

Personal Mitigating Circumstances Procedure

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1.0 Purpose

This document sets out the University's regulations governing personal mitigating circumstances and the procedure for submission of personal mitigating circumstances. It also sets out how such circumstances will be considered by Schools and Boards of Examiners.

2.0 Scope

This procedure applies to all students registered on undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes University of Salford programmes, includes including students at partner institutions.

3.0 Policy Statements

3.1 What are Personal Mitigating Circumstances?

Personal mitigating circumstances (PMC) are circumstances such as medical or personal issues which have seriously affected a student's ability to do an assessment, which a student has no control over and which could not have been predicted.

Students can ask the University to consider PMC requests if assessments have been affected in the following ways:

- late submission of an assessment during the four working day late submission period;
- absence from an assessment such as an examination or presentation;
- non-submission of an assessment.

3.2 Fit To Sit or Submit

By attending an assessment or submitting a piece of coursework, students are deemed to be fit and well enough to take assessments (i.e. students are deemed to be 'fit to sit or submit'). As such, students cannot submit PMC requests on the basis that their standard of performance in the assessment has been affected by PMC.

In rare situations where illness occurs during a scheduled assessment such as an exam or presentation, consideration will be given to PMC requests. These must be reported at the time to the invigilator or examiner. Students can submit PMC requests for non-attendance to request a replacement assessment opportunity after the assessment.

Exceptionally, where a student has been unable to determine if they were fit to sit/submit an assessment and has done so, a student can submit PMC requests to request that the assessment attempt should be considered as a non-submission or absence. This would normally be limited to situations where a student was so unwell or so severely affected by their circumstances that they were unable to recognise or determine their own ill health, and medical documentation would need to be provided to confirm this.

In cases where a student has a disability which is confirmed part way through an academic year and a Reasonable Adjustment Plan is created, a student can submit PMC requests to ask that an assessment which has been submitted or taken should be considered as null and void and effectively request a replacement attempt. A student cannot ask for a replacement assessment attempt for assessments completed in a previous academic year.

3.3 Ongoing Mitigating Circumstances

This Procedure should not be used by students to mitigate against ongoing illnesses or circumstances. Instead students should seek support from their personal tutor, programme leader or askUS. Options include assessment for a Reasonable Adjustment Plan or an interruption to studies.

3.4 Process for Submitting Mitigating Circumstances

A student who wishes the University to consider a PMC request should complete and submit the online form available at: <https://sss.salford.ac.uk>. The form:

- a) must be supported by documentary evidence (see Appendix A for examples of evidence which could be used to support mitigating circumstances).
- b) must specify whether the student is claiming mitigation for:
 - i. late submission of coursework or
 - ii. non-submission of coursework; or
 - iii. non-attendance at an examination or similar type of assessment.

Remember that late submission of coursework, and therefore a PMC request for late submission, is not possible during the reassessment period. This applies to all students who have a

- a replacement first assessment attempt following accepted personal mitigating circumstances;
 - a second assessment attempt (reassessment);
 - a third and final assessment attempt (retake).
- c) may be submitted in advance of the assessment date if the student knows that they will be unable to attend an examination or similar assessment or submit a piece of assessed work and if relevant evidence is available, for example if a student has a hospital appointment or treatment scheduled on the date of an assessment.
 - d) must be submitted within 10 working days of the assessment or submission date (where a student has a Reasonable Adjustment Plan which permits an extended assessment or submission date, the PMC request must be submitted no later than 10 working days after the student's individual assessment or submission date).

Students are responsible for:

- making their case clearly on the form;
- clearly stating the dates they were affected by their mitigating circumstances and the impact of the circumstances;
- providing independent third party evidence to support the circumstances outlined in the form, independent advice is available from the Students' Union if required; Appendix 1 gives guidance on the type of evidence that could support PMCs.

Evidence

- All evidence should be submitted in English or in the original language with an official verified translation provided. Appendix 2 provides guidance for students who may require medical evidence.
- The University **cannot** obtain evidence on behalf of a student.

3.5 Steps to Take if a Student is Unable to Submit Their Own PMC Request

There may be occasions when a student is unable to submit a PMC request due to incapacity. In this case the student may nominate another person to make arrangements for a request to be submitted on their behalf. The student or their confirmed nominee should contact askUS or their School Office.

3.6 Process to Follow if a Student is Unable to Attend an Exam or Similar Assessment

There may be occasions when a student is unable to attend an exam, test or similar form of assessment and, by their absence, has declared themselves unfit to attend. In such cases, the student should:

- a) notify their School Office of their absence, preferably before the assessment is due to take place, if this is not possible, then as soon as possible after the assessment;
- b) seek medical attention and documentary evidence of illness or other relevant evidence as soon as possible;
- c) submit a PMC request within the timescales stated above.

