

**Mitigating Circumstances Guidance for all Taught Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students**

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1. **Where to go for help**

It’s often said that your university years are the best time of your life and we hope that’s the case for you in Leeds. However, there might be times when it doesn’t always feel like that. Whatever your situation, we’re here to help, support and guide you every step of the way.

Wherever you’re from and whatever your circumstances and support needs, our expert teams can work with you during your time in Leeds.

We pride ourselves on the services and facilities we can offer if you need our support while you're studying with us. From our experienced and helpful counselling team to support services for disabled students, we’re here when you need us.

Whatever you need, we’ve probably got it or could help you find it: accessible facilities, an assessment centre, support services and equipment, self-help groups, online and in-person counselling, space for prayer and contemplation, transcription services, support workers and funding advice.

The key services include:

Student Counselling

Disabled Students Assessment & Support

Mental Health Team

LUU Student Advice Centre

Chaplaincy

International Student Office

Accommodation Office

Security Services

If you do think you need some help or support, you should talk to someone within your parent School or Faculty in the first instance.

1. **General Information**

The University recognises that, during the course of their studies, students may be affected by illness and/or difficult and distressing events that are outside their control, but may affect their studies. Whilst it is the case that students should expect such events may take place, and make every effort to manage their lives and studies in conjunction with such events, it is also understood that students may need support in order to do so. To this end, the University has in place a number of mechanisms and services dedicated to providing that help.

Should such circumstances begin to affect a student’s ability to participate in their studies, it is the student’s responsibility to let the School know as soon as possible. There is a great deal of support available across the University, and Schools are best placed to provide advice regarding who to contact, and how. The University accepts that mitigating circumstances don’t just affect coursework or examinations, which is why it is important to let Schools know of any issues, at any stage, and as early as possible.

This guidance focuses on mitigating circumstances claims, and clarifies the types of adverse events or circumstances that the University will consider as a mitigating circumstance, and to set out the process by which requests are to be submitted and considered.

Should students be unclear about any stage of the process, they can ask their School for help. Alternatively, guidance can also be sought from the Leeds University Union Student

Advice Centre.

1. **What are mitigating circumstances?**

Mitigating circumstances are normally exceptional, short term, unforeseen and unpreventable events that may have a significantly disruptive effect on a student’s ability to study. These events are over and above the course of everyday life, and normally outside of the student’s control, and may affect a student’s ability to attend lectures, prepare for seminars, complete coursework, revise for and attend examinations, or any other aspect of their degree.

Mitigating Circumstances must be:

* Significant: The event or circumstances must have had a serious impact on a student’s studies;
* Unexpected: The student must normally have had no prior knowledge that a particular event or circumstance would occur;
* Unpreventable: There must have been no reasonable steps that the student could have taken to prevent the event or circumstance from occurring;
* Relevant: The student must be able to link the event or circumstance, and its impact, on the period for which the claim is being made;
* Corroborated: A request for mitigating circumstances must meet the normal requirements for independent documentary evidence *(see Evidence Guidance p.6)*

Not all difficult or distressing events will constitute mitigating circumstances; there must be a demonstrable adverse effect on an individual’s academic performance, which may take a number of forms:

* The student has been unable to submit work by a deadline date or attend a presentation date, test or examination;
* The event or circumstance may have caused the student to underperform in an assessment, either in the preparation for the assessment, or on the day (i.e. the circumstance affected the student whilst completing a piece of coursework or undertaking revision and/or sitting an examination).
* The event or circumstances impacted on the student prepare for and attend lectures, even if they were not absent, their ability to prepare for or attend seminars, participate in fieldwork, or any other aspect of their studies.
	1. **Examples of what would normally be accepted (with evidence)**

**This list is not exhaustive, and each case will be considered on its own merit.**

* The death of someone you are close to eg. parent, grandparent, guardian, partner, sibling, child;
* Serious personal illness or personal injury, or a significant change or deterioration in a long-term condition (physical or mental);
* Victim of crime (usually with police crime number, or supporting evidence from University member of staff/professional person to whom the student has confided);
* Jury service;
* Involvement in a criminal case/witness.
* Failure in the provision of reasonable adjustments, or failure in, or inaccessibility of, school provided equipment.
	1. **Examples of circumstances that might be considered (with evidence)**

