

# **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 Assessment Boards.

## **2.0 Scope**

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

## **3.0 Policy**

### **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 complete an assessment, over which a student has no control, and which could not have been predicted.

Students can ask the University to consider PMC requests for the following reasons:

- late submission of an assessment during the late submission period which, if accepted, would result in removal of a late submission penalty;
- absence from or non-submission of an assessment which, if accepted, would offer the student a replacement assessment attempt at the next available opportunity.

### **3.2 Acceptable/Unacceptable Personal Mitigating Circumstances**

Examples of acceptable PMC requests are listed below (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) significant and unanticipated 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);
- e) being called for jury service;
- f) the death of someone close to you;
- g) unanticipated military service deployment;
- h) a shortcoming or failure in the support arrangements for disabled students.

The following examples would not normally be considered as acceptable PMC requests (this is not an exhaustive list):

- a) circumstances over which a student has some control (e.g. going on holiday);
- 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 (e.g. through a Reasonable Adjustment Plan);
- 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 scheduled assessment;
- g) being subject to Procedures such as Academic Misconduct, Disciplinary or Fitness to Practise.

### **3.3 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, so 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 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.

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 a PMC request to ask 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 a PMC request 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 or consider options including a Reasonable Adjustment Plan or an interruption to study.

Flexibility may be required where a student's condition fluctuates. Whilst evidence would normally be required to support a request, in the case of a disabled student where the student's condition is known to the University, it would not be reasonable to expect the student to provide

medical evidence each time they submit a PMC request. For example, a student might need to submit a PMC request for late submission if there has been an exacerbation to their known condition. Submitting a PMC request on the basis of previously documented evidence with respect to a registered disability will not be treated as a self-certification PMC request (outlined in 4.2).

## **4.0 Procedure**

### **4.1 Submission and information required**

To make a PMC request, a student should complete and submit the online form available at:

<https://sss.salford.ac.uk>.

The student must:

- a) describe the personal mitigating circumstances which have affected the assessment(s) and the impact of these circumstances;
- b) confirm the dates during which they have been affected by mitigating circumstances;
- c) confirm if the request relates to late submission of coursework or absence from or non-submission of an assessment.
- d) provide either an appropriate self-certificate form (see section 4.2) or independent third-party evidence to support the circumstances (see appendix 1);

The request may be submitted in advance of the assessment date if the student knows that they will be unable to attend an 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.

The request 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).

### **4.2 Self certification**

Self-certification is a way of reporting PMCs of up to seven consecutive days due to a short-term acute illness or condition for which it is not reasonably possible to obtain independent third-party evidence. This can be used where the illness has resulted in absence (non-attendance) from a scheduled assessment event, such as an examination or presentation; or prevented the timely submission of coursework.

Self-certification can only be used for work submitted during the late submission period to request the removal of the late submission cap and cannot be used to extend the length of the late submission period.

Students have one opportunity during an academic year to have a PMC request supported by a self-certification form accepted.

Self-certification of short-term illness cannot be used in situations where students have already declared themselves fit to take assessments.

### **4.3 Evidence**

If a student has an illness lasting longer than seven days, has already had a PMC accepted with a self-certification form in the same academic year or has other types of mitigating circumstances, then independent third-party evidence will be required to support the PMC request.

All evidence should be submitted in English or in the original language with an official verified translation provided. Appendix 1 provides examples of evidence which could be used to support mitigating circumstances. Appendix 2 provides guidance about medical evidence. The University **cannot** obtain evidence on behalf of a student.

### **4.4 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 their School Office or askUS.

### **4.5 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) where appropriate seek medical attention on the day and obtain evidence of incapacity where possible;
- c) submit a PMC request for non-attendance at the assessment within the timescale specified above.

### **4.6 PMCs 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. If such circumstances are likely to be ongoing, the student should seek a review of their Reasonable Adjustment Plan through the Disability and Learner Support Service.

### **4.7 Independent advice and support**

A student who requires independent advice about a PMC request should contact the Students' Union Advice Centre.

### **5.0 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 Assessment Board which considers the same student.

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

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) recommended action to be taken by the Module or Programme Assessment Board.

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

## **6.0 Assessment Board Decisions**

Decisions are reported to the relevant Assessment Board. The Assessment Board shall not be permitted to change the decision of the reviewers. Actions in response to reviewers' decisions shall be recorded in the Assessment Board 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, Assessment Boards 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 Assessment Board, 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](https://www.salford.ac.uk/_data/assets/word_doc/0003/1013286/Removal-of-Extensions-for-Students-on-Taught-Masters-Programmes.docx)

## **7.0 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. Details of the process to follow in this situation will be provided to students when they are informed that their PMC request has been rejected.

Following conclusion of the PMC process and where a PMC request has been rejected, students may subsequently submit an academic appeal against the decision of the Assessment 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.