3.7 Process to Follow if a Student Becomes Ill During an Exam or Similar Assessment

A student who is taken ill during a scheduled assessment i.e. exam or presentation should:

- a) notify an invigilator so that a report of the illness can be made;
- b) seek medical attention on the day and obtain documentary evidence of incapacity where possible;
- c) submit a PMC request for non-submission of assessed coursework or non-attendance at an examination within the timescale specified above.

3.8 Personal Mitigating Circumstances and Reasonable Adjustment Plans

PMC requests should not be submitted for matters covered by a Reasonable Adjustment Plan which offer reasonable adjustments for disabled students or where other individual arrangements have been made. If a student has a Reasonable Adjustment Plan but experiences additional issues, or when the circumstances covered by the Reasonable Adjustment Plan are exacerbated, then a student may submit a PMC request. In such circumstances, the student should seek a review of their Reasonable Adjustment Plan through the Disability and Learner Support Service.

3.9 Independent Advice and Support

A student who requires independent advice and support in completing a PMC request should contact the Students' Union Advice Centre.

3.10 Acceptable/Unacceptable Personal Mitigating Circumstances

Examples of acceptable PMC requests are listed below. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list:

- a) significant illness during an assessment such as an exam or presentation;
- b) significant illness lasting for several days and which is serious enough to prevent a student from making progress with or submitting an assessment;
- c) serious illness of a close family member which means a student needs to provide significant caring support and which has not been planned for;
- d) military service;
- e) elite athletes who are required to attend sporting events/fixtures on behalf of their country;
- f) significant increases in a student's workload (e.g. as a result of paid employment) which had not been planned for (this only applies to part time students);
- g) being called for jury service;
- h) the death of someone close to you;
- i) a shortcoming or failure in the support arrangements for disabled students.

The following examples would not normally be considered as acceptable PMC requests:

- a) circumstances over which a student has some control (e.g. going on holiday; moving house; getting married; choosing to miss an assessment for something considered more important e.g. getting a cheaper flight);
- b) circumstances to which all or most students are subject (e.g. financial difficulties, "bunching" of examinations or coursework deadlines or exam stress);
- c) circumstances which have already been provided for by individual assessment arrangements;
- d) circumstances arising from poor time management or personal organisation (e.g. failure to plan for foreseeable last-minute emergencies such as computer crashes, printing problems, work not backed up, misreading/lack of awareness of examination timetables or submission deadlines);
- e) travel problems arising from minor delays or in cases where normal traffic congestion has not been taken into account;
- f) minor ailments of a short-term nature such as colds, headaches, stomach upsets, except where the ailment prevented attendance at, or occurred during, an exam or similar assessment;
- g) being subject to Procedures such as Academic Misconduct, Disciplinary or Fitness to Practise.

3.11 Process for Review of PMCs and Notification of Outcomes

PMC requests are considered by the School which has responsibility for the student's registration, normally within three working days of submission.

Schools are required to nominate reviewers to consider PMC requests. Each case is considered by two reviewers, one reviewer is a member of academic staff, and the other is a member of the School's administration team. All reviewers will be trained to undertake the role. The academic staff reviewer should not be the Chair of a Module or Programme Board of Examiners which considers the same student.

Reviewers would normally be expected to consider PMC requests prior to meetings of the relevant Module/programme Board of Examiners.

Reviewers determine the validity of each case on the basis of the evidence submitted. Decisions will be made either jointly or, using a third, adjudicating academic reviewer, on a majority basis to either accept PMC requests or reject PMC requests.

When considering PMC requests, reviewers take the following into account:

- a) Is there independent third party evidence to support the case being made? (Appendix 1 provides indicative guidance in relation to evidence.)
- b) Does the period affected by the PMC request correspond with the date of the assessment/examination?
- c) Did the student have time to complete the assessment if the PMC period is disregarded?
- d) Has the student provided a clear supporting statement detailing the nature, severity and impact of the circumstances?

A record should be kept of all cases considered. PMC requests should be retained electronically until the student has graduated and any appeal considered.

Schools shall inform students of the outcome of their PMC request immediately after consideration, normally via email, and where possible within three working days. The communication should advise students of the following:

- a) Module components for which PMCs have been submitted;
- b) Mitigation claimed for each component, e.g. late submission;
- c) The outcome (accept or reject);
- d) A brief rationale to explain the outcome in the cases of rejected PMCs;
- e) Potential action which may be taken by the Module or Programme Board of Examiners.

Students are encouraged to discuss PMC outcomes with their Personal Tutor or Programme Leader to understand any relevant implications.

3.11 Action Taken by a Board of Examiners in Relation to PMC Requests

Decisions are reported to the relevant Module/Programme Board of Examiners. The Board of Examiners shall not be permitted to change the decision of the reviewers. Actions in response to reviewers' decisions shall be recorded in the Board of Examiners' minutes.

The University has determined that students should be given the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and competence at a time when they are fit and well to do so; consequently, Boards of Examiners may not change marks nor set aside marks in order to accommodate PMCs.