**This list is not exhaustive, and each case will be considered on its own merit.**

* Personal problems/trauma/family crisis/domestic issues/unexpected issues with childcare provision;
* Illness of a close family member;
* Planned medical operation (if advance notice is provided);
* Planned hospital tests (if advance notice is provided);
* Unforeseen accommodation issues, outside of the student’s control (this would not include house moves caused due to the end of a lease).
1. **What are not mitigating circumstances?**

Not every event which a student believes has disrupted their ability to study will be considered as mitigating circumstances by the University. An unexpected event or illness does not automatically lead to poor academic performance. Students are expected to manage circumstances in their lives in conjunction with their studies, where feasible. If you are unsure as to whether you have a claim, please seek guidance from your School. Examples of situations which would not normally be considered mitigating circumstances include:

**This list is not exhaustive, and each case will be considered on its own merit.**

* Short-term minor ailments (coughs, colds etc.), even when supported by medical evidence – these should be covered by an application for an extension;
* Late submission of coursework without good reason (or where the student could reasonably have been expected to request an extension);
* Pressures of academic work (i.e. conflicting deadlines, poor time management, non-availability of books and other resources);
* Lost or not backed-up coursework, or other computer failure;
* Financial problems, even if this is a change of circumstances (other than cases of extreme hardship);
* Domestic events such as house moves, family celebrations, holidays, weddings or other such events where the student has control over the date or can choose not to attend;
* Normal academic work commitments;
* Appointments which could be rearranged (or advance notification given to the School);
* Long-standing health conditions, of which the student was aware prior to starting their course. Students are encouraged to raise any long-term health issues which may affect their studies with the University in order that tailored support can be put in place for them;
* Mistaking a deadline, misreading the examination timetable or submitting the wrong assignment in error;
* Transport difficulties (i.e. strikes, traffic jams, delayed trains);
* Illness for which no contemporaneous evidence is available (i.e evidence which demonstrates you sought medical advice or intervention at the time of the illness);
* Pregnancy. You should determine whether you believe you will be fit to study and undertake assessment around your expected due date. If you wish to defer your studies, you should apply to suspend study temporarily. Claims for unexpected difficulties, impact of unplanned pregnancy, or health issues may be considered, if supported by appropriate evidence;
* Examination nerves, feeling generally anxious, suffering from low mood, stress or panic attacks (where no diagnosis of a mental health condition has been made);
* Ignorance of the regulations or examination or assessment arrangements.
1. **Long-term circumstances**

Disabilities or health conditions which were diagnosed prior to the start of your degree are not normally considered grounds for mitigating circumstances. It is recommended that students with long-term and ongoing conditions seek support from the Disabled Students Assessment and Support (DSAS) service, to obtain a Study Aid and Study Strategies (Assessment of Needs) report in order that reasonable adjustments can be made to support them.

Students with long-term conditions who experience mitigating circumstances unrelated to their disability or health condition should follow the usual mitigating circumstances procedure to bring these issues to the attention of the University.

It is acknowledged that, on occasion, students with long-term health issues or disabilities who are being supported by DSAS will experience changes in their circumstances which affect their ability to study to an extent that adjustments put in place for them are not sufficient. Where a student experiences such a change, they are strongly encourage to contact DSAS for advice and further support, but a request for mitigation should also be considered. Students will be required to provide evidence to support such claims, however.

Students who have requested reasonable adjustments and find that they have not been effective, or have not been put in place in time (particularly at the start of the year), can also submit a request for mitigating circumstances where such issues have affected their studies. It is accepted that, sometimes, it will take time to get the right support in place, for example in terms of examinations, and students should feel able to bring this to the attention of the School when it has affected their performance.

