

# Mitigating Circumstances Guidance Document.

## Characteristics of MCs

The following examples would be likely to be considered as valid MCs if the timing were such as to have a significant impact on the student's assessment(s):

- Death or sudden serious illness of a close relative or friend.
- A serious or incapacitating injury, illness, or medical condition (or a sudden, marked deterioration in an on-going or longer-term condition), or an emergency operation.
- Serious unexpected disruption of personal life
- Premature childbirth (self or partner) or related post-natal care. *Appropriate corroborating evidence (e.g. a medical certificate for illness) will normally be required in support of MC claims.*

## What are Mitigating Circumstances?

**Mitigating Circumstances** are the School's descriptions of conditions which temporarily prevent a student from undertaking assessment or significantly impair the students' performance in assessment: as such, the measure of their severity is not about impact on the student, but about impact on the assessment.

**The ability to study effectively** might also be affected by MCs, but any on-going or long-term inability to study should lead to consideration of the need to suspend study.

**On-going or longer-term conditions or circumstances** are not MCs, and may be handled by disability support and/or special assessment arrangements: they are likely to give rise to valid MC claims only if they first come to light are diagnosed, or become unexpectedly and markedly worse, at assessment time.

**Normal life** throws up difficulties and problems, and minor illnesses, that students have to cope with during study in just the same way as everyone does at home or at work: they are expected to take appropriate steps to minimise the impact of these, since such events are unlikely to be accepted as valid MC claims.

**Requesting an extension** for handing in coursework would be the right course of action if failure to do so would be likely to lead to the submission of a valid MC claim after the coursework deadline: timing and the severity of the impact on the assessment are both critical aspects here.

**Formal examinations** are events which cannot have extensions to run a few days later for individual students: for these and other similar assessment events and MC claim will seek either to demonstrate a student's absence with good cause, or significantly impaired performance.

## Events & conditions not normally acceptable as MCs

Normally the following would be unlikely to be considered as valid MCs

- MC claims without appropriate, independent supporting evidence.
- Minor illnesses or ailments (e.g. coughs, colds, hangovers)
- Personal, domestic events which could have been anticipated and/or planned otherwise (e.g. moving house, marrying, routine childcare).
- Choices and preferences in personal life (e.g. attending a wedding; holidays; attending social events, sporting fixtures).
- Poor management of time (including oversleeping) or misunderstanding deadlines/dates.
- Examination nerves, self-diagnosed stress.
- Failure of computer or other equipment being used to produce work to be assessed, including work not backed up (better preparation is needed).
- Individual transport/travel problems (unless due to strikes or disruptions which could not be foreseen or worked around)
- Relative cost of travel arrangements.
- Financial difficulties (if very serious a suspension of studies might be appropriate).
- Demands of paid or unpaid employment, and job interviews (unless exceptional circumstances prevail in work that is undertaken as a condition or necessary counterpart of the programme of study).
- Failure of others to submit group assignments (consult Institute before it becomes an intractable problem).
- Multiple examinations/coursework deadlines within a short period.
- Language of assessment not being the student's main language.
- Late application for MCs (unless good evidence of the unavoidability of the delay is also provided).
- Long-term illness or disability where earlier disclosure would have allowed appropriate adjustments to be made.
- Assessments already subject to special arrangements to accommodate disabilities or other known conditions.
- MC claims which fail to make clear the manner in which performance in assessment had been significantly affected.

# Mitigating Circumstances:

## Advice for students and steps to be taken.

1. As a student you should make yourself familiar with the Mitigating Circumstance guidance given in the Mitigating Circumstance Guidance Document, and, if appropriate, with the services offered by the Disability Support Officer. This familiarisation is best done before Mitigating Circumstance (or other) difficulties are encountered.
2. If the matter can more appropriately be dealt with by an extension to a coursework deadline then this avenue should be pursued instead of seeking to submit a Mitigating Circumstance request.
3. Where conditions or circumstances that are likely to be considered as valid Mitigating Circumstances come into being before an assessment, you should normally notify the Director of Studies of those conditions or circumstances before the start of that assessment period.
4. On-going or longer-term conditions or circumstances are not Mitigating Circumstances, and should be handled by disability support and/or special assessment arrangements: they are likely to give rise to valid Mitigating Circumstance claims only if they first come to light or are diagnosed, or become unexpectedly and markedly worse, at assessment time.
5. If you wish any Mitigating Circumstances to be taken into account by the Board of Examiners you should normally notify the Registry Office seven working days before the commencement of an unseen written examination as a whole (i.e. the first paper, if there is more than one paper), or the date for submission of assessed coursework, dissertation or report. (QAF 9.25)
6. Your notification to the Registry Office should be made using the form provided (Mitigating Circumstance Report Form). With the form, you should submit an **original** medical certificate if the circumstances relate to your own illness or injury, or other appropriate **original** corroborating evidence. By answering the question on the form about confidentiality, you should indicate whether you require confidentiality to be observed with respect to the nature of the circumstances and for the information to be confined, for example, to the Chair of the Board of Examiners and/or the Director of Studies. You should use clear descriptions of the circumstances, such that the School's Mitigating Circumstances Panel will be able to summarise the situation clearly for the Board of Examiners (observing confidentiality where necessary). It may be appropriate for you to discuss a way of summarizing the details with the Director of Studies.
7. You should take all reasonable steps to notify the Registry Office about Mitigating Circumstances. In particular, you must comply with the deadlines indicated and should not wait until results are published. ***The School may exercise its absolute discretion to disregard any late Mitigating Circumstance claims*** (unless good evidence of the unavoidability of the delay is also provided).
8. If you wish any Mitigating Circumstances to be taken into account by the Board of Examiners you should normally notify Registry Office **seven working days** before the commencement of an unseen written examination as a whole (i.e. the first paper, if there is more than one paper), or the date for submission of assessed coursework, dissertation or report. (QAF 9.25)
9. In summary, in all cases, whether for main assessment periods or for supplementary assessment periods, you should notify the Registry Office of Mitigating Circumstance claims according to the appropriate deadlines. You will be notified whether the claim has been considered.