

## MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES ADVICE SHEET FOR STUDENTS 2023-24

September 2023

Please read the guidance for students here: <https://www.studentsupport.manchester.ac.uk/study-support/mitigating-circumstances/> before you make your application.

If you have any questions, please contact the [Student Support & Wellbeing Team](#) for advice via email to: [salc.mitcircs@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:salc.mitcircs@manchester.ac.uk)

### What are 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:

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.

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

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);

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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)

**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 DASS. **Please note that if you have requested an extension, unless your circumstances prevent you from doing so, you should continue working on your assessment, and if possible submit it, while you wait for the decision of the Committee**. When considering your application the Committee may check on your engagement with any support you have been offered by DASS. If support is available but you have chosen not to engage with it, 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 may need to provide supporting evidence (see below for details).

**Automatic 7 day extensions 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. Your Programme Administrator will already have been advised of this, and it will not be necessary for you to submit an application for mitigating circumstances if you are able to submit your work within 7 days of the original deadline. If the circumstances directly relating to your disability mean that you will need additional time beyond the automatic extension of 7 days, you must submit an application for mitigating circumstances. 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?**

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You should submit your mitigating circumstances application **at least 48 hours before** your assessment deadline or examination date. **The Mitigating Circumstances Committee will not normally accept applications submitted more than a week 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 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 2023-24	
Semester 1:	Wednesday 31 <sup>st</sup> January 2024
Semester 2:	Monday 10 <sup>th</sup> June 2024
August examination period:	Monday 2 <sup>nd</sup> September 2024

### Deadline extension requests

**Please note that if you have requested an extension, unless your circumstances prevent you from doing so, you should continue working on your assessment, and if possible submit it, while you wait for the decision of the Committee.** Awaiting the decision on the outcome of your application cannot be used as a reason for not submitting coursework if your circumstances permit you to do so (e.g. you have recovered from a short-term illness). Every application is considered individually, however you should bear in mind that a coursework extension is likely to be for a period of 1-2 weeks from the original deadline date, depending on the nature and severity of your circumstances. For this reason it is very important that you continue to work on your assessment(s) after the original deadline has passed, if you are able to do so. Please note that the Student Support & Wellbeing Team do not advise submitting unfinished work while awaiting the outcome of a mitigating circumstances application, as resubmissions cannot always be permitted. If you have submitted unfinished work, please inform the Student Support & Wellbeing Team as soon as possible.

Academic and administrative staff are here to help you. We understand that students may be reluctant to discuss personal problems, but please bear in mind that whatever you disclose to us will be treated sensitively. For this reason, not informing the University of circumstances due to personal feelings, e.g. shame, embarrassment and pride, or having concerns over the confidential treatment of requests for mitigation, are not considered to be credible and compelling explanations as to why the circumstances could not be disclosed at the appropriate time.

If you consider that you are too unwell to engage with the Mitigating Circumstances process, we would recommend that you consider taking an interruption to your studies. You can find out more about interruptions here: <http://www.regulations.manchester.ac.uk/guidance-on-interruptions/>. If you have any questions about interrupting your studies please email [salc.wellbeing@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:salc.wellbeing@manchester.ac.uk).

### How do I submit a Mitigating Circumstances application?

The online application form is available here: <https://livemanchester.ac.sharepoint.com/sites/UoM-SALC-STUDENT-COMM/SitePages/Mitigating-Circumstances.aspx>. Some Schools use a hardcopy paper application form but we are unable to accept these and you must complete the online application in order for your case to be considered. Once your application is received, we will contact you to confirm receipt, at this stage we may offer you further support (e.g. Counselling Service, DASS).

You should submit the online Mitigating Circumstances form and supporting evidence (if required) **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 one week** after the submission deadline or date of examination.

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### Difficulties completing the application form

If you have any problems completing the online application (e.g. due to a hand injury), we recommend that you seek assistance from the Students' Union Advice Service: <https://manchesterstudentsunion.com/advice> who may be able to help you to complete the online form. Alternatively, the SALC Student Support and Wellbeing Team can help you with this, so please contact us for further guidance <https://www.alc.manchester.ac.uk/connect/contact-us/>.

### Group Assessments

If you are submitting an application that relates to a group assessment (e.g. group presentation or performance), please note that each member of the group must submit their own individual application. If your ill health is affecting your ability to participate in group work we would also recommend informing your Course Unit Director as soon as possible.

**Please note that applications will no 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 as needed throughout the year. In some cases up to date evidence may 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. If your ill health long-term and has affected or will affect you for 12 months or more, we would advise registering with DASS for support. Once you are DASS registered, you will still be required to provide up to date applications, but you will not need to provide new documentation for an ongoing condition.