1. **How to apply for mitigating circumstances**

All mitigating circumstances claims should be submitted to your parent School, even if the module you are claiming for is taken in a different School. Your parent School is responsible for assessing the evidence and making a decision, even though that decision may relate to modules taken elsewhere. The parent School will liaise with other Schools where required. Exact details of where to submit your claim in your parent School are set out under ‘How should I complete my mitigating circumstances form’ – Section 6.

Students must bear in mind that an application for mitigating circumstances, if successful, will usually result in the original assessment being permanently removed from your record, and a fresh attempt, for an uncapped mark, offered instead. Work cannot be marked (or re-marked) ‘taking into consideration mitigating circumstances’, and your existing mark will not be changed in the event of a successful application. This is the case for both claims for mitigation made prior to the meeting of the relevant examination board or claims made via the Academic Appeals process.

If you wish to request an extension to a submission deadline for an assessment, you should contact your parent School in the first instance to discuss this, and to find out what the process is for making your request.

* 1. **When should I inform Schools of my mitigating circumstances?**

You should inform your School of any problems that may be affecting your ability to study as soon as possible, in order to receive both advice and support. Applications for circumstances affecting your day to day studies should be submitted as soon as possible; applications for circumstances that you feel have affected specific pieces of coursework, or examination preparation and performance, should be lodged within 5 working days of the submission deadline, examination date, or by the deadline published by your School.

Please bear in mind that you will need to consider how to provide evidence for your application, which may require obtaining medical evidence. If you do not submit your application in a timely fashion, obtaining suitable evidence will be more difficult.

Please do not wait until you receive your results to submit an application. Retrospective applications for mitigating circumstances from students who wait until they have received their marks will not normally be accepted. Applications for mitigation should be received prior to the Examination Board, and students wishing to bring matters to the attention of the School after their marks have been confirmed will need to do so via the Academic Appeals procedure. Any student raising mitigating circumstances through this route will need to provide an explanation as to why they had not done so at an earlier stage, and waiting to see your marks, or ignorance of the relevant procedures will not be considered valid reasons.

There are some instances where students may receive, during their degree, the diagnosis of a health condition which would have affected their studies when they were not aware of it. In such circumstances, students should first seek advice from the School, or the Student Advice Centre. Such issues will be considered on a case by case basis by the School, via the mitigating circumstances process, or the Committee on Applications, via the Academic Appeals process.

If you take temporary leave after the deadline of the end of teaching week 8, you would need to submit a mitigating circumstances claim. This is due to the University policy that after week 8 of teaching you are still expected to complete your assessments. You should discuss this with your School at the time of taking temporary leave.

**Ignorance of the mitigating circumstances procedure is not considered grounds to permit retrospective claims for mitigation.**

* 1. **Where can I get a mitigating circumstances form?**

You can obtain an Application for consideration of mitigating circumstances form from your parent School or <http://students.leeds.ac.uk/mitigatingcircumstancesapplicationform>

1. **How should I complete my mitigating circumstances form?**

Before you begin to complete your form please read through this guidance document carefully, and also the information contained on the form.

Complete each section fully.

**Section 1: Student details**. You need to complete this section with your personal information and details of your programme of study.

**Section 2: Modules affected**. Here, you should provide details of each module and element of assessment for each module that have been affected by your circumstances. If there is more than one module, or more than one element for a module, list each one separately. For each module and/or element you should provide details of the date the assessment took place or the submission date. If you were absent and missed the assessment or did not submit the piece of work, you should indicate this by ticking in the box headed ‘Absent?’

Finally in this section, for each module and/or element you should state what you are requesting from the Committee. To do this you should select the relevant code as set out in section 3 and write this in the final column under section 2 which is headed ‘Request’. You should be aware that the final decision regarding your application rests with the Board of Examiners, and the resolution you request may not be the outcome granted.