## **8.0 Related Documentation**

- [FAQs for Personal Mitigating Circumstances \(including self certification\)](#)
- [Assessment and Feedback Policy](#)
- [Academic Appeals Procedure](#)
- [Fitness to Practise Procedure](#)

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

## **9.0 Appendices**

Appendix 1: Evidence for Personal Mitigating Circumstances

Appendix 2: 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 to 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.

<b>Document Control Information</b>			
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<b>Author</b>	<b>Summary of changes</b>	<b>Version</b>	<b>Authorised &amp; Date</b>
Annette Cooke	Introduction of self certification, clarified of evidence to support PMC requests for disabled students with fluctuating conditions, review of acceptable reasons for PMC requests.	1.9	SELTEC 22 May 2019
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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<b>Author to complete formal assessment with the following advisory teams:</b>			
Equality Analysis (E&D, HR) <a href="#">Equality Assessment form</a>	1. 24 August 2016		
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<b>The owner and author are responsible for publicising this policy document.</b>	

# UNIVERSITY OF SALFORD

## Self-Certification

### 1. What is self-certification?

Self-certification is a way of reporting to the University personal mitigating circumstances (PMC) of up to 7 consecutive days due to a short-term acute illness or condition for which it is not reasonably possible to obtain independent third-party evidence.

### 2. What assessment situations can self-certification cover?

Students can use the self-certification process for absence (non-attendance) at a scheduled assessment event, such as an examination or presentation, OR the late submission of work during the late submission period.

Students can use the self-certification process for situations where, for example, short term acute illness resulted in absence (non-attendance) from a scheduled assessment event, such as an examination or presentation; OR prevented the timely submission of coursework. Note that self-certification can only be used for work submitted during the late submission period to request the removal of the late submission cap and cannot extend the length of the late submission period.

We trust students to use self-certification of PMCs accurately and honestly. Self-certification should not be used in respect of the general pressure of workload or as a way to address poor personal planning and time management. The provision of false information will be regarded as a disciplinary matter by the University.

Submitting a PMC on the basis of previously documented evidence with respect to a registered disability would not be treated as applying for self-certification.

### 3. What is the process to notify the university of short-term PMC?

Students will need to notify the University of short-term PMC using the student self-service/PMC portal. Students will need to provide a clear description of the nature of their PMC, the impact on assessment(s), which assessment(s) have been affected, dates during which they were affected and a confirm that details provided are accurate. Students are not expected to explain within their PMC why it was not possible or unreasonable to obtain independent third-party evidence.

### 4. What is the deadline to notify the University of PMC?

Students will need to notify the University of relevant PMC within 10 working days from the submission/assessment date. Students should ensure that all assessments affected by the notified condition are included in the same PMC request.

**5. How often can students use the self-certification process?**

Students have one opportunity during an academic year to have a self-certificated PMC request accepted. In some instances, a number of assessments or submission dates may be affected by the notified condition. In which case, students can use this self-certification period to claim for all assessments which fall within the 7-day period and which were specifically affected by the notified condition.

**6. What happens if a PMC request is accepted?**

If a PMC request is accepted for absence from a scheduled assessment, the student will be given a replacement attempt the next time the assessment runs.

If a PMC request is accepted due to late submission, the student will have any late submission penalty removed from the affected assessment(s).

**7. What if a PMC request is rejected?**

If a PMC request which involves self-certification has been rejected, students will be able to make use of the standard PMC reappraisal process to provide clarification of their request or provide additional information. In addition, if a student uses self-certification on one occasion in an academic year and the PMC request is rejected, the student will have further opportunities to self-certificate at a later point in the same academic year; however, only one request can be accepted within an academic year.

**8. What if a student's PMCs last for a longer period?**

If a student has circumstances which last for a period longer than 7 consecutive days, the student will be expected to support their PMC request with evidence from an independent third-party professional.

**9. What if a student has a second instance of short-term PMC in the same academic year?**

Students can only use the self-certification process once in any one academic year so if there is a second instance of short-term PMC then any PMC request would need to be supported by evidence from an independent third-party professional.

**10. How will self certification be tracked?**

If students wish to use the self-certification process, the PMC system will be updated to track use of self certification so that this can be monitored. As explained above, self-certification will only be accepted once during an academic year without additional evidence from an independent third party. We will investigate if this aspect of the system can be disabled once it has been used in an academic year. Students will be advised that one a PMC using self-

certification has been accepted in any one academic year, future occurrences will not be accepted.

**11. How will PMC requests which include self certification be reviewed?**

PMC requests including self-certification will be reviewed in the same way as any other PMC request. This includes review by two School-based PMC reviewers. Reviewers will be asked to consider the timing of the PMCs (is the timing likely to have had an impact on submission of the assessment?).

**12. Final Year Students**

Students in the final year of their studies should be aware that if they are unable to submit an assessment (and a PMC request for non-submission/absence is submitted), this may result in a delay to their graduation as it may not be possible to offer a further assessment opportunity prior to graduation.

16 April 2019