Where a PMC request is accepted for a component of assessment:

- a) if the claim is for the late submission of work then any penalties for late work for that component shall be removed and the module mark or grade shall be calculated in the normal way;
- b) if the claim is for the non-submission of work or absence from an examination then the student shall be offered a replacement attempt for that component which shall normally take place in the next designated assessment period.

Where a PMC request is rejected for an assessment then the mark or grade given to the student, including any penalties for late work, shall stand.

In circumstances where a student is permitted a replacement attempt at an assessment (in the current or next academic year) as a result of an accepted PMC request and this decision has been reported to the Board of Examiners, the Board may exercise discretion regarding the nature of the assessment and how the learning outcomes may be achieved.

Where a student on the final stage of a taught Masters programme has an accepted PMC request for non-submission, guidance is available about submission dates for replacement attempts:

https://www.salford.ac.uk/_data/assets/word_doc/0003/1013286/Removal-of-Extensions-for-Students-on-Taught-Masters-Programmes.docx

3.12 Rejected PMCs and Academic Appeals

Where PMC requests have been rejected due to insufficient or lack of evidence, a student may, within five working days, submit further evidence to support their case by. Details of the process to follow in this situation will be provided to students when they are initially informed that their PMC request has been rejected.

Where PMC requests are rejected, students may subsequently submit an academic appeal against the decision of the Examination Board when ratified/confirmed results are available. Students will need to establish good reason to explain why all relevant information could not be provided through the PMC Procedure. Not knowing about the University's PMC Procedure would not be considered good reason for non-submission of a PMC request.

The following would be considered as acceptable reasons to explain why a PMC request was not submitted in line the PMC Procedure:

- a student was in hospital or severely ill and unable to submit a PMC request (evidence will be required to support this);
- relevant evidence to support a PMC request became available after the PMC submission deadline.

4.0 Related Documentation

- [Assessment and Feedback Policy](#)
- [Academic Appeals Procedure](#)
- [Fitness to Practise Procedure](#)

- [Fitness to Study Procedure](#)
- [Student Interruptions and Withdrawals Policy](#)

5.0 Appendices

Appendix A: Evidence for Personal Mitigating Circumstances

Appendix B: Guidance for students seeking medical evidence for PMC/Academic Appeal Purposes

Appendix 2: Guidance for students seeking medical evidence for PMC/Academic Appeal Purposes

If you have an illness or health condition which has affected your assessments and you need to submit personal mitigating circumstances (either for a PMC or an Academic Appeal), it is strongly advised that you obtain a signed and dated letter on headed paper or with an official stamp from a health professional (GP, clinical specialist, registered professional in psychiatric practice, registered nurse/midwife etc.) to support your PMC/Appeal.

The evidence should be in English and you are responsible for ensuring that evidence in other languages is accompanied by an official certified translation.

Healthcare professionals may charge for any letter or medical evidence which they provide and students are responsible for the payment of these fees. Students will not be reimbursed by the University for any costs associated with obtaining medical evidence.

Appointment cards are not sufficient evidence of a health condition, as they will not indicate a medical condition or the period during which you were affected.

Letters from family members, friends and fellow students are unlikely to be considered as valid evidence for a PMC due to the fact they are not from a professional or independent third party.

Staff considering your PMC/Appeal will look for the following information:

- A brief description (without breaching confidence) of the medical issue and how this has affected your ability to prepare for, submit or attend an assessment. This could include the main effects of the condition and any side effects of medication or treatment.
- The period of time during which you were affected by the medical issue. This is to check that it coincides with relevant assessment dates.
- If you have been affected as the result of a set of circumstances relating to another person (e.g. the illness of a relative), confirmation of the impact this has had on you.
- The university has a 'fit to sit' policy which means that if you sit or submit an assessment, you are declaring that you are fit to do so. In very exceptional circumstances, if you have sat or submitted an assessment but are able to show that you were unable determine if you were fit to do so, the university may be able to consider a PMC or appeal on this basis. In such cases, confirmation from a health professional is needed.
- In the case of academic appeals, if you did not submit a PMC at the time of your assessment, the factors that may have prevented you from doing so.

You should ensure that you read the Personal Mitigating Circumstances or Academic Appeals Procedure for further information.

Document Control Information			
Revision History incl. Authorisation: (most recent first)			
Author	Summary of changes	Version	Authorised & Date
Annette Cooke	General update for 2018/19 and inclusion of link to guidance about PMC requests submitted by students who are in final stage of PGT programmes	1.8	Update on behalf of SELTEC 15 August 2018
Annette Cooke	General update for 2017/18	1.7	Update on behalf of SELTEC 6 July 2017
Annette Cooke	Inclusion of types of circumstances which may be considered as acceptable/unacceptable for PMC purposes, procedure transferred to new template, minor modifications to terminology used and improved accessibility	1.6	Update on behalf of SELTEC 24 August 2016
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Others with responsibilities (please specify):	All subjects of the Policy will be responsible for engaging with and adhering to this policy.		
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