

COVID-19 Response – 2021/22 Mitigating Circumstances Guidance for Staff

Updated: 14 June 2021

Introduction

This document provides guidance for staff about the arrangements for the submission of mitigating circumstances claims in the 2021/22 academic year. It should be read in conjunction with the Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedure. Our existing Mitigating Circumstance Policy and Procedure allows for Coronavirus impacts to be mitigated by Sub Boards of Examiners throughout the current academic year.

This guidance will be in place for the whole of the 2021/22 academic year. The College will continue to monitor the impact of the pandemic on our taught students and can make amendments to policy and guidance if and when required. These will normally be discussed at Education Strategy Group (ESG). If you wish to raise an academic policy matter please contact your Assistant Dean for Education in the first instance, as ESG meets regularly.

All Mitigating Circumstance requests should be made through www.bbk.ac.uk/ask

1. Principles

- 1.1. The College Mitigating Circumstances Policy and guidance continue to apply, however additional circumstances have been identified as acceptable. These arrangements will remain in place for the duration of the 2021/22 academic year. The additional circumstances that have been identified as acceptable grounds for a claim include:
 - i. Bereavement due to COVID-19
 - ii. Hospitalisation due to contracting COVID-19
 - iii. Self-isolation due to having COVID-19 or COVID-19 like symptoms.
 - iv. Financial impacts due to furlough, loss of work or redundancy
 - v. Difficulties in completing work because of limited access to a computer, internet or quiet study space
 - vi. Reduced capacity to study due to having to home-school, children/or caring for vulnerable relatives etc.
 - vii. Taking on extra work in employment to cover staff absences/ extra shifts as a key worker
 - viii. Deterioration of existing mental ill health conditions or development of such conditions
- 1.2. All claims should be submitted online.
- 1.3. Students are **not** expected to submit evidence for **any** mitigating circumstances claims for the duration of the 2021/22 academic year. .

- 1.4. Mitigating circumstances claims can be submitted for non-submission of an assessment, late submission of an assessment, and impaired performance, in line with the existing policy for mitigating circumstances.

2. Consideration of claims

- 2.1. Students have been advised that mitigating circumstances claims should be submitted only in cases where a student: has suffered *“unforeseen circumstances or circumstances that are outside the student’s control, and that significantly disrupt the student’s performance in assessment”* in line with the Mitigating Circumstances Policy. This includes significant personal or family illness, bereavement, or serious personal, emotional or financial challenges as a result of COVID-19.

Text for students

“The College recognises Coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to impact student’s lives. We amended the mitigating circumstances processes since the beginning of the pandemic that have been beneficial to students, and that we will continue to use during the 2021/22 academic year. Department Mitigating Circumstances Panels **do not** require formal evidence to be submitted for any claims. For 2021/22 we publish this guidance to accompany the Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedure.

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. .”

- 2.2. Students are asked in which way they have been impacted:

- a) Bereavement
- b) Health or disability
- c) Financial
- d) IT or computer
- e) Increased caring responsibilities
- f) Employment
- g) Housing
- h) Other

3. Outcomes of accepted mitigating circumstances claims

- 3.1. As per the existing mitigating circumstances policy (paragraph 28) possible options for students are;
 - a) **Reassessment without penalty (deferral)** – no increase of attempt number and no capping applied [please note that new regulations around UG progression and reassessment were introduced in 20/21.
 - b) **Allowing late submission** – late submission of coursework will not be penalised and the ‘true’ mark should be allowed for the element in question.

- c) **Use other completed elements to determine module result** – should only use the marks from non-affected elements of the assessment to decide the module result
- d) **Classification of finalists** – should have their final classification raised (if all credits achieved and the overall weighted average mark is within 2.00% of a borderline).

3.2. Where a decision is taken to use other completed elements to determine the module result (outcome 'c' above), this should only be applied in exceptional circumstances.

The following parameters should also be considered:

- i. Affected element(s) of the assessment should have already been completed and passed before consideration is given to using marks from non-affected elements of assessment to decide the module result (i.e. students *should* be encouraged to attempt the assessment)
- ii. Consideration should be given to the relative weightings of assessment elements for the module i.e. using the marks from an assessment element that only makes up 10% of the module assessment weighting to decide the overall module result would not be appropriate. As such, any mark based on non-affected elements of assessment must constitute at least 40% or more of the module assessment weighting.
- iii. Consideration should be given to whether the module learning objectives have been covered if marks are based on the non-affected elements of the assessment to decide the module result. If all learning objectives have not been demonstrated in the non-affected elements of the assessment it would not be appropriate to base marks solely on this assessment(s) as all learning objectives for the module would not have been met.

4. Students claiming mitigating circumstances for multiple modules

- 4.1. Since we removed the requirement to submit evidence for a mitigating circumstance claim, and have simplified the claim process, the number of claims made is very high.
- 4.2. While we want to support students to be able to make mitigating circumstances claims where needed, and students are free to do so. However, submitting multiple mitigating circumstances claims may also be an indication that the student is struggling. In these circumstances, it may be appropriate to highlight the student's circumstances to their personal tutor, or to refer the student to wellbeing services. Students have been informed through the student guidance document that they may be referred in this way.
- 4.3. Registry Services will explore with IT services whether it is possible for students who make multiple mitigating circumstances claims to be automatically flagged on the mitigating circumstances system.

Further information

Please contact your Assistant Dean for Education if you have a query relating to this guidance or the implementation of College policy in the first instance.

Registry Services
June 2021