COVID-19 response: No detriment and mitigating circumstances guidance for students

Updated: 1st April

INTRODUCTION

This guidance was developed by teaching and professional services staff and Birkbeck Students’ Union representatives.

The College recognises that the outbreak of Coronavirus (COVID-19) is resulting in a great deal of stress and disruption to all our lives. We will be working to try to ensure that your academic progression and achievement is not disadvantaged by the current crisis.

Exam boards will take the COVID-19 crisis as key evidence to the background in which all students have had to complete work this year; the widespread stress and disruption of this period will therefore automatically be taken into account throughout the whole of our assessment and examining process.

Students who attempt assessment and submit on time will automatically benefit from the No Detriment Policy which ensures that students are not disadvantaged by completing assessment during this period of disruption.

If you have suffered significant personal or family illness, bereavement or serious personal, emotional or financial challenges as a result of COVID-19 or other unforeseen circumstances unrelated to COVID-19 then you may wish to submit a claim for Mitigating Circumstances. Claims should be submitted if these factors have impacted on your ability to submit the assessment or on your ability to perform well on the assessment.

The College is encouraging all students to attempt their assessments during this period. In order to encourage students to do so and recognising the challenging environment we have introduced a No Detriment Policy and revised the circumstances that are considered as acceptable for mitigation claims. These are outlined in this document.

NO DETRIMENT POLICY

This policy ensures that for all students undertaking assessment, if you submit an assessment and the mark is negatively out of line with your academic profile, you will not be disadvantaged. You will either

1. Be given a module mark based on previously completed assessment for the relevant module only (see below) or;
2. You will have the opportunity to be reassessed at the next opportunity with no penalty. In this situation no penalty means your reassessment mark will not be capped at the pass mark and your reassessment will not count towards your maximum number of attempts.
Module mark based on previously completed assessment

If the following criteria apply to your module, and your exam mark is below what you have achieved for your previously completed assessment you will be given a mark for your module based on previously completed coursework assessment only. Departments will identify where your module meets the criteria.

- the assessment already passed constitutes 40% more of the module assessment weighting.
- achievement of the core learning objectives has been demonstrated in already completed assessment.
- this would continue to meet any professional body accreditation requirements.

Example

- Essay (40% weighting): 58 mark
- Alternative exam (60% weighting): 45 mark
- Total mark: 49

- Essay (100% weighting): 58 mark
- Alternative exam (no weighting)
- Total mark: 58

In this example the student receives a module mark of 58 as the exam was lower than the 58 achieved in the previously completed coursework.

Reassessment without penalty

If your module does not meet the criteria outlined above, then the following applies:

- If you fail the assessment you will be offered the opportunity to be reassessed without penalty.
- If you pass the assessment you will be offered the choice of accepting the mark or reassessment without penalty.

Reassessment without penalty means you will not be capped for your reassessment and it will not count towards your maximum number of attempts. This is considered a ‘deferral’ in line with the CAS regulation 29.0.

Example

- Essay (30% weighting): 72 mark
- Alternative exam (70% weighting): 42 mark
- Total mark: 51

In this example the student may choose to receive the module mark of 51 or can elect to be reassessed without penalty in the exam at the next reassessment period.
MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES

Submission of a claim

We now have an online form to receive mitigating circumstances submissions. Students can submit a mitigating circumstances claim at any point in advance of an assessment and up to 14 days after the assessment submission date.

When to submit a claim

The no detriment policy automatically ensures that you are not disadvantaged by submitting an assessment and does not require you to submit a mitigating circumstances claim if you submit your assessment on time.

If you wish your circumstances to be taken into account as regards your assessment you should consider submitting a mitigating circumstances claim if your circumstances have affected your ability to submit your assessment, submit your assessment on time or has impacted negatively on your performance.

COVID-19 Acceptable grounds

The Birkbeck Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Guidance remains applicable but with the following amendments in relation to COVID-19 that are applicable during this period.

- No documentary evidence is required for any claims.
- The addition of the following examples as acceptable grounds for claims

Examples of circumstances beyond the reasonable control of the student:

N.B. this list is not exhaustive.

- Bereavement due to COVID-19.
- Hospitalised due to contracting COVID-19.
- Ill at home due to having COVID-19-like symptoms.
- Financial impact due to loss of work.
- Difficulties in completing work because of limited access to a computer, internet and/or quiet study space.
- Home-schooling or caring for children/getting shopping/caring for vulnerable relatives.
- Taking on extra work in employment to cover staff absences/ extra shifts as a keyworker.

Consideration of claims

Departments will consider your claims through exam boards and mitigating circumstances panels. You will be notified of the outcome of your claim at the earliest opportunity after an exam board has made a decision. Please be assured you will be offered the maximum flexibility given the unprecedented international situation.

Exam boards will make a decision on the appropriate mitigation for you in line with the mitigating circumstances policy. The following are the most likely outcomes for accepted claims.
If you are claiming for a late submission and your claim is accepted, then your assessment submission will not be capped.

If you are claiming for non-submission and your claim is accepted you will be either permitted to be given a module mark based on an already completed assessment or offered the opportunity to be reassessed without penalty.

If you are a finalist and your claim is accepted, if your weighted average is within 2% of a borderline, you may be considered for award of the higher classification.

**QUERIES**

If you have any questions regarding the No Detriment Policy or Mitigating Circumstances please raise a query via ASK.

**Further reading**

A full list of College Policy and Regulations can be found at:
[http://www.bbk.ac.uk/registry/policies/policies-1](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/registry/policies/policies-1)

Registry Services
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