



Coleg Gwent Higher Education Pearson Programme Mitigating Circumstances Policy

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Mitigating circumstances (also referred to as extenuating or special circumstances) are any serious circumstances beyond a student's control which may have adversely affected their performance; this can include the non or unauthorised late submission of assessments.

Where a student thinks that they have a case for mitigation they should be supported to follow the procedures below.

Principles

Students studying Higher Education programmes at Coleg Gwent should make every effort to ensure they are fit to study and undertake assessment as directed by the programme team. Students are also expected to make every effort to comply with assessment deadlines and complete their programme within the timeframe expected. However, there are times when a student will face adverse difficulties that will affect their academic progress.

The appropriate management of mitigating circumstances affecting a student's study and assessment is important in ensuring that academic standards are maintained and that students perceive that they are being treated fairly.

Students are responsible for reporting, in a timely manner, any special/mitigating circumstances that may affect their results, using the procedures that accompany this policy. Claims for mitigating circumstances must be supported by appropriate evidence and the circumstances must be relevant to the claimed impact. Wherever possible, reasonable adjustments should be made to allow students to attend teaching activities and to complete coursework.

Claims mitigating circumstances should be treated fairly and equally, and students who demonstrate mitigating circumstances should not be unduly disadvantaged or advantaged over other students.

Definition

Mitigating circumstances are circumstances that:

- affect the student's ability to attend or complete an assessment or a number of assessments
- affect the student's ability to complete a level, or the number of units they are enrolled on in an academic year (ie when a student requests to transfer mode of study eg from full-time to part-time)
- are exceptional
- are outside their control
- can be corroborated by independent evidence
- occurred during or shortly before the assessment in question

Procedure

Where necessary a student should use the extensions procedure to request an extension 5 working days before an assessment deadline. If this is not possible then the mitigating circumstances procedure will need to be used.

If a student feels that they have valid mitigating circumstances that have affected their performance or ability to meet an assessment deadline (where they did not have an agreed extension) they should raise this, in the first instance, with their Personal Tutor or Programme Leader, who will then be able to provide support to the student to ensure they are aware of the process, the possible outcomes and, where feasible, identify support that would help the student towards completing the course work. The student may be referred to the Student Support Services offered by the College where they can be informed of available support services.

The student must apply by filling in the Mitigating Circumstances Form. The Mitigating Circumstances Form and supporting evidence should be sent to the Programme Leader.

The application will be considered by the Programme Leader, who may consult other members of the programme team, student services and the Higher Education Manager in order to reach a fair and equitable outcome, that neither disadvantages or advantages the student.

Possible Outcomes

1. **No Action** - where the mitigating circumstances are not considered to be directly impacting the student's studies or the evidence is not valid.
2. **Extension to submission deadline** - where the mitigating circumstances are agreed to be valid and require the learner to submit work by new deadlines NB If marked work has been returned to learners and the learner requesting mitigation would benefit from that assessment feedback the learner will be asked to complete a different assessment.
3. **Make an assessment attempt 'null and void' and allow an opportunity to repeat the assessment** - where allowances for mitigating circumstances have not already been made and it is accepted that the mitigating circumstances have impacted performance in that assessment.
4. **Poor performance taken into consideration** - where the student wants the mitigating circumstances to be considered by the assessment board. For example where an illness affected a student's ability to undertake work to the same standard as previously submitted work, although the learner did submit work by the deadline.

In this case the board of examiners may decide to increase the award class on academic achievement where the following apply:

- the student has a borderline mark
- there is evidence that the mitigating circumstances had an impact beyond specific modules in which allowances have already been made
- it is not possible to make allowances retrospectively at module level e.g. because of the nature of the assessment method

The Higher Education Assessment Board may also decide to defer the decision until further details are obtained.

If a student attends a module but is unable to sit examinations or complete coursework because of Mitigating circumstances, the student may:

- Sit a supplementary examination or complete coursework before the meeting of the Assessment Board or
- Sit a supplementary examination or complete coursework as a first attempt before or during the re-sit examination period

Evidence Based

In the interests of equity and transparency applications for mitigating circumstances must be supported by relevant and independent evidence to corroborate the claim made. This can include:

- Death certificates
- Medical certificates or GP letters
- Legal Notices.

