



The University of Manchester

School of Arts, Languages and Cultures

Mitigating circumstances guidance for Examination Boards

SECTION A

University Mitigating Circumstances Policy: <http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=4271>

Grounds for mitigation are **unforeseeable** or **unpreventable** circumstances that could have **a significant adverse effect** on the academic performance of a student. Possible mitigating circumstances include:

- Significant illness or injury; or worsening of an ongoing illness or disability, including mental health conditions; (please see the following DASS webpage for examples of disabilities: <http://www.dso.manchester.ac.uk/who-do-we-support/current-students/>)
- The death or critical/significant illness of a close family member/dependant
- Significant family crises or major financial problems leading to acute stress
- Absence from the University for public service, for example, jury service

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

- Holidays, moving house and events that were planned or could reasonably have been expected;
- Assessments that are scheduled close together
- Misreading the timetable or misunderstanding the requirements for assessments
- Inadequate planning and time management
- Failure, 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
- The act of religious observance
- Consequences of paid employment (except in some special cases for part-time students)
- 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 recorded by the invigilators

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.

SECTION B

In accordance with the new University policy a mitigating circumstances application may be classified as follows:

ACCEPTED Mitigating Circumstances	
A	Accepted - circumstances meet the grounds for mitigation and the Mitigating Circumstances Panel is satisfied with the supporting evidence. A recommendation based on the severity of the impairment suffered by the student is indicated by the alpha-numeric codes described under Applying Mitigation.
PA	Provisionally accepted – student has referred to difficulties in obtaining evidence, but based on the description of the circumstances the request is approved pending the evidence being provided (submission date must be before the Examination Board in which the mitigation is considered). A recommendation based on the severity of the impairment suffered by the student is indicated by the alpha-numeric codes described in under Applying Mitigation but it would not be applied if the requested evidence is not presented to support the claim. <i><u>In SALC we will normally only use Provisionally Accepted in rare cases where the circumstances are severe, a decision is needed quickly to reassure the student and the evidence will be forthcoming shortly.</u></i>

REJECTED Mitigating Circumstances	
The following codes indicate when Mitigating Circumstances are not accepted by Mitigating Circumstances Panels, with the codes being helpful as part of the process of providing feedback to students.	
N	Not accepted – circumstances provided by the student are not regarded as grounds for mitigation under the Policy on Mitigating Circumstances
N1	Not accepted - supporting evidence does not cover the relevant period.
N2	Not accepted - supporting evidence not supplied by an appropriate source.
N3	Not accepted - evidence is deemed insufficient to support the student's claim of seriousness of impact on their assessment performance.
N4	Not accepted - wording of evidence supplied does not support the student's claim e.g. the material does not provide a medical diagnosis.
N5	Not accepted – no evidence is provided, and the student has not given any explanation as to the reasons why nor indicated when evidence could be available.
N6	Not accepted - the evidence relates to a chronic condition which the student is already in receipt of support from the Disability Advisory and Support Service (DASS). This does not include instances where the student has an acute flare up of a pre-existing condition which may be accepted if properly evidenced. This decision should always be confirmed by the DASS, as there are occasions when the support available will not be able to fully mitigate the student's need.
N7	Not accepted - evidence relates to a condition or circumstance previously used to claim mitigation where the Panel, on the earlier occasion, instructed the student that this mitigation could not be used again and may have instructed the student to obtain support from the Disability Advisory and Support Service (DASS). This decision should always be confirmed by DASS as some conditions will inevitably recur, sometimes without warning and mitigation may still be relevant.
N8	Not accepted – the request for mitigation was submitted after the School's published deadline and the student has not provided any credible or compelling reason for the delayed submission.
N9	Not accepted – other stated reason. [A note of explanation will be recorded.]

