



# **Policy for Mitigating Circumstances (for taught and research programmes)**

**Effective from September 2023 to Present**

<b>Purpose of Policy</b>	During the course of their studies, students may suffer from some illness or misfortune that adversely affects their ability to complete an assessment. This Policy sets out the University's arrangements for considering requests for mitigation in such circumstances. This Policy applies to Undergraduate, Postgraduate Taught, and Postgraduate Research students.
<b>Internal services involved</b>	Academic Registry
<b>Related UCLan regulations, policies and procedures</b>	
<b>Enquiries to</b>	<a href="mailto:AR-MitCircs@uclan.ac.uk">AR-MitCircs@uclan.ac.uk</a>
<b>Senior Managers responsible</b>	Head of Student Administration
<b>VCG Lead</b>	Deputy Chief Executive

<b>Version</b>	<b>Approved</b>	<b>Effective from</b>	<b>Revisions made</b>	<b>Next Review</b>
1	May 2022	September 2022		May 2023
2	May 2023	September 2023	Application to all postgraduate research students	May 2024

# Mitigating Circumstances

## 1. Introduction and Scope

During the course of their studies, students may suffer from illness or misfortune that adversely affects their ability to complete an assessment. This Policy sets out the University's arrangements for considering requests for mitigation in such circumstances.

This Policy applies to Undergraduate, Postgraduate Taught, and Postgraduate Research students.

## 2. The Policy

The University defines mitigating circumstances as 'unforeseeable or unpreventable circumstances that may have a significant adverse effect on the academic performance of a student'.

Students are responsible for submitting their own requests for consideration of mitigating circumstances. As such, students should make themselves aware of the definition of mitigating circumstances and of the procedures for submitting a request for mitigation.

### *Taught Students*

The timeframe permitted for any extended coursework submission due to mitigating circumstances is up to 14 (calendar) days. Longer requests, or when requesting an extension for an exam, in-class assessment, or other assessment types where an extension is not appropriate or possible these are a 'deferral to next assessment period'

### *Pre-panel triage*

Following application there may be a pre-panel administrative triage in place that will consider applications in advance of a panel and may approve or decline on the following basis -

- Approve applications from students that have pre-agreed flexibility with deadlines - (inc. specific disability support and carers)
- Decline applications without Evidence that apply with for an extension that requires evidence on submission.

### *Panel*

The duration and application of Mitigating Circumstances across modules will be considered by a Mitigating Circumstances panel who will convene within 5 working days of the submission. The application will be considered by the panel to ensure it meets all of the criteria detailed in the 'Criteria' section of this policy . The panel can grant extensions of up to 14 (calendar) days or decline the application, communicating the outcome to the student the same day.

When a student asks for a longer period than 14 days or is requesting an extension for an exam, in-class assessment, or other assessment types where an extension is not appropriate or possible\*. These applications will be classed as a 'deferral to next assessment period'. The application will be considered by the panel to ensure it meets all of the criteria detailed in the 'Criteria' section of this policy. Where the panel agrees that a longer period of extension may be required they will refer the case to the Personal Tutor / Year Tutor (or Equivalent at Partner Institution) for a Mitigating Circumstances meeting to be conducted between the Personal Tutor / Year Tutor and the student. The Mitigating Circumstances meeting will be held within 5 working days of the referral. At this meeting, if a new deadline is agreed by the Personal Tutor / Year Tutor this will be confirmed with the student. In some circumstances, it may not be appropriate to approve the MC and the original deadline will be final.

\*Assessments which are not appropriate for standard extensions (up to 14 days) will be communicated by courses teams to students in advance.

#### *Late Submissions without Agreed MCs*

Students who submit work within 7 calendar days after the published submission date without an authorised extension granted through the Mitigating Circumstances process - will be awarded the maximum of the minimum pass mark for that element of assessment (including work graded pass/fail, where the minimum grade would be 'pass'). All work submitted later than 7 calendar days after the published submission date, without an authorised extension granted through the Mitigating Circumstances process, will be awarded a mark of 0% for that element of assessment (work graded pass/fail would receive a 'fail').