Medical certificates are acceptable if they:

- are signed by a medical practitioner who has seen the student during or immediately after a period of illness
- indicate the date(s) when the student sought assistance
- provide sufficient detail without breaching confidentiality of the nature and seriousness of circumstances
- indicate the degree and duration of any incapacity

NB. Medical certificates signed by family members are not acceptable

Non-medical circumstances (e.g. bereavement) may be reported in writing, with a description of the circumstances, when they occurred and, wherever possible, their duration.

Higher Education Assessment Board

In order to pass a module students are required to meet specific learning outcomes. The Programme Leader will make recommendations to the Assessment Board who must be satisfied that specific learning outcomes have been achieved prior to allowing a student to progress to the next stage or making an award.

The Assessment Board has the right to ask for additional information about mitigating circumstances if original documentation is not adequate or if the circumstances reported are not considered serious enough to warrant special consideration.

Appeal

If the student wishes to appeal against an application that has been rejected, the Head of Higher Education will firstly assess if the independent evidence fully supported the dates noted on the Mitigating Circumstances Form. If any aspect of the Form is incomplete, or further evidence is required, contact will be made directly with the student and the Programme Leader to request this information or amend the form. If the evidence still does not fully meet the criteria for approval, the student and programme leader will be formally notified in a letter and the minutes noted to reflect the final rejection of the application and the relevant reasons.

Retrospective claims of mitigating circumstances will not normally be considered unless there were exceptional reasons for not doing so at the time. This would normally only be because the student was unable to disclose the circumstances in advance because a medical condition has only just been diagnosed. Please note that unless there are exceptional circumstances as detailed above, mitigating circumstance claims which are submitted retrospectively will be deemed to be invalid.

Examples of circumstances which might be considered valid are:

- Hospitalisation, including operations
- Health problems
- Personal or psychological problems for which the student is undergoing counselling or has been referred to a counsellor or other qualified practitioner
- Bereavement
- Major accident or injury, acute ailments or conditions which coincide with an assessment deadline or an examination or test, or are sufficiently long-lasting to impact on a significant part of a term
- Mental health problem
- Recent burglary/theft/serious car accident
- Jury service which cannot be deferred
- Late diagnosis of, for example, dyslexia, resulting in no support or examination provision

Examples of circumstances which would not normally be considered valid:

- Computer problems such as inability to upload assignments to Turnitin
- Time management problems (e.g. competing deadlines)

- Appointments (legal, medical etc) which could be rearranged
- Child care problems which could have been anticipated
- Accidents or illness affecting relatives or friends (unless serious, or the student is a sole carer)
- Unspecified anxiety, mild depression or examination stress
- Cough, cold, upper respiratory tract Infection, sore throat, minor viral infection, unless the illness was at its peak at the time of an examination, end-of-module test or in-class test and the corroborating evidence refers to the impact on the student's performance
- Financial problems (other than cases of exceptional hardship)
- Holidays, house moves, family celebrations

Application for Mitigating Circumstances Form

Personal Details

Name:		Date of Birth	
Address:		College Student ID	
		Programme (and year) of Study	
Contact Tel No		E-mail Address:	

Mitigating Circumstances

Details of reasons for late submission (LS), non-submission (NS) or poor performance (PP) in assessments must be presented below. Please state the nature of the evidence being presented with this application

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Time Period

From:		To:	
When applying for Mitigating Circumstances you must carry on working on your assessment and submit at the earliest opportunity.			

Module Assessment(s) Affected

Criteria: LS/NS/PP	Module Title	Assessment Number and Type	% of work already completed	Original due date of assessment	New date to submit assessment (If submitting after the original submission date)

- LS= Late Submission (Assessment has been submitted, but after the original submission date with no approved extension)
- NS= Non Submission (Assessment has not yet been submitted and no extension has been approved)
- PP= Poor Performance (Assessment was submitted on time, but mitigating circumstances may have affected your performance. Application for PP may affect your grade outcome, and will form part of the discussion when your profile is considered at the Assessment Board).

Student Declaration

I confirm that the above details are correct to the best of my knowledge and I understand that I may be requested to provide further written evidence in support of my application. I confirm that I have read and understood the guidance notes before completing this form and that I have notified my Personal Tutor or Programme Leader that I am making this application.

Student Signature :

Date :

Outcome (For College Use Only)

Decision of the Programme Leader