ACCEPTED Mitigating Circumstances and ACTIONS required

Coursework (including dissertations)	
<p>C1 Mit circs recommendation</p>	<p>Coursework to be submitted as a first attempt (deferral) in the next possible reassessment period appropriate to the programme.</p> <p><u>First Attempt Required</u> <i>If the student has not submitted the coursework (and has not been granted a revised submission deadline already) the coursework should be set as a first attempt in the next possible assessment period. This will usually be the August resit period.</i> <i>If the student has submitted the coursework but considers they were significantly affected, a first attempt will be recommended. If the student considers they have significantly underperformed, they may opt to take the first attempt. This will usually be in the August resit period.</i></p>
<p>C2 Exam Board to action</p>	<p>Coursework to be submitted as a reassessment (referral) in the next possible reassessment period appropriate to the programme.</p> <p><u>September Board Only</u> <i>C2 is intended for September Board outcomes where a student may be granted an opportunity to resit (following a first attempt in August). In this case a student will be noted as PCFL and normally they will be enrolled for the same unit again in the following academic year. This will be done by the Exam Board Secretary following the Board.</i></p>
<p>C3 Mit circs recommendation</p>	<p>A reasonable extension to coursework to be granted within an assessment period (new deadline will need to be stated) or the removal of any late submission penalties imposed. If the work has already been submitted prior to the Committee reviewing the application, any penalties applied for late submission will be waived.</p>
<p>C4 Mit Circs recommendation</p>	<p>Exclude the coursework assessment mark(s) from the calculation of the unit average if the coursework constitutes 30% or less of the unit assessment.</p> <p><i>If the coursework is worth 30% or less and is deemed 'omittable', the Mitigating Circumstances Committee may recommend that the coursework is omitted from the unit. Omissions will be actioned on the student system prior to the Exam Board by Programme Administrators only if the omission does not disadvantage the student. Unit marks before and after omission will be included on the exam grid. The Exam Board will need to double check that this action will not disadvantage the student and ratify this decision.</i></p>
<p>C5 Mit circs recommendation</p>	<p>Student to sit paper copy version of the eLearning assessment at a date set by the Mitigating Circumstances Panel.</p> <p><i>In SALC it is unlikely that we will use this option.</i></p>
<p>C6 Exam Board to action</p>	<p>Student to sit using an alternative assessment method, to be agreed with the unit co-ordinator, either as a referral or deferral, but the assessment must meet the same intended learning outcomes (ILOs) as the original.</p> <p><i>In SALC this will usually mean another opportunity to take the assessment again as a first attempt, in the same format.</i></p>
<p>C7 Exam Board to action</p>	<p>If reassessment is not practicable, exclude the coursework assessment mark(s) from the calculation of the unit average if the coursework constitutes 30% or less of the unit assessment.</p> <p><i>In SALC it is unlikely that we will use this option.</i></p>

ACCEPTED Mitigating Circumstances and ACTIONS required

Assessments (Any summative assessment that is not coursework e.g. Examinations (including oral/aural examinations), presentations, in-class/online tests etc.)	
A1 Mit circs recommendation	<p>If affected assessment(s) have been passed at first attempt, but the student has significantly underperformed in relation to other assessments, the assessment(s) may be taken as a first attempt (deferral) in the next possible assessment period.</p> <p><i><u>Examination attended - first attempt required</u></i> <i>If the student sat the examination and their circumstances are accepted, a first attempt will be recommended. If the student considers they have significantly underperformed, they may opt to take the first attempt. This will usually be in the August resit period.</i></p>
A2 Mit circs recommendation	<p>If affected reassessment(s) have been passed, but the student has significantly underperformed in relation to other assessments, the assessment(s) may be taken as a reassessment (referral) in the next possible assessment period.</p> <p><i>A2 is intended for September Board outcomes where a student may be granted an opportunity to resit (following a first attempt in August) or in cases where a student is required to complete a referred (resit) assessment in August, which is subsequently affected by mitigating circumstances. In this case a student will be noted as PCFL and normally they will be enrolled for the same unit again in the following academic year. This will be done by the Exam Board Secretary following the Board.</i></p>
A3 Exam Board to action	<p>If affected assessment(s) or reassessment(s) have been passed, the results of the affected assessments may be excluded from the degree classification calculation if there is evidence of underperformance compared to unaffected assessments/units.</p> <p><i><u>Final Year students only</u></i> <i>This recommendation applies to individual component marks, which may have been affected by mitigating circumstances</i></p>
A4 Mit circs recommendation	<p>If assessment(s) have been failed or missed, they may be taken as a first attempt (deferral) in the next possible reassessment period.</p> <p><i><u>Examination missed – first attempt or omit</u></i> <i>If the student has missed an examination (or an assessment that is not coursework), the Mitigating Circumstances Committee will normally offer a first attempt (deferral) in August. The Mitigating Circumstances Committee may recommend that an assessment is excluded (omitted) if the component is worth 30% or less of the overall assessment for the unit, providing the learning outcomes of the course have been met.</i></p>
A5 Mit circs recommendation	<p>If reassessment(s) have been failed or missed, they may be taken as a reassessment (referral) in the next possible reassessment period. (When making this recommendation, the Mitigating Circumstances Panel/Exam Board should consider the required workload.)</p> <p><i>A5 is intended for September Board outcomes where a student may be granted an opportunity to resit (following a first attempt in August) or in cases where a student is required to complete a referred (resit) assessment in August, which is subsequently affected by mitigating circumstances. In this case a student will be noted as PCFL and normally they will be enrolled for the same unit again in the following academic year. This will be done by the Exam Board Secretary following the Board.</i></p>

