

**Requesting Consideration for Mitigating Circumstances
Guidance for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Students
2023-24**

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Introduction

As a student at Manchester, you are expected to regularly attend and participate in your studies, including assessments (coursework or exams). You are expected to sit and submit all assessments as timetabled unless you have a good reason not to do so.

We understand that you may be affected by illness and/or difficult and distressing events that are outside your control and which may affect your ability to take assessments. The guidance explains the additional consideration that can be given by the University in relation to your assessments.

This guidance explains the types of adverse events or circumstances that we will consider as a mitigating circumstance for assessment and sets out the process by which applications are to be submitted and considered. If you are unclear about any stage of the process, please contact soos.mitcircs@manchester.ac.uk

Alternatively, guidance can also be sought from the Student's Union [here](#)

What are mitigating circumstances?

Mitigating circumstances are normally exceptional, short term, **unforeseen and unpreventable** events that may have a significantly disruptive effect on your ability to take assessments. These events are over and above the course of everyday life, and normally outside of your control. They may affect your ability to complete coursework or other assessments, and revise for and attend examinations.

Mitigating circumstances must be:

Significant	The event or circumstances must have had a serious impact on your studies.
Unexpected	You must normally have had no prior knowledge that a particular event or circumstance would occur.
Unpreventable	There must have been no reasonable steps that you could have taken to prevent the event or circumstance from occurring.
Relevant	You must be able to link the event or circumstance, and its impact, on the period for which the application is being made.
Corroborated	An application for mitigating circumstances must meet the normal requirements for independent documentary evidence (see Evidence section).

When considering if an event or events will constitute mitigating circumstances; there must be a demonstrable adverse effect on your academic performance, which may take several forms:

- You were unable to submit work by a deadline or attend a scheduled test, examination, or practical activity.
- The event or circumstance may have caused you to underperform in an assessment, either in the preparation for the assessment, or on the day (i.e., whilst completing a piece of coursework or undertaking revision and/or sitting an examination).

Circumstances normally accepted.

Supported by evidence, these are examples of circumstances normally accepted as mitigating **if they occur immediately prior to or during an assessment period**:

This list is not exhaustive, and each application will be considered on its own merit.

- Significant illness or injury

- The worsening of an ongoing illness or disability, including mental health conditions (if you are registered with the University Disability Advisory and Support Service (DASS), please see below for further details).
- The death or critical illness of a close family member or dependant.
- Significant family crises or major financial problems leading to acute stress.
- Absence from the University for public service (e.g., jury service).
- Some IT issues may be accepted (please see below for further advice).

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.

IT Issues

In certain circumstances, IT issues may be considered grounds for mitigating circumstances. You will need to provide detailed supporting evidence of the issues you are experiencing, please see the section on evidence required for further details.

Circumstances with an impact on all students, or groups of students

Sometimes there will be unanticipated circumstances which have an impact on all students, or specific groups of students. Where this is the case, the University will take action to apply mitigation and will let students know what this will be. For example, where there is industrial action or public health requirements which impact on learning and teaching arrangements, action will be taken to adjust teaching and learning arrangements for students, and consideration will be given to mitigate the impact on assessment, for example by assessing content taught, or changing the method of assessment.

If you consider that the impact of circumstances with an impact on all students affects you severely and is not mitigated by the action taken by the University, you should apply for mitigation in the normal way. Evidence will be expected of individual impact.

What are not mitigating circumstances?

Not every event which you believe has disrupted your ability to take assessments will be considered as mitigating circumstances. If you are unsure whether your circumstances will be considered, please seek guidance.

Examples of situations which would **not** normally be considered mitigating circumstances include:

This list is not exhaustive, and each application will be considered on its own merit.

- Holidays, moving house and events that were planned or could reasonably have been expected.
- Assessments that are scheduled close together or on the same day.
- 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 on their University P drive and not leave completion so late that they cannot find another computer or printer; (for further information, please see below under 'IT Issues').

- The act of religious observance, (please see policy Religious Observance for Students).
- Consequences of paid employment (except in some exceptional 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 an assessment which has not been recorded by the invigilators.
- Last minute or poorly planned travel arrangements.

