

Arrangements for Claiming Mitigating Circumstances

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

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

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

1. Grounds for Claiming Mitigating Circumstances

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

- serious illness which is not a permanent medical condition or disability (for which reasonable adjustments to arrangements are made). This might, for example, include a broken writing arm or an illness requiring hospitalisation, but would not include a headache, cold or upset stomach;
- the death of an immediate family member shortly before the date of the assessment.

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

Harper Adams will not take into account events such as holidays or social occasions, car breakdowns, public transport delays and computer or printer difficulties or back-up failures. Harper Adams is also unable to make allowances for minor illnesses such as headaches, upset stomachs, coughs or colds. These affect everyone and it would not be practical or sensible to take account of them all. Students are expected to plan their work and allow time to cope with minor set-backs. Studies and associated assessment demands are expected to be given priority.

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

2. Categories of Mitigating Circumstances

Mitigating circumstances may be claimed as follows:

- a) where a student requests, in advance, an extension to a *coursework* submission deadline (ie extension request)
- b) where a student was unable to attend at, or submit for, a scheduled assessment, of any sort, and requests a deferred assessment at a subsequent opportunity (ie deferral request)

- c) where a student believes that their performance has been unexpectedly and negatively influenced by circumstances beyond their control and wish this to be considered when decisions on progression and final awards are made (ie condonement request).

3. Procedures for Dealing with Mitigating Circumstance Requests

Coursework Extension Requests

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

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

Deferral and Condonement Requests

Where a student wishes to request that either:

- (a) they be granted a further opportunity to submit for assessment, as if for the first time, because of circumstances that prevented them from submitting for assessment at the scheduled time, for examinations or, exceptionally, for coursework as specified at annex 5.1 of the *Academic Quality Assurance Manual* at section 17, as at annex 1 (ie **deferral**);
or
(b) circumstances outside their control have affected the quality of their assessed work and they request the board to consider *either* granting a condonement to a marginally failed module, within the limits specified in the assessment regulations (at annex 5.1 of the *Academic Quality Assurance Manual* at section 11.3, as at annex 1) *or* to exercise discretion to permit the candidate a further opportunity for assessment (ie **condonement**);

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

It is not possible for the assessment board to speculate on how a student might have performed had the mitigating circumstances not impeded performance. Where a condonement request is approved, the original mark achieved in the condoned module will remain unchanged.

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

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

4. Acceptable Forms of Evidence

Medical reports

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

Employers' letters

For part-time students who are also working full-time, extension or deferral requests, as a consequence of workloads, will only be granted in exceptional circumstances as Harper Adams is unable to make allowances for events that occur as a result of normal working practices. Students are expected to plan their work and allow time to cope with employment and study workloads. Letters of evidence in support of mitigating circumstances as a consequence of unplanned and exceptionally high workloads must be on official letter headed paper, be signed by the student's line manager and must give specific details on the impact of problems encountered in the workplace on the course of study.

Other evidence

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

5. Access to Supporting Evidence

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

Mitigating Circumstances: Deferral or Condonement Request Form

To be completed by the student and submitted to the Examinations Office (M17) five working days prior to the commencement of the assessment board schedule:

Student name:	Course:	Year:

Deferral or condonement request?	Module title	Module Leader	Assessment element	Evidence presented ³

Summary of claimed mitigating circumstances⁴, to include specific dates of illness or other incapacity and claimed impact on assessment preparation for each assessment element (attach supplementary pages where necessary)

I confirm that to the best of my knowledge the information contained on this form is an accurate statement of my personal circumstances and that I request the relevant Assessment Board to grant me a deferral or condonement.

Student signature: _____ **Date:** _____

The claims outlined herein will be considered through the relevant assessment board and outcome reflected in the results notifications.

³ Eg medical note, counsellor report, police report, death certificate or notice published in press or funeral order of service, employer's supporting letter

⁴ As specified in section 1 of accompanying notes

Annex 1: Extracted from Assessment Regulations for Taught Awards

11 Mitigating circumstances

11.1 Procedure for claiming mitigating circumstances

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

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

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

11.2 Grounds for mitigation

Grounds for mitigation claims are normally limited to:

- Serious personal illness which is not a permanent medical condition or disability (for which reasonable adjustments to learning, teaching and assessment arrangements are made). For example, it might include a broken writing arm or an illness requiring hospitalisation that seriously affected a student's ability to study over an extended period, but would not include a cold or upset stomach.
- The death of a member of the immediate family before the date of the assessment.

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

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

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

A student who has difficulties with the conditions in an examination room must bring this to the attention of the invigilator immediately. If this is not

done, the condition in the examination may not be used as mitigating circumstances.

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

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17 Coursework deadline policy

Arrangements for the submission of all student work will be published for each module and the industrial training period(s). In addition to the paper copy, an electronic copy, where required, must also be provided, as detailed in assignment briefs by the stated date/time. Student work submitted 24 hours later than the published date/time will not be accepted for assessment unless, exceptionally, **prior** written permission has been obtained from the Course Manager, Senior Tutor or, for placement work, from the Placement Manager, using the approved Extension Request Form, including supporting written evidence.

Student work that is submitted, in both paper and electronic format where required, up to 24 hours after the published deadline will be accepted for marking but 20 marks from 100 will be deducted from the mark awarded by the Tutor, as a penalty for late submission, of either or both formats. Where student work is submitted later than 24 hours after the published deadline, or where an electronic copy has not **also** been provided, without an approved extension request or provisionally approved deferral request, the work will not be accepted and a zero mark will be awarded.

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