#### *Postgraduate Research Students*

The duration and application of Mitigating Circumstances across the programme will be considered by a Mitigating Circumstances panel who will convene weekly. The panel will grant extensions of up to 7 (calendar) days or decline the application, communicating the outcome to the student the same day. Where the panel considers a longer period of extension may be required, they will refer the case to the Research Degree Tutor via email for a Mitigating Circumstances meeting to be conducted between the Research Degree Tutor and the student.

Research Degree Tutors can grant a maximum of 14 calendar days for a final programme deadline as detailed below:

- Expected thesis submission date
- Lapse date
- Post-viva Thesis corrections deadline following examination
- Post-viva Thesis resubmission deadline

For extensions to an in-programme deadline (listed below) Research Degree Tutors can grant up to a maximum of 10 weeks where overall progress is not impeded, and the final submission deadline is not altered.

- Research Programme Approval
- Annual Assessment of Progress
- Transfer from MPhil to PhD (MPhil/PhD students only)

Only one Mitigating Circumstances application per assessment point/deadline is permitted.

### Principles – Taught and Research

Procedures for handling mitigating circumstances are defined in an associated procedure document for those students taught/completing research directly by UCLan in the UK partner organisations may have their own procedural guidance or information.

Requests for mitigation must be processed formally and judged impartially.

The procedures will be applied consistently and in line with this Policy, to apply equally to undergraduate, taught postgraduate students and postgraduate research students to allow Schools to meet any discipline-specific or professional body requirements.

Not all difficult or distressing events will constitute mitigating circumstances; there must be a demonstrable adverse effect on the student's academic performance, which may take several forms:

- The student was unable to submit work by a deadline or attend a scheduled test, examination, or practical activity.
- The event or circumstance may have caused the student 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).

### Criteria

For a claim to be accepted, the student must be able to demonstrate that mitigating circumstances are **ALL** of the following:

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

### Timeframes

#### *Early Applications*

Applications for Mitigating Circumstances should be submitted up to a maximum of 4 weeks in advance - they must still demonstrate how they meet the 'Unexpected' and 'Unpreventable' criteria.

### *Late Applications*

Applications for Mitigating Circumstances submitted after the assessment deadline or examination date will not be considered without a credible and compelling explanation as to why the circumstances were not known in advance or why the student was unable to submit an application prior to the published date. This could include but not limited to periods of Hospitalisation.

This is with the exception of those requests made as a result of circumstances that have arisen on the day of the deadline or examination. Where the request for mitigation relates to circumstances occurring on the assessment deadline or examination date, the student must submit their Mitigating Circumstances application through the process within 3 (calendar) days of the deadline. This includes where examinations have been started but cannot be completed as a result of unforeseen circumstances.

### *Number of Submissions*

A student cannot submit the same standalone individual circumstance as a request for mitigation more than once unless the student can show that the circumstance has exacerbated in some way, or the effects on the student have lasted longer than expected.

### *Assignment Submission whilst awaiting an MC application decision*

Students that are awaiting an outcome of their Mitigating Circumstances application should continue with their work and make a submission that meets the originally set deadline. If the Mitigating Circumstances application is declined the submission in advance of the deadline will be the submission.

If MCs are later granted then the student will be allowed to make **one** further submission in advance of the new deadline. If a further submission is not made in the extension period the first submission will be considered the only submission. If a further submission is made during the extension period the first submission will be disregarded and the second submission will be marked.

There is no automatic right for an extension to be granted

### 3. Guidance

Guidance is updated from time to time to support the application of the policy, up to date guidance can be found here -

- Student Guidance ([UCLan Student Hub](#))
- Staff Guidance ([UCLan Staff Intranet](#))

#### **Examples of circumstances normally considered with Evidence include:**

- Serious personal illness or personal injury, or a significant change or deterioration in a long-term condition.
- Victim of crime (usually with police crime number)
- Jury service.
- Involvement in a criminal case/witness.
- Failure in, or inaccessibility of, School/University provided equipment.
- Failure in the provision of reasonable adjustments

