

Review of the Policy and Procedures on Mitigating Circumstances

In February 2014 a report was presented to Teaching and Learning Group (TLG) following the initial review of the Policy and Procedures on Mitigating Circumstances. Subsequent to TLG, Schools and Faculties across the University were provided with further opportunity to comment on the content of the report, after which a response was issued in April 2014 by the review Sponsor, Professor Richard Reece (AVP Teaching, Learning and Students).

Based upon the content of the feedback, and as stated in the April 2014 response, it was considered necessary for more detailed discussions to be undertaken by a Task and Finish Group. The Group was constituted according to a terms of reference, and whose role included finalising the revisions to the policy and the documents that supported the policy. The Group concluded its work on the policy, and the new version was approved at the June 2014 meetings of TLG and Senate.

Key changes to the current Policy on Mitigating Circumstances

1. The policy title has now changed from the Policy and Procedures on Mitigating Circumstances to the Policy on Mitigating Circumstances.
2. As the Policy on Mitigating Circumstances is only applicable to undergraduate and postgraduate taught students, a specific reference to the relevant policy for postgraduate research students is made at paragraph 4.
3. Paragraph 5 reflects the role of Mitigating Circumstances Panels more accurately.
4. Paragraph 7 lists the methods by which Schools should publicise the deadlines and procedures for the submission of requests for mitigation.
5. The defined grounds for mitigation, and list of accepted and not accepted examples, have been updated at paragraphs 11 and 12.
6. The section on 'Handling requests for mitigation' has been broken down from 3 into 6 paragraphs. This section now includes references to:
 - a. The Mitigating Circumstances: Guidance for Students and the Notification of Mitigating Circumstances Form (paragraph 15) (Note: if Schools do not use the TLSO template form then programme handbooks should acknowledge variance in practice);
 - b. Requests for mitigation submitted about circumstances arising during an assessment period need to be submitted within one day of that period ending (paragraph 16);
 - c. Enhanced statement of what the University does not accept to be a credible and compelling explanation for non-submission of requests for mitigation (paragraph 16);
 - d. A more explicit statement about the confidential treatment of requests for mitigation (paragraph 17);
 - e. The use of sub-panels and how they should operate (paragraph 18);
 - f. Allowance to Mitigating Circumstances Panels to consult with University support services where a student has indicated that they are receiving support and has consented to such contact being made (paragraph 18);
 - g. Mitigating Circumstances Panels needing to meet after each key assessment period with written records made (paragraph 19);

- h. The need for coordination of the policy with other student related matters e.g. disability support and certification of ill health (paragraph 20).
7. There is a requirement for students to be informed of the outcome of their request for mitigation at paragraph 29.
8. A number of grammatical changes have been made for consistency and accuracy e.g. the reference to Mitigating Circumstances Panels and not Committees.

Ongoing work (expected completion date September 2014)

- Mitigating Circumstances Panel Terms of Reference (as required under the revised policy)
- Process recommendations for handling requests for mitigation
- Mitigating Circumstances: Guidance for Students (with flowchart)
- Notification of Mitigating Circumstances Form

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