



University of
Salford
MANCHESTER

Personal Mitigating Circumstances Procedure

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1.0 Purpose

This document sets out the University's regulations governing personal mitigating circumstances (PMCs) and the procedure for submission of PMCs. 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 at Salford, including students at partner institutions. It only applies to summative assessment (i.e. assessment formally submitted for marking and credit). It does not apply to formative assessment, which has a development purpose and is designed to help you learn more effectively through feedback on your performance, providing comments on how it can be improved.

This procedure does not apply to postgraduate research students who are advised to consult the Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Programmes for information regarding personal mitigating circumstances.

3.0 Policy

3.1 What are Personal Mitigating Circumstances?

PMCs are circumstances such as medical or personal issues which have seriously affected your ability to complete an assessment, over which you have no control, and which could not have been predicted.

You 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 you from making progress with or submitting an assessment;
- c) serious illness of a close family member which means you need to provide significant caring support and which has not been planned for;
- d) significant and unanticipated increases in your 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 you have 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, you are declaring that you are fit and well enough to take assessments, so you are deemed to be ‘fit to sit or submit’. As such, you cannot submit PMC requests on the basis that your 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. You can submit PMC requests for non-attendance to request a replacement assessment opportunity.

Exceptionally, where you are unable to determine if you were fit to sit/submit an assessment and has done so, you 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 you were so unwell or so severely affected by your circumstances that you were unable to recognise or determine your own ill health, and medical documentation would need to be provided to confirm this.

Information for students with Reasonable Adjustment Plans and disabilities is provided in sections 3.3 and 4.6.

3.4 Ongoing Mitigating Circumstances

This Procedure should not be used to mitigate against ongoing illnesses or circumstances. You should seek support or consider options including a Reasonable Adjustment Plan or an interruption to study.

Flexibility may be required where a you have a fluctuating condition. Whilst evidence would normally be required to support a request, if you are a disabled student and your condition is known to the University, it would not be reasonable to expect you to provide medical evidence each time you submit a PMC request. For example, if you submit a PMC request for late submission if there has been an exacerbation to a 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, please complete the online form available at: <https://sss.salford.ac.uk>.

You must:

- a) describe the personal mitigating circumstances which have affected the assessment(s) and the impact of these circumstances;
- b) confirm the dates you 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 you know you will be unable to attend an assessment or submit a piece of assessed work and if relevant evidence is available. For example, you have a hospital appointment or treatment scheduled on the date of an assessment.

Your 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 arising from unanticipated circumstances where it is **not possible** to obtain independent third-party evidence including:

- a period of short-term acute illness or condition;
- caring responsibilities.

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. It cannot be used for non-submission of assessments.

You 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 you have already declared yourself fit to take assessments.

4.3 Evidence

If you have an illness lasting longer than seven days, have already had a PMC accepted with a self-certification form in the same academic year, or have 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 a 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 your behalf.

If concerns arise regarding the authenticity of evidence provided to support a PMC request, the University reserves the right to check the authenticity of such evidence with the identified originating source.

4.4 Steps to take if you are unable to submit your own PMC request

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

4.5 Process to follow if you becomes ill during an exam or similar assessment

If you are taken ill during a scheduled assessment i.e. exam or presentation you 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 Disabilities/Reasonable Adjustment Plans

Occasionally a disability may not be diagnosed until some, or all, of your assessments have been completed, or it is too late to put in place appropriate reasonable adjustments required to avoid disadvantage. In such circumstances, you may use the PMC process, even if you have submitted or taken assessments. You cannot ask for a replacement assessment attempt for assessments completed in a previous academic year.

PMC requests should not be submitted for matters already covered by a Reasonable Adjustment Plan which offers reasonable adjustments for disabled students, or where other individual arrangements have been made. If you have a Reasonable Adjustment Plan but experience additional issues, or when the circumstances covered by the Reasonable Adjustment Plan are exacerbated, then you may submit a PMC request. If such circumstances are likely to be

ongoing, you should seek a review of their Reasonable Adjustment Plan through Disability and Learner Support.

4.7 Independent advice and support

Independent advice about a PMC request is available from 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 your registration, normally within three working days of submission.

Schools are required to nominate reviewers to consider PMC requests.