<p>A6 Exam Board to action</p>	<p>In exceptional circumstances, only if it is determined that more evidence (e.g., other assessment results) is required to conduct a result comparison, it could be recommended that the mitigation is carried forward to be evaluated in a future year/Examination Board.</p> <p><u>For Second Year students only</u> Flag potentially affected L2CM (Level 2 year mark) for Classification in Final Year <i>In SALC this will be reflected by a list at the end of the minutes from the Board of Examiners meeting, containing all Year 2 students who have been flagged as having, one semester or the full year potentially affected by mitigating circumstances. The Board should minute any student whose second year average mark (L2CM) appears to be out of line and should be reviewed again at classification. It will be the responsibility of the Assessment Coordinator and the Examination Board Secretary to ensure that this list is available and reviewed.</i></p>		
<p>A7 Exam Board to action</p>	<p>Where there is sufficient evidence of attainment, exclude the assessment mark(s) from the calculation of the unit average if the assessment(s) for which mitigation applies does not exceed 50% of the unit assessment.</p> <p><i>In SALC this recommendation would only be used in exceptional circumstances, and only if it is deemed that the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) for the course have been met. For example, if a student has been confirmed as medically unfit to complete any further reassessment.</i></p>		
<p>A8 Exam Board to action</p>	<p>If there is evidence of underperformance compared to unaffected units, disregard the affected unit(s) from the degree classification calculation (to a limit of 45 credits for the academic year).</p> <p><u>For Final Year students only:</u> Disregard Affected Assessment from Classification <u>This action should only be taken in exceptional cases, for example if the student is unable to return to complete first attempts of affected assessments for serious health reasons.</u> If this action is taken the decision should be fully minuted to state that the classification has been calculated without the affected course unit(s).</p> <p><i>In SALC the limit will be <u>40 credits</u> for the academic year.</i></p>		
<p>A9 Exam Board to action</p>	<p>Extend the limit of the boundary zone for students falling between degree classifications to a maximum of 2%. The Mitigating Circumstances Panel will determine the extent of this depending on their assessment of evidence relating to severity, duration, timing and impact of the mitigating circumstances.</p> <p><u>For Final Year students only:</u> Please note that students must have met the requirement of having 80 credits in the higher class in order for the boundary zone to be extended.</p> <p><i>In SALC the Board of Examiners will be provided with one of the following recommendations, which potentially applies to all assessments within an affected semester or affected academic year:</i></p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td> <p>A9.a Sem1 or Sem 2 only affected</p> </td> <td> <p><u>For Final Year students only:</u> <i>In SALC the Board of Examiners will normally use discretion to look across component marks for the whole affected semester. This will be indicated on the final mitigating circumstances report that is produced for the Board.</i></p> <p><i>The Board may then use discretion to take appropriate action for any course unit/component(s) which may not be listed on the mitigating circumstances report. Specifically this would involve the waiving of penalties for late coursework; offering a first attempt or omitting an affected component (providing intended learning outcomes have been met and the component is worth 30% or less) as appropriate. Alternatively the Board may recommend that the student should repeat the whole affected semester.</i></p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p>A9.a Sem1 or Sem 2 only affected</p>	<p><u>For Final Year students only:</u> <i>In SALC the Board of Examiners will normally use discretion to look across component marks for the whole affected semester. This will be indicated on the final mitigating circumstances report that is produced for the Board.</i></p> <p><i>The Board may then use discretion to take appropriate action for any course unit/component(s) which may not be listed on the mitigating circumstances report. Specifically this would involve the waiving of penalties for late coursework; offering a first attempt or omitting an affected component (providing intended learning outcomes have been met and the component is worth 30% or less) as appropriate. Alternatively the Board may recommend that the student should repeat the whole affected semester.</i></p>
<p>A9.a Sem1 or Sem 2 only affected</p>	<p><u>For Final Year students only:</u> <i>In SALC the Board of Examiners will normally use discretion to look across component marks for the whole affected semester. This will be indicated on the final mitigating circumstances report that is produced for the Board.</i></p> <p><i>The Board may then use discretion to take appropriate action for any course unit/component(s) which may not be listed on the mitigating circumstances report. Specifically this would involve the waiving of penalties for late coursework; offering a first attempt or omitting an affected component (providing intended learning outcomes have been met and the component is worth 30% or less) as appropriate. Alternatively the Board may recommend that the student should repeat the whole affected semester.</i></p>		