There are four types of request that you can make:

1. Further attempt. This applies to a first attempt re-sit (uncapped) or a further re-sit attempt (capped). For example, if you missed the original attempt at your assessment, you may be granted a first attempt re-sit. If you missed a re-sit attempt at your assessment you may be granted a further resit attempt.
2. Coursework submission deadline extension. You should contact your parent School in the first instance to discuss your extension request and what the process is for making such requests in your School. You should only select this option as a mitigating circumstance if you are requesting an extension for a period of time which is longer than can be granted through the normal extension request process in your School/Faculty, or if your School/Faculty uses the application for consideration of mitigating circumstances form for all extension requests.
3. Remove penalties. This should be selected if you are requesting that a late submission penalty, or penalty for exceeding a word count, be waived.
4. Other (please state). This should be selected if you are making a request not covered in the categories above. You need to explain what you are asking for and why.

Example:

You have missed a practical assessment and think that you have not performed as well as usual due to illness in an exam for one of your modules. You would like to request a further attempt so you would complete section 2 as follows:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Module Code | Module title | State which element of assessment was affected (e.g. in class test/ groupwork/ presentation/ exam/ practical/ coursework) | Date of test/ presentation/ exam/ practical/ submission deadline date | Absent?(please state Yes or No) | Request (insert relevant code – see section 3) |
| BAKE1234 | Practical baking skills | Practical | 15/1/16 | Yes  | A |
| BAKE1234 | Practical baking skills | Exam | 17/1/16 | No | A |

**If you are unsure about how to complete this section, or what you should request, please speak to your school for advice. Staff will be able to go over your options with you.**

**Section 4: Details of your circumstances**. In this section you need to describe the nature of the circumstances which have affected you, and how this has affected your ability to prepare for, and participate, in your studies. You should give details of when the circumstances occurred and, where relevant, relate this to the assessments you have listed in section 2. In addition, if you are submitting your case after the deadline as published by the School, you need to provide an explanation as to why your case is late so that the Committee can decide whether or not it should be considered. If you are asking for an extension to a submission deadline you should state the length of time requested.

**Section 5: Supporting evidence**. This section gives you an idea of the type of evidence that will normally be accepted to support your case. You should indicate which one(s) you are providing. If you are unable to submit your evidence at the same time as your form, for example if you are awaiting a medical note from your doctor, you should state this, and when you expect to be able to provide the evidence, under ‘Further details’. Other forms of evidence to those listed may be relevant and appropriate; if you are not sure, check with your School

**Note**: All mitigating circumstances applications are treated confidentially, and seen only by those members of staff required in order to make a decision. If your circumstances are such, that you would like to restrict sight of your application to the Chair of the decision making committee only, please submit it in a sealed envelope, clearly marked with your name and SID number, and indicate that you have done so on the form using the ‘tick box’.

**Study Abroad:** Any information disclosed on this form may help us to liaise with you about a suitable placement and support for your residence/study abroad. By agreeing to the disclosure of information, you will help us to provide the best level of advice as you plan for your time abroad. It is also important that you share information with us so we can offer you full support while you are away.

**Section 6: Checklist**. You should use this section to check that you have provided all the necessary information so that the Committee can consider your case.

When your form is completed, you should take a copy of it and your evidence, then submit it, along with your supporting evidence (or details of when this will be submitted) to your parent School.

**Section 7: Declaration**. You should sign and date to confirm that the information you have provided is honest and accurate to the best of your knowledge. This also confirms that you have read and understood the mitigating circumstances guidelines.

1. **Mitigating Circumstances – Guidance on Evidence**

Applications for mitigating circumstances will not normally be considered unless they are supported by independent documentary evidence. Applications will not be confirmed until this evidence has been received (applications can be submitted without this evidence, but relevant documents must be submitted within 5 working days of the form where possible).

Independent evidence would normally be an original document on headed paper and signed by an appropriate third party, giving details of the circumstances, its dates and/or duration and, where possible, its impact. (Original documentation can be returned to the student if requested). An appropriate third party would be one who knows the student in a professional capacity, or one who can verify the circumstances and who is in a position to provide objective and impartial evidence. Electronic evidence will only be accepted from verifiable addresses.

All evidence must be provided in English. It is the student’s responsibility to provide translations of any non-English documentation, and any documents not in English or without translation will not be accepted as evidence. The translation must be certified as accurate by a Public Notary or translated by an accredited translator.