Reviewers determine the validity of each case, taking the following into account:

- Have you provided a clear supporting statement detailing the nature, severity and impact of the circumstances?
- could the circumstances have been predicted or avoided?
- did the period affected correspond with the assessment date or timing?
- are the circumstances sufficiently severe to have had a definite impact?
- where appropriate, is the case supported by relevant and genuine evidence third party evidence?
- were adjustments in place to support the assessment (e.g. a RAP)?
- were the circumstances particular to you, or did they apply to all students?

A self-certification request will be considered by one reviewer (usually a member of the School's administration team).

An evidence-based request will be considered by two reviewers (a member of the School's academic staff and a member of the School's administration team). Where the two reviewers cannot agree, a third adjudicating academic reviewer will consider the case.

The academic 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.

A record should be kept of all cases considered. PMC requests and outcomes should be retained electronically in line with the Information Retention Schedule.

Schools will inform you of the outcome of your PMC request immediately after consideration, normally via email, and where possible within three working days. The communication will advise you 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.

You are encouraged to discuss PMC outcomes with your Personal Tutor, Programme Leader or Student Progression Administrator 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 you should be given the opportunity to demonstrate your skills and competence at a time when you 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 you will 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, including any penalties for late work, shall stand.

In circumstances where you are 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 you are a student on the final stage of a taught Masters programme and have an accepted PMC request for non-submission, [guidance](#) is available about submission dates for replacement attempts.

7.0 Rejected PMCs and Academic Appeals

Where PMC requests have been rejected due to insufficient or lack of evidence, you may, within five working days, submit further evidence to support your case. Details of the process to follow in this situation will be provided to you 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, you may subsequently submit an academic appeal against the decision of the Assessment Board when ratified/confirmed results are available. You 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:

- You were 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 \(including self certification\)](#)
- [Academic Appeals Procedure](#)
- [Fitness to Practise Procedure](#)
- [Fitness to Study Procedure](#)
- [Student Engagement, 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 3: FAQs for Self Certification

Appendix 1: EVIDENCE FOR PERSONAL MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES

This table gives an indication of what may be required to support a PMC claim. It is not comprehensive and there will be Personal Mitigating Circumstances that do not fall within the examples given. In such a case, students should still complete a form and supply appropriate evidence. Personal mitigating circumstances will be accepted or rejected depending on their nature, severity, timing and the cogency of the evidence. It may not be necessary to supply all the various forms of evidence listed for each PMC in this table but independent evidence is necessary to support the case. Students must provide the most appropriate type of evidence for their circumstances.

	Self Cert Notification through online PMC form (no evidence needed)	Letter from Doctor or counsellor	Proof of attendance at hospital or similar	Letter/ evidence from independent professional	Debt letters	Tenancy agreement	Official Witness Report/ Police report	Death Certificate/ Order of service	News/ Media Report	Evidence of Travel Arrangements/ Statement from Independent 3rd party	Meteoro logical Office/ News Report
All evidence should be submitted in English or in the original language with a translation provided											
Short Term Illness	✓	✓	✓	✓							
Medical Issue		✓	✓	✓							
Bereavement		✓		✓							
Death in family		✓		✓				✓	✓		
Problems at home		✓	✓	✓							
Victim of crime							✓				
Personal Matters		✓	✓	✓							
Housing problems					✓	✓					
Natural/ Environmental Matters (e.g. extreme weather									✓	✓	✓

conditions, volcanic ash)											
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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), if you do not meet the criteria for self-certification of an illness, 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 a translation.

Healthcare professionals may charge for any letter or medical evidence which they provide and you are responsible for the payment of these fees. You 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.

Appendix 3

Self-Certification

1. What is self-certification?

Self-certification is a way of reporting PMCs of up to seven consecutive days arising from unanticipated circumstances where it is **not possible** to obtain independent third-party evidence including:

- a period of short-term acute illness or condition;
- caring responsibilities.

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 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-certify 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 once 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 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.

Document Control Information			
Revision History incl. Authorisation: (most recent first)			
Author	Summary of changes	Version	Authorised & Date
Annette Cooke	Change to the process to review self-certification PMCs, removal of the need to provide an 'official' translation for evidence in another language, inclusion of the framework for PMC review, confirmation that PMCs do not apply to formative assessment and clarification of PMC routes for PGR students.	V1.10	SELTEC 1 July 2020
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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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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Legal implications (LPG)	2. N/A		
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