Mitigating Circumstances and Disability (including Specific Learning Difficulties (such as dyslexia and dyspraxia), mental health conditions and long-term medical conditions)

If you are disabled, or you have a long-term health condition (12 months or more) that impacts on your day-to-day activities, you should register with Disability Services who will advise further on support and reasonable adjustments to your study and assessment. Disability includes specific learning difficulties (such as dyslexia and dyspraxia), as well as diagnosed mental health conditions. You can find out more about Disability Services and how to register [here](#).

Students who are registered with the Disability Advisory and Support Service (DASS)

If you need to apply for mitigating circumstances due to issues 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. When reviewing your application, any engagement with support you have been offered by DASS may also be considered. If support is available but you have chosen not to engage with it, this may be taken into consideration and reflected in recommendations made to the Examination Board. If you are registered with DASS but need to apply for mitigating circumstances for an issue that is not related to your disability, you will need to provide supporting evidence (see below for details).

As part of your support plan, you may be eligible for an automatic extension of 7 days for assessed written work. Your School's Disability Coordinator will already have been advised of this, and it will not be necessary for you to apply for mitigating circumstances if you are able to submit your work within 7 days of the original deadline. If the circumstances relating to your disability mean that you will need additional time beyond the automatic extension of 7 days, you must apply for mitigating circumstances. Please note that automatic extensions do not apply to group-work, presentations, or other forms of assessment, and you **must** apply if you are unable to meet the deadline for anything other than assessed coursework.

Forms of Mitigation Available

There are two forms of mitigation available: Extensions to Coursework Deadlines and Mitigating Circumstances for those assessments that cannot be extended, or you are unable to submit/sit.

Extensions to written assessed work.

Circumstances which will have a short-term impact on your ability to complete written assessments (for example, minor illness) should be covered by an application for an extension to the submission deadline.

Short-term Extension requests will be assessed individually based on the information provided. You should however bear in mind that you will **only** be offered an additional 5 working days from the original deadline date to complete and submit the work.

If a longer-term Extension is requested, you will be required to complete a mitigating circumstance submission form. The form will be assessed individually based on information and evidence provided in the application and marking/exam board deadlines.

Extension requests will only apply to assessed written work for example dissertations, and do **not** apply to the following: (this is not an exhaustive list)

- Take home timed, written examinations.
- Group/teamwork
- Presentations
- Formative coursework
- Assessments limited by logistical constraints e.g., assessments to be completed whilst on a field trip; short recurring deadlines e.g., where assessments are to be submitted weekly for a particular unit; continuous ongoing course work e.g., portfolios; or where feedback needs to be provided to students before the extension end date.
- Practice elements of professional practice modules
- Work which is required to be completed within a set timescale because to do so is a professional competency standard.
- Practical/skills-based work
- First submission for PhD/MPhil submissions and any subsequent resubmissions

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.

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).

You can apply for a 5-day Extension by completing this form: <https://forms.office.com/e/09atf7kbG8>, please note supporting evidence is not required.

Mitigation for exams/assessments that cannot be extended or that you are unable to sit/submit

Where your circumstances cannot be mitigated via a short extension, and you feel that circumstances have or will impact on your ability to participate in assessments, an application for Mitigating Circumstances may be appropriate.

Applying for other Mitigation

To apply for Mitigating Circumstances, you should complete this form: <https://forms.office.com/e/wFmTuiNSYZ>, supporting evidence will be required and should be attached to the form.

You should ideally submit your application at least 5 working days before your submission deadline or examination date.

The School will not accept applications using other forms i.e., paper version, email request etc.

Once your application is received, we may also offer you further support (e.g., Counselling Service, DASS). If supporting evidence is not available when completing the Mitigating Circumstances Submission form, a period of 2 weeks will be given to submit evidence. This should be sent to soos.mitcircs@manchester.ac.uk.

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.