The following list aims to provide guidance on the types of evidence that we would normally expect to be provided to support an application for mitigating circumstances. This list should not be considered definitive, and Schools should always give reasonable consideration to other forms of documentary evidence obtained by a student in support of their application.

Students should be aware that their School may request additional evidence to help to clarify a set of circumstances and all documentation supplied should be the originals unless otherwise stated by the School. Scanned documents may be provided in instances where time is a factor, but students MUST be prepared to present the original documents upon request at any stage of the application, including once an application has been approved.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Illness or accident of student (short-term) | Medical certificate signed by appropriately qualified medical practitioner, obtained whilst the illness or incident was affecting the student (including a copy of the Invigilator’s report in instances where a student is taken ill during an examination – these are sent directly to the parent school from the examinations office);ORLetter from doctor, giving dates affected by illness and containing a medical opinion on how the student would have been affected. NB: Medical notes which demonstrate that medical advice and treatment was sought at the time of, or soon after, a bout of illness, will carry more weight than a retrospective disclosure of illness weeks or months after the fact.  |
| Illness of student (chronic/long-term) | For conditions which pre-date admission to the University, students will need to provide relevant medical evidence to demonstrate how and when the symptoms had become acute or had changed, and explain how this affected their ability to study or impaired their performance in assessments. |
| Illness of another person, usually a close family member (this can be either short-term or chronic illness)  | Medical evidence relating to the illness (clearly indicating dates of illness). Students may also be required to provide evidence of their connection to the person who is ill (where that person is not a family member)ANDCorroborating evidence to demonstrate the impact on the student (this will preferably come from a member of University staff /other relevant third party, which can include family members). Students will need to make clear why and how their ability to study was affected. |
| Bereavement | Evidence of bereavement which can be a letter from funeral director or minister conducting the service, Order of Service showing date, or other relevant documentation. A statement from a doctor or other qualified professional, or member of University staff (e.g. personal tutor) confirming the student had disclosed a bereavement, would also be accepted.A death certificate would be accepted, **but is not a requirement**.In the event a student suffers a bereavement during their degree, they are strongly encouraged to seek support from the School. The University Counselling Service is also available. |
| Other domestic disruption (family issues, financial or accommodation difficulties, work-related issues (for part-time students)) | Statement must provide clear details, including dates which link to the assessment(s) affected. Must also provide evidence of how the student was affected and why this prevented them from completing the assessment(s) on time.This could include corroborating statement from professional person, i.e. counsellor, employer, landlord/agent, University staff member (i.e. personal tutor, module leader, exam invigilator).  |
| Absence arising from such things as jury service or maternity, paternity or adoption leave. | Official correspondence relating to these events. |
| Victim of crime | Crime number (these are usually issued by the police for all reported crimes) For crimes which are of a personal nature, where students find it difficult to report the matter to the police, appropriate evidence can be provided from a medical professional, counsellor or other relevant person.  |

It is the responsibility of the student to obtain all evidence they wish to submit in support of their application. The University and its staff will not be able to obtain medical, or other, evidence on behalf of the student.

1. **Consideration of mitigating circumstances**
	1. **Who considers my application?**

Your application will be considered within your School by the School Special Circumstances Committee (this is likely to consist of an academic chair and members of the Student Education Service staff within your School). Details of membership of the Committee can be found in your School Code of Practice on Assessment. This Committee will make a recommendation to the Progression and Awards Board (or Examination Board), who will make the final decision regarding the action to be taken in respect of your application

**9.2 How is my application considered?**

The remit of the Special Circumstances Committee is as follows:

* To consider under the authority and on behalf of the Progression and Awards Board details of applications for mitigating circumstances and make recommendations on the outcome of each application to the Board.
* To determine whether the circumstances cited are acceptable grounds to grant mitigation.
* To ensure that decisions are equitable and that there is consistency of treatment across cohorts.

