

Arrangements for Claiming Mitigating Circumstances



**Harper Adams
University**

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Arrangements for Claiming Mitigating Circumstances

The assessment regulations outline permissible mitigating circumstances (as at annex 1). This document covers the arrangements by which mitigating circumstance claims are considered and includes:

1. The grounds on which mitigating circumstances can be claimed.
2. The categories of mitigating circumstances.
3. The procedures associated with each category.
4. Acceptable evidence in support of mitigating circumstances.
5. Access to supporting evidence.

The overarching principles are those of equity and consistency of treatment of students and sensitive and confidential handling of personal information.

1. Grounds for Claiming Mitigating Circumstances

The grounds on which mitigating circumstances can be claimed are normally limited to:

- serious illness which is not a permanent medical condition or disability (for which reasonable adjustments to arrangements are made). This might, for example, include a broken writing arm or an illness requiring hospitalisation, but would not include a headache, cold or upset stomach;
- the death of an immediate family member shortly before the date of the assessment (typically, 28 days immediately before the scheduled assessment);
- Other serious circumstances beyond the control of a student, which could not have been foreseen or prevented (typically no more than 28 days before the scheduled assessment).

A student may not normally claim mitigating circumstances on the basis that their family, financial or other general life problems and employment or other workload pressures affected performance, unless they can produce written evidence that their performance has been unexpectedly and severely affected. Such claims will require independent, supporting evidence.

Harper Adams will not take into account events such as:

- Misreading of assessment dates and times
- Timetabling of examinations or coursework
- Holidays or social occasions,
- Car breakdowns or public transport delays
- Computer or printer difficulties or back-up failures.

Harper Adams is also unable to make allowances for minor illnesses such as headaches, upset stomachs, coughs or colds. These affect everyone and it would not be practical or sensible to take account of them all. Students are expected to plan their work and allow time to cope with minor set-backs. Studies and associated assessment demands are expected to be given priority.

Students who enter the examination room or submit assessed work are considered to have declared themselves fit for assessment.

Students are advised that false or overstated claims of mitigating circumstances will be considered seriously and passed to the Academic Misconduct Panel for consideration.

2. Categories of Mitigating Circumstances

Mitigating circumstances may be claimed as follows:

- a. where a student requests, in advance, an extension to a *coursework* submission deadline (ie an **extension request**);
- b. where a student was unable to attend at, or submit for, a scheduled assessment, of any sort, and requests a deferred assessment at a subsequent opportunity (ie a **deferral request**);
- c. where a student believes that their performance has been unexpectedly and negatively influenced by circumstances beyond their control and wish this to be considered when decisions on progression and final awards are made (ie a **condonement request**).

3. Procedures for Dealing with Mitigating Circumstance Requests

Coursework Extension Requests

Where a student wishes to request, in advance, an extension to a coursework submission deadline they should firstly discuss their difficulties with their Course Manager / Senior Tutor. If the Course Manager / Senior Tutor agrees that there are acceptable mitigating circumstances, students must complete the Mitigating Circumstances Extension Request Form overleaf, including accompanying evidence, and submit it to their Course Manager / Senior Tutor for action as outlined therein. The Course Manager / Senior Tutor will confirm in writing if they approve the extension request, by giving the student a copy of the request form, with approval signified.

Extension requests may only normally be granted within the current academic session. Any request to complete work for submission for the first time (ie not a reassessment) within the following academic session (or for courses with a non-standard start date, within 12 months of enrolment) would, normally, be rejected. Exceptionally, a part-time student may be permitted to withdraw, voluntarily, from the module with a view to starting the module tuition and associated assessments afresh.