Deadlines for submitting Mitigating Circumstances applications

Mitigating circumstances and extension applications would normally be submitted at the point you have been impacted by exceptional, short term, unforeseen and unpreventable events. Therefore, it is expected that you submit your application close to, or if necessary, immediately after an affected assessment deadline or examination unless there are exceptional circumstances that require you to submit much earlier for example planned medical treatment during an assessment period, notice of jury service etc.

Applications will be reviewed and if submitted significantly far in advance of the assessment deadline or examination the team may not consider your application until a later date and Wellbeing support provided in the interim.

In addition, if you cannot submit your application before, or immediately after an affected assessment then you should explain the reasons why you were unable to do so, and the team will decide if the circumstances warrant the consideration of a late application.

Adjustments to Application Process

If you require an adjustment to this process due to disability or accessibility need you are asked to contact the School to let them know. Disability Services can also assist you in liaising with the School about your support needs www.dass.manchester.ac.uk/

Evidence of Mitigating Circumstances

All mitigating circumstances applications (other than for short extensions) **must** be supported 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).

Applications for mitigating circumstances will not normally be considered unless they are supported by independent documentary evidence. Decisions on applications will not be confirmed until this evidence has been received (in exceptional circumstances applications can be submitted without this evidence, but relevant documents must be submitted within 14 calendar days of applying).

If supporting evidence is required and has not been provided within 14 calendar days of the submission of your application 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.

The nature of this documentation will vary according to the nature of the circumstances; it must be sufficiently independent; proximate to the relevant assessment period and confirms the impact of the circumstances outlined in the application. 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).

Personal information about third parties should not be submitted to the University unless necessary. If your circumstances relate to someone close to you, what we need to know is the impact on you of their circumstances rather than their details. By disclosing data relating to a third party to evidence your mitigating circumstances application you are confirming that you have the consent of the third party to do so.

Examples of appropriate evidence

The following list aims to provide guidance on the types of evidence that we would normally expect to be provided to support an application for mitigating circumstances. This list should not be considered definitive, therefore If you are unsure about the type of evidence to provide, please contact soos.mitcircs@manchester.ac.uk for further advice.

Example circumstances	Suggested evidence – provide one of the following
<p>Short-term illness, injury, or mental health condition (affecting you up to 7 days prior to a submission deadline/examination) This includes illness related to Covid-19</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctor’s letter or extracts from your medical notes which you can request from your GP practice • Copy of prescription dated proximate to the impacted assessment • Photo of labelled positive COVID-19 test results (if you have been unable to access a test, please explain this on your application) • Confirmation of appointment from medical unit or hospital admissions letter dated proximate to the impacted assessment • Student self-certification forms may be used as a form of evidence however the request for mitigation would be stronger if appropriate, independent, third-party supporting documentation is also provided.
<p>Long-term/significant illness, injury, or mental health condition This includes illness related to Covid-19</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter from your GP or other medical professional* • Extracts from your medical notes which you can request from your GP practice • Copy of prescription dated proximate to the impacted assessment • Photo of labelled positive COVID-19 test results (if you have been unable to access a test, please explain this on your application) • Confirmation of appointment from medical unit or hospital admissions letter dated proximate to the impacted assessment • Internal confirmation of existing engagement with Counselling / DASS / Advice and Response service <p>*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.’</p>
<p>Family crises or major financial problems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter or email from a close family member of yours confirming the circumstances affecting you and your studies • Copy of appropriate financial records proximate to the impacted assessments

Absence for jury service or maternity, paternity, or adoption leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter confirming summons for jury service • MAT B certificate or relevant correspondence confirming pregnancy/birth/adoption
The death or critical/significant illness of a close family member/dependant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter or email from a close family member of yours confirming the circumstances affecting you and your studies and dated proximate to the impacted assessments • Copy of the order of service from the funeral (this should only be provided if you wish to do so) • Copy of the death certificate (this should only be provided if you wish to do so)
IT Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screenshot or photograph of the IT issue (e.g., error message) showing date and time of the IT incident • Copy of information from your service provider showing date and time of incident • Copy of repair of equipment receipt <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"> • Police report 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 Panel with any information about the crime) • Insurance report • Press or media report that provides sufficient corroboration of the event • Security report

Please note that you do not need to provide an original copy of your supporting documentation, a photograph or a scanned copy can be uploaded to the Mitigating Circumstances Submission Form.