	<p><u>Extend Boundary Zone</u> Extend the limit of the boundary zone for students falling between degree classifications at final classification stage by a maximum of 2%. (eg. The boundary zone for a 1st would become 66-69%; for a 2.1 it would become 56-59%; for a 2.2 and so on) The Mitigating Circumstances Panel will determine the extent of this depending on their assessment of evidence relating to severity, duration, timing and impact of the mitigating circumstances.</p> <p>Please note that students must have met the requirement of having 80 credits in the higher class in order for the boundary zone to be extended.</p>
	<p>A9.b Whole year affected</p> <p><u>For Final Year students only:</u> <i>In SALC the Board of Examiners will normally will use discretion to look at component marks for the whole academic year. This will be indicated on the final mitigating circumstances report that is produced for the Board.</i></p> <p><i>The Board may then use discretion to take appropriate action for any course unit/component(s) which may not be listed on the mitigating circumstances report. Specifically this would involve the waiving of penalties for late coursework; offering a first attempt or omitting an affected component (providing intended learning outcomes have been met and the component is worth 30% or less) as appropriate. Alternatively the Board may recommend that the student should repeat the whole academic year.</i></p> <p><u>Extend Boundary Zone</u> Extend the limit of the boundary zone for students falling between degree classifications at final classification stage by a maximum of 2%. (eg. The boundary zone for a 1st would become 66-69%; for a 2.1 it would become 56-59%; for a 2.2 and so on) The Mitigating Circumstances Panel will determine the extent of this depending on their assessment of evidence relating to severity, duration, timing and impact of the mitigating circumstances.</p> <p>Please note that students must have met the requirement of having 80 credits in the higher class in order for the boundary zone to be extended.</p>
<p>A10 Exam Board to action</p>	<p><u>Alternative Recommendation</u></p> <p>In exceptional circumstances, for scenarios not addressed in a recommendation above, a Mitigating Circumstances Panel may make an alternative recommendation considered to be reasonable; however an explanation of the reasons must be fully documented.</p>

* N.B. 'original assessment' means an assessment of the same type or testing the same intended learning outcomes, not an identical question or task

Students who have potentially been affected for one semester or the full academic year	
<p>Exam Board to action</p>	<p><i>For students in all years:</i></p> <p><i>In SALC the mitigating circumstances reports will indicate whether the Board should review all course unit/component marks that <u>may</u> have been affected in one semester/full year. The Board may then use discretion to take appropriate action for any course unit/component which may not be specifically listed on the mitigating circumstances report.</i></p> <p><i>For second year students the Board is encouraged to consider A6 above.</i></p> <p><i>For final year students the Board is encouraged to consider A9 above, providing the student has 80 credits or more in the higher class.</i></p>