Account shall be taken of:

* Whether the mitigating circumstances are considered to be circumstances genuinely beyond the student’s control or ability to foresee and whether they may seriously impair the student’s assessment attempt;
* The impact of the event or circumstance on the student and their studies;
* The length of time it lasted;
* The proximity of the event or circumstance to the assessment(s);
* Whether all/other assessment(s) might equally be affected;
* Whether there is verifiable and current third party evidence to support the request for deferral or underperformance.

The Chair of the Special Circumstances Committee is authorised to approve applications for mitigating circumstances outside formal meetings only in exceptional circumstances where the case is clearly valid under the University regulations on mitigation.

**9.3 When will my application be considered?**

Your claim will be considered at a date decided upon by your School. Generally extension requests are dealt with at the time of submission. Claims for mitigating circumstances (for example, first attempt resits) will be considered at meetings of the Special Circumstances Committee within your School. These are generally held following on from the examination periods – some Schools hold meetings more regularly. You must ensure that you are aware when your School is considering your claim. Details of when the Committee meets in your School can be found by contacting the Student Education Service team within your parent School.

1. **What are the possible outcomes?**

Module marks must always reflect the actual academic performance in the assessments that you take. The School therefore does not change module marks because of mitigating circumstances, or take them into consideration when marking your work.

There are a number of possible decisions that the Special Circumstances Committee may make when considering your case, set out below. This list is not exhaustive, and recommendations are made on a case-by-case basis.

1. Further attempt – first attempt re-sit. If the assessment you failed or missed was the original attempt or had previously been granted as a first attempt re-sit, then the Committee may grant you a further ‘first attempt’ for an uncapped mark. In this circumstance your original mark would be permanently removed from your record and overwritten by the mark you receive for the fresh attempt whether it was higher or lower than the original attempt.
2. Further attempt – resit attempt. If the assessment you failed or missed was a resit, the Committee may grant you an exceptional ‘extra’ resit attempt for a capped mark.
3. Coursework submission deadline extension for a period of time which is longer than can be granted through the normal extension request process in your School/Faculty.
4. Remove penalties for late submission or exceeding the word count.
5. To set an alternative or replacement assessment component or combination of components (any alternative will be approved by the Pro Dean for Student Education in advance).
6. To give you the opportunity to re-take all or part of the year, with first attempts or resit attempts at assessments, including attending teaching.
7. Not to grant any concessions or take any action in relation to your application

NB: Where you have been granted a first or further attempt following an application for mitigating circumstances, any attempts must be taken at the next available opportunity (or within the timeframe agreed with the School). It will not be open to you to decline the offer of a further attempt (whether a first attempt resit or otherwise) following a successful application for mitigating circumstances, and then ask for that attempt to be restored at a later date.

If, however, you are not happy with the remedy offered by the School, you may appeal the decision via the Academic Appeals process (see number 12 below).

The Special Circumstances Committee may also recommend that you seek additional support either through the student support available in your School or from other professional services, for example Counselling Service, Medical Practice or Disabled Students Assessment and Support Service.

On occasion, the Special Circumstances Committee may ask you to submit further evidence or information if you have provided insufficient details for them to make a decision.

1. **How will I be told the outcome?**

Your School will contact you to inform you of the outcome of your application. You will usually be asked to provide medical evidence to demonstrate that you are fit to undertake further assessment opportunities, or to resume your studies.

1. **What happens once I am told the outcome?**

Your School will contact you to let you know what steps you will need to take next.

1. **What can I do if I am not happy with the decision/my application was not approved?**

You should contact the School in the first instance. Your School should explain the decision to you, and also explain any recommendations that have been made (e.g. why you have been advised to defer taking an examination). The School should also explain the grounds on which your application was not approved. If you are not happy with the outcome of your application, you can appeal the decision via the University Appeals process. Details of this process can be found on the Secretariat website:

<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/secretariat/documents/taught_appeals_process.pdf>

If you do wish to appeal the decision, you should complete an appeal proforma, setting out your reasons for disagreeing with the decision, which should be submitted to the Student Cases Team. You can contact the Student Cases Team for further advice on the process, and the Leeds University Union Student Advice Centre, who can also help you complete your appeal request. **Your appeal must be received by the Student Cases Team within 20 working days of you being notified of the outcome of your application.**

**FAQ**

**I am ill/something has happened, and my studies are being affected. What do I do?**

The University understands that sometimes, something occurs which will have a negative effect on a student’s ability to study. Whether you fall ill, or something happens in your personal life, it may be that it is not in your best interests to try to continue with your studies as if nothing was happening.

