Policy on Mitigating Circumstances and Extension Requests

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Effective from September 2025

Read this if you are an undergraduate or postgraduate taught student needing guidance on how to request mitigation or extensions when unforeseen events impact academic performance—or if you're an academic or professional services staff member responsible for processing these requests.

This policy clearly outlines responsibilities, submission deadlines, acceptable grounds for requesting mitigation and extensions, and available support to ensure fair and timely management of such requests.

Table of Contents

Definitions 2

Key terms 2

Acronyms 2

1.0 Introduction 2

1.1 Purpose 2

1.2 Scope 3

1.3 Applicability 3

2.0 General Principles 3

2.1 Responsibilities of the Student 3

2.2 Responsibilities of the School 4

3.0 Grounds for Mitigation 5

4.0 Sources of Support and Advice 7

5.0 Monitoring Compliance 7

Definitions

Key terms

Assessment Period: the set time during which students' examinations and coursework usually take place.

Coursework: any summative assessment which is not a formal timetabled examination.

Examinations: any formal timetabled examination which is usually held in the end of semester/end of unit, examination period.

Extension: extra time granted to complete summative coursework, final year project or dissertation. This is in response to a one-off/isolated incident relating to health or other personal circumstances or an exacerbation of an existing medical or health condition.

Mitigating Circumstances: unforeseeable or unpreventable circumstances that 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.

Acronyms

DASS – Disability Advisory and Support Service

The Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

1.1.1 During their studies, students may experience significant events or a one-off isolated incident, which negatively affect their ability to submit work, attend an assessment or perform to their usual standard.

1.1.2 If significant events or a one-off isolated incident usually related to student's health,

individual circumstances or personal issues, are unforeseeable and unpreventable, they can apply for mitigating circumstances and extensions.

1.1.3 The aim of accepting and applying mitigation is to reduce the negative effects on a student's academic outcomes.

1.1.4 This Policy sets out the University's arrangements for considering requests for mitigation. It includes requests for extensions to pieces of coursework as well as requests for mitigation for other forms of assessment, such as examinations.

1.1.5 This 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.

1.2 Scope

1.2.1 This Policy should be read alongside the Mitigating Circumstances Procedure and the Extensions Procedure.

1.3 Applicability

1.3.1 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.

2.0 General Principles

2.1 Responsibilities of the Student

2.1.1 Students are responsible for submitting their own requests for mitigating circumstances or extensions, unless a significant event prevents them from doing so, and on those occasions a third party may submit on their behalf.

2.1.2 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 (see Section 4 'Sources of support and advice'). See 3.0.4 regarding longstanding and chronic health conditions.

2.1.3 Students must submit an extension request by the coursework deadline. If a student needs to apply for an extension after this deadline has passed, they must instead submit a mitigating circumstances request, along with supporting evidence.

2.1.4 Students must submit a request for mitigating circumstances at the earliest opportunity, and by the following deadlines:

- For examinations: the School's published end-of-semester deadline (which is generally set seven calendar days after the end of the assessment period). Any application submitted after this deadline will be classed as late and will not be considered without a strong and acceptable reason as to why the circumstances were not, or could not, have been notified before this date.

- For coursework: seven calendar days after the submission deadline of the affected coursework. Any application submitted after this deadline will be classed as late and will not be considered without a strong and acceptable reason as to why the circumstances were not, or could not, have been notified before this date.

2.2 Responsibilities of the School

2.2.1 Schools must publicise their deadlines for submission of requests for mitigating circumstances 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.

2.2.2 Schools have a duty to develop a holistic view of a student's circumstances in order to appropriately inform them of the support available to them. They should ensure students have a realistic understanding of the different options available to deal with a request for mitigation, and how to submit such requests.

2.2.3 Requests for mitigation must be processed formally and considered impartially. Schools must properly document each case for reporting purposes. 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 Procedure provides further guidance on this.

2.2.4 Schools must inform students of whether their application has been accepted or rejected, as soon as possible after a decision has been made.