Deferral and Condonement Requests

Where a student wishes to request that either:

- (a) they be granted a further opportunity to submit for assessment, as if for the first time, because of circumstances that prevented them from submitting for assessment at the scheduled time, for examinations or, exceptionally, for coursework as specified at **Annex 5.01** of the *Academic Quality Assurance Manual* at section 18, as at annex 1 (ie **deferral**);
or
- (b) circumstances outside their control have affected the quality of their assessed work and they request the board to consider *either*:
 - i) granting a condonement to a marginally failed module, within the limits specified in the assessment regulations (at **Annex 5.01** of the *Academic Quality Assurance Manual* at section 11.3) (**module condonement**);
 - ii) exercising its discretion to permit the candidate a further opportunity for assessment to be considered as the same attempt (ie **re-take**);
 - iii) granting a condonement to permit an upgrade to the final classification of the award, within the limits specified in the assessment regulations, as specified in **Annex 5.01** at section 10.6 (**award condonement**).

Students should complete the Mitigating Circumstances: Deferral or Condonement Request Form below. They should submit the completed form, with accompanying written evidence, to the Examinations Office (room M17) at least five working days before the scheduled assessment boards commence (as advertised on the Examinations notice board).

Students who enter the examination room are considered to have declared themselves fit for assessment. Condonement requests on the basis of illness affecting examination performance would not, normally, be considered, unless there is written evidence to suggest that the student could not have reasonably known that their performance would be affected before entering the examination room.

It is not possible for the assessment board to speculate on how a student might have performed had the mitigating circumstances not impeded performance. Where a module condonement request is approved, the original mark achieved in the condoned module will remain unchanged. Where a student attempts the assessment again (through a re-take), then the mark achieved in the retake assessment will represent the final, definitive mark for that assessment component.

The relevant assessment board, or panel appointed by the Chair, will consider the claim and the outcome will be reflected in the results notified to students. The panel will consist of the Chair of the Course Assessment Boards and up to four other impartial members, appointed by the Chair.

4. Acceptable Forms of Evidence

Medical reports

For significant illnesses, students must visit the doctor or nurse whilst they have the symptoms so that a signed note can be issued which includes precise dates of illness, a diagnosis or description of symptoms and assessment of the impact on the student's ability to prepare for assessments. Notes or reports from health professionals which are imprecise and state, for example, that the illness, "may have had an impact", or that, "the patient informs me", will not normally be accepted as valid evidence.

Verification of needs assessment evidence

For students that have previously submitted documented evidence relating to a long term condition/disability to the University. Students should contact the Learning Support Coordinator to request a summary narrative of the condition and the likely impact of the condition on student performance. This should be submitted to the Panel for consideration. This summary of the assessment must be signed by the University's Learner Support Co-ordinator (or nominee).

Counsellor's reports / Mental Health Advisor reports

For those students who are receiving **ongoing support** from the University Counsellor and/or Mental Health Advisor, a signed note (prepared by the University Counsellor or Mental Health Advisor) may be submitted that includes a description of the symptoms, an assessment of the impact on student's ability to prepare for assessment over specified time periods and confirmation that a plan for ongoing support and/or treatment is in place. The panel will not normally be able to accept notes that relate to initial consultation appointments or meetings, unless supported by other appropriate evidence.

Employers' letters

For part-time students who are also working full-time, extension or deferral requests, as a consequence of workloads, will only be granted in exceptional circumstances as Harper Adams is unable to make allowances for events that occur as a result of normal working practices. Students are expected to plan their work and allow time to cope with employment and study workloads. Letters of evidence in support of mitigating circumstances as a consequence of unplanned and exceptionally high workloads must

be on official letter headed paper, be signed by the student's line manager and must give specific details on the impact of problems encountered in the workplace on the course of study.

Other evidence

Any other supporting evidence must be provided in writing, and provide independent verification of a claim.

5. Access to Supporting Evidence

Students are advised that evidence of mitigating circumstances is treated sensitively and in confidence. For extension requests, the Course Manager / Senior Tutor and Assistant Registrar (Examinations) normally have access to detailed written requests. For deferral and condonement requests, the Assistant Registrar (Examinations), Course Assessment Board Chair, with appointed panel members, and relevant Course Manager / Senior Tutor will normally review written claims, in confidence, before assessment board meetings. A student may request, in writing, that supporting evidence is not reviewed by their Course Manager / Senior Tutor, although the broad nature of mitigating circumstance claims (eg medical treatment, family bereavement, court appearance) will be shared with the Course Manager / Senior Tutor, even if they request that the evidence is not reviewed by them. The precise nature of personal circumstances or medical conditions is not normally discussed at Course Assessment Board meetings, unless, exceptionally, it is considered absolutely necessary to do so, at the discretion of the Chair.