### Do I need to submit supporting evidence?

When you are applying for long extension, an extension after the deadline has passed or the opportunity to complete a first attempt of an exam, your application **must** be supported by independent third party evidence (for DASS registered students if your circumstances relate directly to your disability, you may not need to provide supporting documentation, but will be required to provide a detailed explanation, as noted above). The nature of this documentation will vary according to the nature of the circumstances; it must be sufficiently independent, relate to the relevant time period and confirm 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 evidence you should provide are below:

Circumstances relate to:	Suggested evidence - provide one of the following:
Short-term illness, injury or mental health condition (affecting you up to 7 days prior to a submission deadline/examination)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extracts from your medical notes which you can request from your GP practice</li> <li>• Copy of prescription</li> <li>• Photo of name label on prescribed medication</li> <li>• Photo of labelled positive COVID-19 test results (if you have been unable to access a test, please explain this on your application)</li> <li>• Appointment cards from medical unit or hospital admissions letter</li> <li>• Confirmation text of medical appointment</li> </ul>
Long-term/significant illness, injury or mental health condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extracts from your medical notes which you can request from your GP practice</li> <li>• Copy of prescription</li> <li>• Photo of name label on prescribed medication</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photo of labelled positive COVID-19 test results (if you have been unable to access a test, please explain this on your application)</li> <li>• Appointment cards from medical unit or hospital admissions letter</li> <li>• Confirmation text of medical appointment</li> <li>• Internal confirmation of existing engagement with Counselling / DASS / Advice and Response service</li> <li>• Letter from your GP or other medical professional</li> </ul>
Family crises or major financial problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• letter or email from a close family member of yours confirming the circumstances affecting you and your studies</li> <li>• copy of appropriate financial records</li> </ul>
Absence for jury service or maternity, paternity or adoption leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• letter confirming summons for jury service</li> <li>• MAT B certificate or relevant correspondence confirming pregnancy/birth/adoption</li> </ul>
The death or critical/significant illness of a close family member/dependant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• letter or email from a close family member of yours confirming the circumstances affecting you and your studies</li> <li>• copy of the order of service from the funeral (this should only be provided if you wish to do so)</li> <li>• copy of the death certificate (this should only be provided if you wish to do so)</li> </ul>
IT issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• screenshot or photograph of the IT issue (e.g. error message)</li> <li>• copy of information from your service provider</li> <li>• copy of repair of equipment receipt</li> </ul> <p>Please note you are expected to make regular backups of any academic assessments to remote storage to prevent loss of work.</p>
Burglary or other crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• letter or email from the Police which includes confirmation of the nature of the crime and the date and time it took place (a crime reference number alone is not sufficient as it does not provide the Committee with any information about the crime)</li> <li>• Police or insurance report</li> <li>• Press or media report</li> <li>• Security report</li> </ul>

If you are unsure about the type of evidence to provide, please contact the Student Support & Wellbeing Team ([salc.mitcircs@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:salc.mitcircs@manchester.ac.uk)) for further advice. Please note that you do not need to provide an original copy of your supporting documentation, a photograph or a scanned copy can be emailed to [salc.mitcircs@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:salc.mitcircs@manchester.ac.uk).

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If supporting evidence is required and has not been provided within 2 weeks 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.

### GP 'Fit notes'

Please note that if your GP, or other medical professional, indicates that you are not fit to study (due to illness or injury), it will not be possible for the School to consider providing deadline extensions during the period that you have been 'signed off'. In addition, all students must meet attendance requirements. For these reasons, it may be necessary therefore for the School to recommend that you interrupt your studies (please see 'Fitness to Study' section below).

### What happens next?

When appropriate supporting evidence has been submitted and your application is complete, your case will be considered at a meeting of the Mitigating Circumstances 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 required). The Committee may decide that they do not have enough information from you, in which case we will contact you by email to ask for further details.

### If my application is accepted how will mitigation be applied?

Mitigation can be applied in the following ways:

#### *Late submission of coursework:*

[You should aim to submit outstanding coursework at the earliest opportunity.](#) Any coursework submitted after the submission deadline will be subject to the penalties outlined in the [Guidance on late submissions](#). If you have valid mitigating circumstances to explain the late submission and the Committee accept that your circumstances warranted the length of time you took to submit the work, then it will be the recommendation of the Committee that the penalty is waived and your full marks are reinstated. Please ensure that you inform the Student Support & Wellbeing Team if you submit your work while awaiting the outcome of your mitigating circumstances application. If your application for mitigating circumstances is not accepted by the Committee (i.e. rejected), then late penalties will be imposed. It is therefore in your interest to minimise the number of days that your work is submitted late. If you have not yet submitted your work, and your case is accepted, the Committee will confirm an appropriate date for submission in accordance with the circumstances you have presented.

