission date and couldn’t really focus on my assignment but felt I should submit it anyway. I spoke to my Academic Adviser and...

When it happened e.g. exact dates and match it with your deadline/assignment/exam date

And how ‘exactly’ it affected your performance e.g. I am feeling upset and unable to concentrate, I feel down. My mother suggested that I go and have a chat with the Counselling Service as my family is so far away. My marks were of a 60 average but my recent assignment which I submitted two weeks after he passed achieved 41 and this shows my performance was affected.

Provide evidence e.g. Death Certificate and Counselling letter.
Submitting a claim for mitigating circumstances \(\text{cont}\)

Evidence that could be included:

- If an examination or an assessment performance is affected for medical reasons then you should seek medication on the day/as soon as possible and attach a Medical Certificate/Doctors letter to your form.

- If undergoing treatment for any issue that may be affecting your studies, you should attach a supporting letter from the University/private counselling service that you are accessing.

- If you have been involved in an incident concerning the police, a police report including reference number should be attached.

If the evidence is highly confidential, details should be submitted in a sealed envelope attached to the standard form, together with the supporting documentary evidence.

You need to make sure you include all relevant evidence and information with your form as the University is very unlikely to ask for any further information or to ask for further evidence/information.

However if you are unable to submit the evidence by the deadline submit your form and explain that the evidence will follow and detail why it is delayed.
Will my on-going issue be considered?

On-going issues may not be considered as mitigating circumstances as they should be ‘unforeseeable.' However an on-going issue that increases in severity or fluctuates may be considered as mitigation.

If the on-going issue is health related the Disability Support Office may be able to provide you with invaluable support.

You may also find an interruption of your studies is the best option, speak to your Academic Adviser before you make any decision and meet with an advisor at the University of Manchester Students’ Union to discuss the possible financial implications of this.

What happens next?

Your claim will then be considered by a Mitigating Circumstances Panel (these meet at the end of the semester or monthly depending on your school) who will decide whether your case constitutes mitigation, the severity of the mitigation and to determine if they had an effect on the assessment. The Panel will inform the Board of Examiners of the outcome, they will decide and apply a recommendation.
What could happen if my claim is successful?

If your claim is successful there are a number of possible outcomes that the board may consider appropriate:

- They may offer a first assessment opportunity e.g. a re-sit without a cap.
- They may offer one final re-sit opportunity.
- If there are no further reassessment opportunities available the board will consider whether there is enough evidence to award a percentage mark (if at least half of the assessment has been completed) or a pass (if less than half of the assessment has been completed).
- If the board cannot judge as above and award a percentage or pass mark, they may apply general mitigation to the overall performance and, although they cannot award a mark, they will flag this for future boards to take into consideration when awarding the degree (e.g. if, as a result of the general mitigation a student’s marks are on the borderline, the board will allow for the reduction in marks when assessing the overall average).

In some programmes of study, discipline-specific or professional requirements may mean that the options available to the Board for dealing with mitigation are very restricted e.g. permission to re-sit an examination or to re-submit a piece of assessed coursework. In such instances students must be informed clearly and unambiguously in the relevant Programme Handbook.

What if my mitigating circumstances are refused?

Students have no right of appeal against the decision of a Mitigating Circumstances Panel, although they can appeal under the Academic Appeals process once the Board has made a decision (Regulation XIX) if they fit the grounds. Please see the section of this booklet on appeals.
What can the advice service do to help?

The advice service can discuss your circumstances with you in confidence either in person, over the telephone or via email using the contacts on the back of this booklet. An Advisor can review the draft statement that you prepare, give advice on gathering your supporting evidence and support you through the process.

If you have missed the deadline for submitting Mitigating Circumstances but feel that your assessments were severely compromised, you still have the opportunity to appeal (*please see the chapter on Academic Appeals*), however; you must be able to fully explain why you have been unable to submit mitigating circumstances before this time.

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**Important links**

**Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedure**
http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=4271

**Mitigating Circumstances Form and Guidance for Students**
http://www.tlso.manchester.ac.uk/map/teachinglearningassessment/assessment/sectionc-reachingdecisionsfromassessment/mitigatingcircumstancesguidanceforstudents/mitigatingcircumstancesform/

**Faculty Offices contact details**
http://www.studentnet.manchester.ac.uk/crucial-guide/academic-life/formal-procedures/contacts/

http://www.tlso.manchester.ac.uk/map/teachinglearningassessment/assessment/sectionc-reachingdecisionsfromassessment/mitigatingcircumstancesguidanceforstudents/

http://www.tlso.manchester.ac.uk/map/teachinglearningassessment/assessment/sectionc-reachingdecisionsfromassessment/policyonmitigatingcircumstances/
RECEIVE

Free, Independent & Confidential Advice

Academic • Housing • Finance • Wellbeing

We are here Monday–Friday

Located on the ground floor of the Students Union Building 10 AM until 4 PM

Drop in, make an appointment by emailing advice.su@manchester.ac.uk or call 0161 275 2952

manchesterstudentsunion.com/advice-service