Mitigating Circumstances: Extension Request Form

Before completing this form, please ensure that you have read the accompanying 'Arrangements for Claiming Mitigating Circumstances' guidance. All requests for extensions to assignment submission dates must be accompanied by this form **AND** appropriate independent evidence.

Section A – To be completed by the student

Form to be submitted and discussed with the Course Manager / Senior Tutor at least 48 hours *before* the due submission date:

Student Name	Student ID	Course

Module Number	Module Title	Module Leader/ Module Tutor	Due Submission Date	Evidence Presented ¹

Please provide a summary of the mitigating circumstances overleaf (in Section B), ensuring that all supporting evidence is securely attached to this form.

I confirm that to the best of my knowledge the information contained within this form is an accurate statement of my personal circumstances and that I request my Course Manager / Senior Tutor to grant me an extension.

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____
(Student)

Section C – To be completed by the Course Manager / Senior Tutor

Module Number (as above)	Revised Approved Submission Time and Date

Signed: _____ **Printed:** _____ **Date:** _____
(Course Manager/Senior Tutor)

¹ e.g. Medical note, counsellor report, study needs assessment report (through the DSA), police report, death certificate or notice published in press or funeral order of service, employer's supporting letter

Section B – To be completed by the student

Please list full details of your claimed mitigating circumstances. This should include specific dates of illness or other incapacity and claimed impact on preparation for each assessment element and the requested extension deadline (attach supplementary pages where necessary).

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Course Manager / Senior Tutor Checklist

	Yes	No
Appropriate supporting evidence supplied by student?		
Original form retained by Course Manager/Senior Tutor		
Copy of Sections A and C only forwarded to Assignment Office?		
Copy of Sections A and C only forwarded to Module Leader(s)?		
Copy of ALL sections (& supporting evidence) forwarded to Examinations Office?		
Copy of ALL sections supplied to Student?		

Please ensure that all paperwork is distributed prior to the original submission deadlines for which extensions are being requested.

Mitigating Circumstances: Deferral or Condonement Request Form

Before completing this form, please ensure that you have read the accompanying 'Arrangements for Claiming Mitigating Circumstances' guidance. Failure to do so may mean that this form is incorrectly completed and could result in your claim being turned down. This is a double-sided form – please ensure that you complete **BOTH** sides before submitting the form to the Examinations Office (M17) at least **FIVE** working days prior to the commencement of the assessment board schedules.

Student Name	Course	Year of Study

Reason for claim – Please clearly indicate what you are requesting for each module/assessment using the following terms:

- Deferral:* Where you have been unable to attend at, or submit for, a scheduled assessment and you are seeking to delay your assessment to a later date;
- Re-take:* Request to undertake assessment again (to be considered as same attempt) in light of unexpected circumstances that impacted negatively on academic performance;
- Module:* Condonement request for mitigating circumstances to be taken into account in relation to a marginal module fail result;
- Award:* Condonement request for mitigating circumstances to be taken into account in relation to final award classification.

Reason for Claim	Module Title	Module leader	Assessment Element	Date of Exam or Submission date	Evidence Presented

All evidence presented **MUST** be either original documents or independently verified copies. Please note that your request is likely to be rejected if it is not supported by independent evidence.

Please Turn Over

Summary of claimed mitigating circumstances, to include specific dates of illness or other incapacity and claimed impact on assessment preparation for each assessment element (attach supplementary pages where necessary).

I confirm that to the best of my knowledge the information contained within this form is an accurate statement of my personal circumstances and that I request the relevant Assessment Board to grant me a deferral, re-take or condonement of my assessment(s).

