

Guidance on Mitigating Circumstances related to IT Issues

Updated guidance for the 2023/24 academic year

During the COVID-19 pandemic and the move to more flexible, blended learning, temporary arrangements were put in place to consider unexpected and unavoidable computer/IT issues as a possible ground for mitigation.

For the 2023/24 academic year, IT issues are still being accepted as a possible ground for mitigation, with each request for mitigation being considered on a case-by-case basis.

The following guidance is intended to assist Schools in identifying evidence that may be considered in IT-related mitigation cases.

- Any student who is experiencing technical problems in accessing online content or assessment should initially contact their School and can be directed to the following resources:
 - The Cost of [Living Support Fund web page](#). There is support available for low-income students who have no other financial means to replace IT equipment or do not have access to Wi-Fi facilities, to help them engage with online learning and study materials.
 - If students are experiencing problems connecting to the network there is advice available at the [Help Me Get Online web page](#).
 - The [Help with exam and assessment issues support webpage](#). This page provides technical support and advice.
 - General advice and guidance to students on mitigating circumstances and extension requests can be found on the [Student Support website](#).
- If a student is informed by their IT Service provider, power company, etc. of maintenance or other scheduled downtime that will coincide with assessment submission dates, they should contact their Schools immediately so that alternative arrangements can be made. In such cases, copies of correspondence from the service provider or utility company may be requested.
- If a student has continuous/multiple IT issues (e.g. regular disruption of their internet provision), they should contact their School at the earliest convenience to discuss.
- If a student experiences a network or hardware fault at the point of submission, they should take a screenshot or photograph any error message (this is preferable to a video of the issue). They should then submit their assignment as soon as possible once the fault is resolved and send a copy of the captured error message to the School for consideration.
 - In such cases, students should be informed not to re-save their documents after the submission deadline has passed. Even if the submission is late, the document header can be interrogated to see if it was last saved before or after the deadline. Faculty eLearning teams can assist in retrieving document header information.
 - Faculty eLearning Teams can also provide records of a student's Blackboard usage immediately prior to submission to confirm whether or not they were logged on.

- In the case of a catastrophic failure that prevents the recovery of work intended for submission (e.g. a failed hard drive), it may be necessary to offer the student an alternative assessment. For this reason, students should be recommended to use cloud-based storage services and save their work regularly.
- Staff and students might wish to consider submitting part completed work prior to the deadline so that there is some record of achievement should there be an IT failure – this is not a requirement but is good practice and would provide evidence of work completed.
- Students are reminded to make regular backups of the work they are undertaking to minimise the impact of any IT failure – preferably to remote storage; failure to back up work regularly and leaving completion or submission of work so late that students cannot find another suitable computer or printer to complete/submit their work, would not normally be accepted as grounds for mitigation.
- Students who have opted to study remotely from outside of the UK will have been informed of the relevant IT requirements to enable them to successfully undertake their required work and study.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the University's [Policy on Mitigating Circumstances](#) and the [latest advice on mitigating circumstances](#).

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