In such circumstances, we always encourage you to speak with someone in your School. There are a number of options available to you, and your School will be best placed to explain them to you, and advise you how to request them. Those options include:

**Extensions** – usually short-term remedies to give you a little extra time to complete a piece of coursework. Should be requested before the deadline for submission. Students should also consider the impact of an extension on any other deadlines they may have. Some Schools ask their students to complete a mitigating circumstances form in order to request an extension. Check with your School regarding the process.

**First Attempt resits (or further attempts)** – where you have attempted to continue with your studies and submitted work, or sat an exam but illness or other circumstances have meant you do not think you performed to the best of your ability. This will require you to submit a mitigating circumstances application.

**Deferring assessment until a later date** – for more serious illness or circumstances which may not be resolved quickly, but will not require temporary leave. This allows you to attempt the assessment at a point where, hopefully, you are no longer being affected by the circumstances. This is usually requested via the mitigating circumstances process.

**Temporary leave/suspension of studies** – for longer term issues, for example (but not exclusively) an injury or illness that will take time to recover from, require treatment, and will most likely require you to be absent from campus.

Several of these can be requested via the mitigating circumstances process, on an as needed basis. However, please consider that, in some circumstances, making repeated applications for mitigating circumstances is not the best way to obtain support for your studies. Whilst we to do say that you should be prepared to try and manage events in your life in conjunction with your studies, you should also be realistic that, occasionally, continuing with your studies is not the best approach for you, and some circumstances cannot be successfully mitigated against by the application of extensions or re-sits alone.

**I talked to my personal tutor about my problem, do I still need to complete a form?**

Yes, you do still need to complete a form so that your issues and circumstances can be considered by the School Special Circumstances Committee.

**Can I ask my personal tutor to provide a statement to support my case?**

Yes, if you have talked to your personal tutor about your circumstances you can ask them to provide a supporting statement to that effect, which should be submitted directly to the School. The Committee may accept this as evidence, however this would be in addition to, and not instead of, professional evidence such as a medical note in the case of illness.

**I don’t think my mitigating circumstances have affected my performance, should I still submit an application?**

You should still submit an application for mitigating circumstances as you may not be fully aware of how your circumstances have actually affected your academic study and performance .You must submit an application if you wish your circumstances to be considered. It is too late to submit a claim after the event and when you have seen your marks and believe they are not a reflection of your actual ability.

**I am stressed about my examinations, what should I do?**

Examination stress is a normal part of student life and if you are finding that you are particularly stressed about your examinations then you should talk to someone for some help and advice. This could be your personal tutor, your programme leader or a member of the Student Education Service staff within your School. They may be able to point you in the direction of some further support within the University such as Skills@library or the Student Counselling Centre who run occasional exam stress workshops. Should you feel that you are experiencing a significant adverse effect on your wellbeing due to examination stress, you should seek medical advice and support.

It is usually, however, the case that exam stress will not be considered as grounds for an application for mitigating circumstances unless there is evidence of an underlying mental health condition, as this is not an unexpected event.

**Something has happened, and I have an assignment due for submission/examination to take, what do I do?**

Your first action, under such circumstances, should be to contact your School. They will be able to advise you of what steps you need to take.

If something happens close to the deadline for an assignment, or an examination date, you should contact your School (your personal tutor, the School administrators, programme leader, a module tutor you feel you can approach) as soon as possible and let them know. They will able to advise you whether you need to request an extension, or submit an application for mitigating circumstances, and the process you need to follow.

Normally, an application for an extension or mitigating circumstances will require evidence of some form. If you are ill, you should also contact your doctor.