Signed: _____

(Student)

Date: _____

11. Mitigating circumstances

11.1 Procedure for claiming mitigating circumstances

A student who believes that their ability to enter for assessment or that their assessed work has been affected by circumstances outside their control, may draw these circumstances to the attention of the course assessments board that considers their progression or final award.

The student must submit any claim in writing, using the Mitigating Circumstances forms (available from www.harper.ac.uk/keyinfo or **Annex 5.28** of the *Academic Quality Assurance Manual*). Any written claim must be submitted to the Harper Adams Examinations Office at least five working days before the assessments boards meeting schedule, as published on the Examinations Notice board. The student is responsible for ensuring that the Examinations Office is in receipt of the written claim by the deadline. This is to ensure that the request is incorporated into the relevant meeting agenda.

The claim must detail the specific circumstances that the student wishes to be taken into account and show how they affected either their ability to submit for assessment or their performance level. The claim should be supported by appropriate independent documentary evidence. Students who enter the examination room are considered to have declared themselves fit for assessment.

11.2 Grounds for mitigation

Grounds for mitigation claims are normally limited to:

- serious illness which is not a permanent medical condition or disability (for which reasonable adjustments to arrangements are made). This might, for example, include a broken writing arm or an illness requiring hospitalisation, but would not include a headache, cold or upset stomach;
- the death of an immediate family member shortly before the date of the assessment (typically, 28 days immediately before the scheduled assessment);
- Other serious circumstances beyond the control of a student, which could not have been foreseen or prevented (typically no more than 28 days before the scheduled assessment).

A student may not normally claim mitigating circumstances on the basis that their family, financial or other general life problems and employment or other work pressures affected performance, unless they can produce written evidence that their performance has been unexpectedly and severely affected.

A student may not claim mitigating circumstances, specifically, on the grounds that:

- They consider the marks awarded too low;
- They were unaware of the assessment regulations;
- They missed the published examination, through misreading the timetable, travel problems or other reason;
- Work was lost because of a technical or delivery failure (eg computer malfunction or lost post).

A student who has difficulties with the conditions in an examination room must bring this to the attention of the invigilator immediately. If this is not done, the condition in the examination may not be used as mitigating circumstances.

The course assessments board will, in confidence, consider the mitigating circumstances, in making decisions on module condonement, student progression and final awards. A copy of the written claim and documentary evidence will be retained, in confidence, by the Examinations Office.

11.3 Module condonement

Where mitigating circumstances are demonstrated to have affected student performance, the course assessments board has discretion to condone marginal failure (35-39%) in a maximum of 45 credits or 15% of total credit requirements, (whichever is the lesser), excluding the individual major project. The original mark achieved in a condoned module will be used in the classification of awards and the corresponding grade will be included in the transcript, with a reference to the condonement.

No more than 45 combined credits or 15% of the total requirement, (whichever is the lesser), from compensated and/or condoned modules can contribute to award requirements.

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18 Coursework deadline policy

Arrangements for the submission of all student work will be published for each module and the industrial training period(s). In addition to the paper copy, an identical electronic copy, where required, must also be provided, as detailed in assignment briefs by the stated date/time. Student work (paper or digital) submitted **UP TO 5 working days** later than the published date/time will be subject to the final mark being capped at 40%. Student work submitted **AFTER** 5.00pm on the fifth working day will be awarded a grade of zero.

The only exception to the above is if a student produces a written claim for extenuating circumstances using the approved Deferral Request Form, with appropriate evidence, in support of a failure to hand work in on time, normally **within 48 hours** of the submission deadline, the Course Manager or delegated Course Tutor, will advise the module leader to mark the work and to record the provisional marks. The relevant assessment board, or panel appointed by the assessment board Chair, will subsequently consider the claim and decide whether or not the provisional marks attributed to the late work should be accepted and advise the relevant subject assessment board accordingly. The outcome will be reflected in the results notified to students following the assessment board meeting.