#### **Examples of circumstance that do not require further evidence at application point:**

- The death of someone you are close to e.g., parent, grandparent, guardian, partner, sibling, child. - this document is not always available immediately so will be confirmed after submission
- Confirmed Carer Status
- Confirmed G09 indicator

#### **Circumstances that MAY be considered with evidence include:**

- Personal problems/trauma/family crisis/domestic issues/unexpected issues with childcare provision.
- Illness of a close family member.
- Planned medical operation (if advance notice is provided).
- Planned hospital tests (if advance notice is provided).
- Unforeseen consequences of disability which have not been mitigated by agreed reasonable adjustments.
- Unforeseen accommodation issues, outside of the student's control (this would not include house moves caused due to the end of a lease).

#### **Circumstances that will NOT normally be considered include:**

Support needs that have not previously been shared/declared to the University these should be declared to Inclusive Support to ensure adjustments can be considered.

Other events which you are reasonably expected to manage, for example:

- Issues due to time mismanagement
- Lost (electronic) coursework that is not backed up.
- Domestic events like house moves, holidays or family celebrations
- General pressures of multiple deadlines
- Traffic difficulties
- Illness you did not seek medical advice for at the time (or do not have evidence you sought advice for).

- Pregnancy - (Excluding illness, associated medical appointments and proximity to due date).
- General examination nerves (where no diagnosis of a mental health condition has been received).
- Mistaking a deadline, misreading the examination timetable, or submitting the wrong assignment in error.
- Paid employment for full time students resulting in time management issues.

### **Ongoing circumstances and long-term health conditions**

You will not normally be awarded mitigating circumstances for known or ongoing circumstances unless there are events beyond your control that prevent you from accessing support. You will need to provide evidence to support this.

### **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 a student considers that the impact of circumstances with an impact on all students affects them severely and is not mitigated by the action taken by the University, they should apply for mitigation in the normal way.



## 4. Evidence

Applications for mitigating circumstances will not normally be considered unless they are supported by independent documentary evidence.

### **Evidence must be:**

Independent evidence from a third party that knows you in a professional capacity (GP, police, hospital, funeral director).

### **Or**

Supporting information/documentation that students receive when being supported by Student Services can be used to support an application- for example an appointment confirmation email with Counselling, Mental Health and Wellbeing team.

### **All evidence should -**

- Be clear photographs or scans of documents
- Identifiable - have the students' details on.
- Confirm who is providing the Evidence (Person or organisation). e.g:
  - Letter-headed correspondence (Ideally be signed by an appropriate third party)
  - Email from XX
  - Text from XX
- Include date of evidence
- Include date and duration of issue/incident (if applicable).
- Where possible state the impact of the issue
- Be written in English

Fit Notes **should include the second page** that includes further (student) name confirmation and address.

NHS APP - both pages should be included showing the students' details.

The evidence can be redacted if the appropriate information is still visible.

### **In certain circumstances academic/school staff can support the application with an email to the student and this should be attached as evidence. For example:**

- Failure/Availability of Specialist Equipment - Academic Staff can support applications where it is accepted are for course situations beyond the student's control for example the failure or the availability of Specialist Equipment required to meet the learning outcome
- Placements - Unforeseen issues with placements their supervision or sign-off may be supported by Academic staff.
- Degree Apprentices - Employment pressures are only an applicable reason for an MC for Degree Apprentice Students. Work pressures can be considered supporting evidence can be from the Employer (Supervisor/Manager) or the Academic/Assessors with knowledge of the placement/situation.

**Evidence that will NOT be accepted:**

- Photographs of Non-documentary Evidence - for example:
- Incidents (such as car accidents).
- People or body parts/injuries and illness
- Photographs of COVID lateral flow test
- Pets
- Documents that do not confirm the identity of the student and relevant date.
- Assignment briefs

All documentation that does not meet the criteria setout above (All Evidence should)

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

To authenticate evidence and information supplied, the university may make further checks or require further evidence or information from the student. The manipulation and alteration of documentation used to evidence Mitigating Circumstances may result in disciplinary or fitness to practice action by the university.