



HE MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES POLICY

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1 Introduction

Ada College (“Ada”) recognises that students may suffer from a sudden illness, or other serious and unforeseen event or set of circumstances, which adversely affects their ability to complete an assessment, or the results they obtain for an assessment.

Mitigating Circumstances are situations or circumstances of a serious nature (i.e. not day-to-day minor illnesses or circumstances you could have easily avoided through prior planning). If you believe that they have adversely affected your ability to submit coursework on time or to submit it at all or to attend an exam, then you may wish to bring them to the attention of the examiners. The circumstances might include serious illness, bereavement or any personal issue that has affected you for a significant period of time during your studies and/or during the examination period and has had a recognisable effect on your studies and assessments. This policy is written in line with the Expectations and Core practices of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code), [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education’s \(QAA\) Quality Code Advice and Guidance for assessment](#), which are mandatory for higher education providers in all parts of the UK.

Assessment is a fundamental aspect of the student learning experience. Engagement in assessment activities and interaction with staff and peers enables learning, both as part of the task and through review of their performance. It is a vehicle for obtaining feedback. Ultimately, it determines whether each student has achieved their course’s learning outcomes and allows the awarding body to ensure that appropriate standards are being applied rigorously. Deliberate, systematic quality assurance ensures that assessment processes, standards and any other criteria are applied consistently and equitably, with reliability, validity and fairness.

2 Purpose

Mitigating Circumstances requests can only be submitted for:

- I. A leave of absence
- II. Extensions to assessment deadlines

Normally, mitigating circumstances requests cannot be submitted because you feel that your mitigating circumstances have affected the standard of work you have already submitted or your performance in an exam you have already sat.

2.1 A leave of Absence (Break in Learning)

If you feel that you are entitled to a period of leave from study, e.g. for documented medical or personal reasons, this needs to be authorised **in advance** by the Apprenticeship Programme Manager. A leave of absence means you are not in attendance.

If, after speaking with your skills coach, you wish to request a leave of absence, you **must** submit your request in writing with documented evidence to the apprenticeship programme manager. The amount of leave you can request depends on your circumstances and programme of study and will follow the awarding body (the Open University) regulations.

Depending on your personal circumstances, there may be alternative solutions to help you continue your studies without the need for a leave of absence. Your skills coach will be able to discuss alternative with you and refer you to appropriate colleagues to seek further help and support.

2.2 Extensions to Assessment Deadlines

If you experience personal difficulties then you may be able to extend a coursework submission deadline, defer an assessment or claim mitigating/extenuating circumstances. This needs to be formally requested as an extension or as an application for mitigation.

Examples of what may constitute personal difficulties include, for example:

- If you are taken seriously ill just before or during an exam or submission deadline;
- If you are involved in an accident or serious incident that prevents you attending the College just before an exam or assignment deadline;
- If you experience a bereavement or family illness.

If you are applying for mitigation you will need to provide evidence to document and verify your personal difficulties. Depending on your particular circumstances, examples of evidence could include:

- Death certificate;
- A medical certificate - Post-dated medical certificates will not normally be accepted. If you are ill you are strongly urged to visit a doctor and request a medical certificate at the time of your illness, not after the event;
- Counsellor's letter;
- Police Crime Reference Number or other independent verification of an incident.

Not all of your personal difficulties are considered valid reasons to extend a coursework submission deadline, defer an assessment or claim mitigating circumstances. For example, if you:

- Sleep in and miss your exam/coursework submission;
- Turn up at the wrong time or venue for an exam/coursework submission;
- Miss a submission deadline because you didn't manage your study time properly;
- Have a cold or other minor illness;
- Have lost work on laptops, PCs and USB drives, etc.
- Have time management issues.
- Have workload issues at workplace

3 Procedures

3.1 Assessment and Coursework Deadline Extensions

Where illness or other verifiable cause will prevent you from meeting a deadline for completing an assessment/coursework you should contact your module leader, or skills coach at the earliest opportunity **before** the coursework deadline.