3.0 Grounds for Mitigation

3.0.1 Possible grounds for mitigation include (but are not limited to):

a) Health Issues:

- illness or injury; or worsening of an ongoing illness or disability, including mental health conditions; (see the Disability Advisory and Support Service (DASS) website for examples of disabilities;

b) 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;

c) IT related Issues:

- some IT issues such as a network or hardware fault at the point of submission (see Guidance for Schools on mitigating circumstances related to IT Issues and information for students on help with assessment issues (including IT matters);

d) Public Service:

- absence from the University for public service, for example, jury service.

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

a) 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 (see the University's Policy on Religious Observance for more information);
- consequences of paid employment (except in some special cases for part-time and/or Online and Blended Learning students);

b) 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;

c) Issues during examinations:

- examination stress 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).

3.0.3 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 Student Support & Wellbeing Team as soon as possible. (see the University's Student Pregnancy, Maternity and New Parent Policy).

3.0.4 Students with longstanding and chronic health conditions that they can foresee will affect their assessments, should already be supported by DASS. If a student's situation changes, they are expected to liaise with their DASS Advisor to ensure appropriate adjustments are made to their support plan which provides mitigation for their condition. Making such arrangements is advised to avoid the need to submit repeated mitigating circumstances applications.

4.0 Sources of Support and Advice

4.0.1 The following areas of the University can be contacted for support and advice relating to mitigation:

a) The University Counselling and Mental Health Service - http://www.counsellingservice.manchester.ac.uk/
b) 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).
c) Disability Advisory and Support Service - http://www.dso.manchester.ac.uk/
d) Occupational Health Service - http://www.occhealth.manchester.ac.uk/
e) Students' Union Advice Service - http://manchesterstudentsunion.com/advice
f) Students' own programme or School Hub – 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 Hubs
g) Report & Support https://www.reportandsupport.manchester.ac.uk/

5.0 Monitoring Compliance

5.0.1 Adherence to this document is expected and should be monitored by Heads of Schools (or their delegates) as part of a wider quality assurance process which supports the Annual Academic Assurance Process including, Schools, Faculties, Teaching and Learning Strategy Group, the Academic Quality Sub-Committee for Teaching, Learning and Students, and Senate.

Version amendment history box and Document control box

Document Control Box	
Policy / Procedure title	**Policy on Mitigating Circumstances and Coursework Extensions**
Date approved	June 2025
Approving Body	Senate / Academic Standards and Quality Committee (Teaching, Learning and Students)
Implementation date:	September 2025
Version	2.1 June 2025
Supersedes	June 2023 version of the Policy on Mitigating Circumstances

Previous review dates	June 2023, June 2017, June 2015, June 2014, June 2009, February 2009, April 2006
Related information	• 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 *For any queries or questions relating to this document, please direct your email to teaching-policy@manchester.ac.uk*

Version amendment history: Policy on Mitigating Circumstances and Coursework Extensions		
Version	**Date**	**Reason for change**
2.1	June 2025	**Updates made to the policy following a review of the Policy and related Procedures on Mitigating Circumstances** Including: • Changes to wording and clarification of existing wording to promote consistency and support the design of the technical solution. • Significant revisions to evidentiary requirements in light of the Bristol V Abrahart case.
2.0	June 2023	**Updates made to the policy following a review of the Policy and related Procedures on Mitigating Circumstances** Including: • 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	**Updates between June 2017 – October 2022 versions** Updates November/December 2020: • 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 Update January 2021: • Reference to the new Assessment Pledge in the notes at top of the Policy. Update February 2021: • Reference to higher apprenticeships added to the scope section Update October 2021: • Note added to top of document regarding arrangements under the Assessment Commitments 2021/22 Update July 2022: • Update to document control box re Division name and contact details Update October 2022: • Reference to the Assessment Commitments removed from the note at the top of the page and statement amended to read: "*For specific arrangements for Mitigating Circumstances during 2022/23, please see:* 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/*"

10