Consideration of mitigating circumstances

Who considers my application?

Your application for an extension will be considered by appropriately trained Student Support and Wellbeing staff with appropriate academic oversight within the School. All recommendations are then ratified by the Exam Board who will confirm the final decision regarding the action to be taken in respect of your application.

How is my application considered?

The Student Support and Wellbeing Team along with appropriate academic input will:

- Consider details of applications for mitigating circumstances and make recommendations on the outcome of each application to the Board.
- Determine whether the circumstances cited are acceptable grounds to grant mitigation.
- Ensure that decisions are equitable and that there is consistency of treatment across cohorts.

Account shall be taken of:

- Whether the mitigating circumstances are circumstances genuinely beyond your control or ability to foresee.
- The nature of the circumstances disclosed (e.g., length of impact).
- Evidence of impact of the event or circumstance on your assessments.
- The proximity of the event or circumstance to the assessment(s).
- Whether all/other assessment(s) might equally be affected.
- Whether there is appropriate evidence to support the request.

When will my application be considered?

Extension requests are dealt with at the time of application, you can normally expect a decision within 3 working days of receipt of your application. You will receive an email to confirm if your application has been accepted along with the new submission date(s) for your assessments.

For all other Mitigating Circumstances applications including long extensions, it is anticipated that you can normally expect a decision within 7 days. If your case needs further consideration at a Mitigating Circumstances Academic Review Meeting these are held monthly, and you will be notified of the outcome immediately after this.

What happens to the application form and my evidence once reviewed?

The School will keep details of your application confidential, but it may be necessary for data to be shared between departments to consider your application for mitigation, or disclosed in response to any appeal that you may make.

Information about your application may be used anonymously to improve services for students and inform development of programmes and services at the University.

The University holds and retains information about your application in accordance with the University Registered Student Privacy Notice. For more information see: <http://www.regulations.manchester.ac.uk/non-academic/data-collection-notice/>

What are the possible outcomes?

The University does not change marks because of mitigating circumstances or take circumstances into consideration when marking work.

There are different outcomes that may apply depending on the individual student/application. This list is not exhaustive, and recommendations are made on an individual basis.

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 supported by evidence, to explain the late submission, and the team accept that your circumstances warranted the length of time you took to submit the work, then it will be recommended that the penalty is waived, and your full marks are reinstated.

Please ensure that you inform the Student Support & Wellbeing Team if you have been able to submit your work while awaiting the outcome of your mitigating circumstances application.

If your application for mitigating circumstances is not accepted (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 team will confirm an appropriate date for submission in accordance with the circumstances you have presented.

Performance being affected:

If you submitted or took the assessment on time, but your performance was significantly affected by the circumstances outlined in your application, a recommendation may be made to the Board of Examiners that you are offered a first attempt of the assessment. You should bear in mind that if you take this opportunity the new mark will stand, even if it is lower than your original mark.

It could also be recommended that the affected assessment(s) marks be excluded if for example there whether no resit opportunities are available and depending on the weighting of the assessment and your performance across other course units/assessments.

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 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.

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 you missed an examination, it could be recommended 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.

Interruptions and/or Support to Study

The Mitigating Circumstances Review Panel may also recommend that you seek additional support either through the Student Support and Wellbeing team school or from other professional services, for example Counselling Service, or Disability Services.

If there are concerns about your ability 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. It may be considered 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 Support 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 us so that arrangements can be put in place.

How will I be told the outcome?

You will be notified of the outcome of your application by email to your University of Manchester email address please note that we do not send confirmation to other (i.e., personal) email addresses.

What if I am not satisfied with the decision?

Any recommendation is provisional until it is reviewed by the Board of Examiners. Therefore, all marks are provisional until the Final Examinations Board. Students can appeal against the final decision of an Examination Board, or equivalent body, under regulation XIX (Academic Appeals Procedure) once results have been published.

If having read this guidance, you any further questions regarding Mitigating Circumstances, please contact soos.mitcircs@manchester.ac.uk for advice.