You must submit an on-line Extension request to the Head of Degree Programmes (HoDP). It is your responsibility to submit this form. The HoDP may, on receipt of the appropriate form, extend an assessment/coursework deadline up to a **maximum of ten working days** (Saturday and Sunday not included).

The Extension request form is required as official proof that the extension has been granted. The approved request form should be submitted with the assessment/coursework by the extended submission deadline. If the extension is granted and the assessment/coursework submitted by the extended deadline, it will be marked accordingly with an uncapped grade.

Retrospective extensions will not usually be granted. In exceptional circumstances, as identified by the HoDP, on a case-by-case basis, your module leader may set an alternative assignment.

Please note that assessment submission deadlines are not automatically extended according to the number of days lost due to illness or personal circumstances. The length of any coursework extension is decided on by the module Leader based on how long it should take you to complete the coursework (irrespective how well you will perform in the assessment) and up to a maximum of five working days.

Assessment submission deadlines will NOT be extended if you are able to complete the assessment, but feel that your performance in the assessment will be affected. If you feel that illness or other verifiable cause will affect your performance in the assessment, then you must make an application for mitigating circumstances.

3.2 Mitigating Circumstances Application Procedure

If a student is aware that an extension of ten working days will not be sufficient for them to complete the work, they should not apply for an extension but should apply instead for consideration of Mitigating Circumstances.

If work is submitted late without an authorised extension or mitigation in place, or after the extended deadline, the HE Policy on Late Submission of Assessments will apply.

You are strongly advised to discuss any application for mitigating circumstances with the HoDP **before** submitting it; this will help ensure that valid claims are accepted by the Mitigating Circumstances Panel. The panel comprises of : The Dean, The Head of Degree Programmes, and The Apprenticeship Programme Manager.

The Panel will consider the mitigating circumstances application presented by the student. The decision of the panel will be reported to the Exam Board. Please note that a claim for mitigating circumstances cannot usually be considered for an assessment for which you have had the submission deadline extended.

In case of a valid mitigating circumstance application the assessment is deferred to the next appropriate opportunity, but only when a pass mark or grade for the module overall has NOT been achieved. Where the student achieves a pass mark or grade for the module, then the mark will stand and the consideration of the mitigating circumstances application is ended. Deferred assessments with an authorised mitigating circumstances request in place will not have marks capped.

Where the Mitigating Circumstances Panel do not accept that the student has experienced timely, severe, acute and unexpected circumstances, this ends consideration of the mitigating circumstances application.

Evidence submitted to the Exam Board of a student's personal mitigating circumstances will be regulated by the policies and procedures of the programme qualification awarding body, the Open University. Where the regulations of the programme qualification awarding body prescribe a stage 1 local submission to the College, the following procedure will apply:

- The student will submit a claim for personal mitigation to the college designated member of staff (normally the HoDP).
- The College designated person (normally the HoDP) will present the application for mitigation to the College HE Mitigating Circumstances Panel at its next available meeting.
- The HE Mitigating Circumstances Panel will consider the application for mitigation and make a recommendation to the relevant assessment board.

4 Board of Examiners

Mitigation circumstances requests are considered by Mitigating Circumstances Panel, who will verify the authenticity of any evidence submitted and then make recommendations to the Board of Examiners . Upon receipt of recommendations the Board of Examiners will decide whether to:

- a) provide a student with the opportunity to take the affected assessment(s) as if for the first time i.e. a 'sit' or 'submit', allowing them to be given the full marks achieved for the examination or assessment, rather than imposing a cap;
- b) waive late submission penalties;
- c) determine that there is sufficient evidence of the achievement of the intended learning outcomes from other pieces of assessment in the module(s) for an overall mark to be derived;
- d) note the accepted extenuation for the module(s) and recommend that it is considered at the point of award and classification.

The Board of Examiners, depending on the circumstances, may exercise discretion in deciding on the particular form any reassessment should take. Options are a viva voce examination, additional assessment tasks designed to show whether the student has satisfied the programme learning outcomes, review of previous work, or normal assessment at the next available opportunity. The student will not be put in a position of unfair advantage or disadvantage: the aim will be to enable the student to be assessed on equal terms with their cohort.

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