#### *In the case of your performance being affected:*

If you submitted or took the assessment on time, but were significantly affected, the Mitigating Circumstances Committee will recommend to the Board of Examiners that you are offered a first attempt of the assessment. **You will be required to confirm that you wish to take it by contacting your Programme Administrator. If you do not confirm, you will not be entered for the examination/assessment.** You should also bear in mind that if you take this opportunity the new mark will stand, even if it is lower than your original mark.

**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.

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### *Missed examinations or non-submission of coursework:*

If you have been unable to submit a piece of coursework and a revised submission date could not be given, or missed an examination, the Committee will recommend to the Board of Examiners that you be given another opportunity to submit or sit the assessment; this will be classed as a 'first sit'.

In the case of a missed examination, this will normally be rescheduled for the August examination period. All students must make themselves available for first sit or resit examinations in August, these examinations cannot be scheduled at another time unless there are further accepted mitigating circumstances (in August).

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

Please note that students cannot progress to the next academic level carrying more than 20 credits from the previous level. If you have not completed more than 20 credits of your academic load by the end of any one level, then you will be expected to take a period out of your studies (known as 'resit without attendance') for one academic year and complete the outstanding assessment before progressing to the next level of your degree programme.

### **Fitness to Study**

If the Committee has concerns about your fitness to study due to health issues described in your application for mitigating circumstances, it is likely to recommend that you consider taking an interruption of study. The Committee may consider that this is in your best interest, so that you can focus on your health and wellbeing and return to your studies when you are well enough to do so. You can find information about the implications of interrupting your studies here: <http://www.studentsupport.manchester.ac.uk/study-support/interruption-or-withdrawal/>. If an interruption of study is recommended and you choose not to go ahead, the School may refer your case to its Fitness to Study Panel.

### **Students going on a period of Residence Abroad**

If your application for mitigating circumstances is accepted you may be given the opportunity to take a first sit of an examination/first submission of an assessment in the August examination period. If you can provide proof that your approved Residence Abroad activity will commence prior to the start of the August examination period, it may be possible to provide an alternative assessment so that you are not required to be present in Manchester. Please note that, if your Residence Abroad starts earlier than the August examination period, it is your responsibility to notify your Programme Administrator so that arrangements can be put in place.

### **How will I find out the result of my application?**

You can normally expect to receive confirmation of the Committee's recommendation to your student email address within 5 working days. If we have not received supporting evidence from you when the Committee considers your application, the outcome is likely to be dependent upon you providing appropriate evidence by the stated deadline. Please note that we do not send confirmation to other (i.e. personal) email addresses. **If you have requested an extension for coursework, unless your circumstances prevent you from doing so, you should continue working on your assessment, and if possible submit it, while you wait for the decision of the Committee.**

### **Appeal**

The recommendation of the Committee is provisional and is reviewed by the Board of Examiners at their meeting in June/September. Therefore all marks are provisional until the Final Examinations Board. 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 results have been published.

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### What happens if I did not submit an application for Mitigating Circumstances at the time I was affected?

Requests made after the publication of results will be treated as appeals under Regulation XIX, but again there should be a credible and compelling explanation as to why you did not bring the circumstances to the attention of the School at an earlier stage.

### What support might I be offered after submitting a mitigating circumstances application?

The Student Support & Wellbeing Team can help you to access the relevant support services within the University. If you have disclosed personal/medical circumstances on your application, the Student Support & Wellbeing Team may contact you and ask for your permission to complete a referral to the relevant University support service (e.g. DASS, Occupational Health) and/or signpost you to the [University Counselling Service](#) for support.

We also recommend that you speak to your Academic Advisor if you are experiencing ongoing problems so that they can offer support. You can find the email addresses for members of staff here: <http://directory.manchester.ac.uk/>.

#### Other useful contacts:

University Counselling Service	Tel: 0161 275 2864	Email: <a href="mailto:counselling.service@manchester.ac.uk">counselling.service@manchester.ac.uk</a>
Disability Advisory and Support Service	Tel: 0161 275 7512	Email: <a href="mailto:dass@manchester.ac.uk">dass@manchester.ac.uk</a>
Students' Union Advice Centre	Tel: 0161 275 2952	Email: <a href="mailto:advice.su@manchester.ac.uk">advice.su@manchester.ac.uk</a>