You should then check the deadline for when such requests need to be made; work out what evidence you will require to support your application and begin to obtain it. Do note that evidence obtained at the time of your illness/the issue affecting your studies, will usually carry more weight than evidence obtained several weeks or months after the fact.

**I am ill and I have an examination today.**

If you fall ill on the day of an exam, contact your School immediately. If you will not be able to attend, let them know as soon as possible, preferably before the examination. You will need to see a doctor to confirm that you were unfit to sit the examination. If you fall ill during an examination, notify the invigilator, who will complete an examination report to confirm this – this can act as a record of your illness when you apply for mitigation – you will, however, need to present medical evidence of your illness, and thus must see a doctor as soon as you can after you leave the examination room.

**I find it difficult to talk about my circumstances.**

We understand that some students are not comfortable raising personal issues, particularly where the circumstances in question are private or of a sensitive nature. We cannot, however, take into account circumstances we are not told about, and retrospective applications, where a student did not wish to raise their issues until they receive their results, will not usually be considered or accepted. All applications for mitigating circumstances are treated confidentially, and usually only a very small number of staff sit on the panels where cases are decided. No details of mitigating circumstances are presented to examination boards, only the fact that the student has made a successful application.

**Who should I ask for advice?**

You can speak to your Personal tutor, Student Education Service staff within your School or your programme leader. The LUU also have an advice service, and they can guide you on the various procedures available to you, and direct you to other sources of support (including DSAS and the Counselling Service).

**Should I apply for mitigating circumstances or an extension?**

For coursework, where you can’t meet the deadline because of a short term or minor issue that has arisen, you should submit a request for an extension. Contact the Student Education staff within your School for advice on the process for extension requests. Please note that some Schools may follow the same process for extensions as for mitigating circumstances, so check with your School!

As explained earlier, an extension will grant you a short amount of additional time to complete work. For some circumstances, particularly serious health issues or significant events which may affect all aspects of your studies, an extension would not be appropriate. You should also consider the impact of an extension on other deadlines you may have, to ensure you are not creating problems for yourself at a later date.

In these circumstances, mitigating circumstances may be more appropriate. You can also apply for mitigating circumstances if you miss the opportunity to request an extension (although you will have to explain why)

In the event that you were unable to request an extension, because you submitted the request after the submission deadline, or because the nature of your circumstances prevented you from doing so. If it is not possible to request an extension (if you have missed the deadline, or can’t meet the new deadline), or because the circumstances affecting you may have a longer term effect, you may wish to consider applying for mitigating circumstances.

**What happens if my mitigating circumstances claim isn’t approved?**

You can appeal against the School’s decision not to approve a claim for mitigating circumstances via the University’s appeals procedure:

<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/secretariat/documents/taught_appeals_process.pdf>

The Student Cases Team in Secretariat can provide further advice on the appeals process.

**Will I be given additional marks, or will my marks be changed, if my case is approved?**

No, module marks for assessments you take must always reflect the actual academic performance, therefore the School does not change module marks because of mitigating circumstances, or take them into consideration when marking your work.

**If I am granted a first attempt re-sit for an assessment, can I decide not to take it?**

Yes, however, if you do decline the offer of a further attempt (whether a first attempt resit or otherwise) following a successful application for mitigating circumstances, you cannot then ask for that attempt to be restored at a later date.

Where you have been granted a first or further attempt following an application for mitigating circumstances, any attempts must be taken at the next available opportunity (or within the timeframe agreed with the School).

If you do decide not to take up the offer of a first or further resit attempt, you must inform your School of your decision straight away to ensure that you are not registered to take it, and that your original mark is not permanently removed from your record.

**I have taken temporary leave from my studies, do I still need to submit a mitigating circumstances request?**

If you have taken temporary leave from your studies before the temporary leave deadline (end of teaching week 8), then no, you do not need to submit a request.

If you have taken temporary leave after the deadline, then yes a submission would need to be made.  This is due to the University’s policy that after teaching week 8 you are still expected to complete the assessment. Please note that if you are studying a year-long module and taking temporary leave in semester 2, you would need to discuss this with your School as a request may need to be submitted.