

Personal Circumstances Policy (Previously Extenuating Circumstances)

Responsibility for Policy:	Registrar and Chief Operating Officer
Relevant to:	All LJMU Staff, Students and Academic Partnerships
Approved by:	Academic Board on 26 th June 2019
Responsibility for Document Review:	Head of Registry Services, Assistant Academic Registrars
Date introduced:	Updated with this coversheet April 2016.
Date(s) modified:	May 2014, September 2016, July 2018, June 2019, May 2020, October 2021
Next Review Date:	May 2021, May 2022

RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

List here any documents that relate to the creation of this policy

- Academic Framework
- Academic Appeals Guidance for Students

RELATED POLICIES & DOCUMENTS

Personal Circumstances Policy 2021/22

In the context of Extenuating Circumstances, the Institution defines the term “Personal Circumstances” to describe serious and exceptional factors outside a student’s control that adversely affected their performance during their study and which are not already taken into account by an Individual Student Learning Plan (ISLP). These factors may, for example:

- Require an extension to a deadline to allow the student to submit an assessment;
- Have prevented the student from attending examinations or other timed assessments (e.g. presentation, in class test);
- Have severely impacted the ability of students to complete a timed assessment (e.g. the student was taken ill during the event and was unable to complete the assessment); and/or
- Have caused the student to miss assessment submission deadlines.

1. Support processes for personal circumstances

It is each student’s responsibility to undertake the required assessments for their programme of study on or by the dates set by the University. However, the University recognises that students may encounter personal difficulties or circumstances outside of their control that affect their ability to attempt or complete assessment(s). This policy provides details of the following processes designed to support students in those situations:

- Extensions;
- Non-attempt at assessment; and
- Special Mitigation (i.e. circumstances that occur during an assessment to such an extent that the assessment item could not be completed).

1.1 Who is eligible to use the processes?

All undergraduate and postgraduate taught students (including those at partner institutions) as well as postgraduate researchers taking taught, modules as part of their programme are eligible to use the processes described in this policy.

1.2 Disposal of supporting evidence

All applications and evidence will be held securely and treated confidentially, and will only be viewed by those directly involved in the decision-making process. Following the Board of Examiners and subsequent appeals period, supporting written and electronic evidence related to all applications will be disposed of, including the application itself.

NOTE: the appeals period includes the opportunity for the student to submit to Stages 2 & 3 of the internal appeals process and to progress to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). Students have up to one year from the completion of internal procedures to submit their complaint to the OIA. Thus, applications and evidence will be subject to disposal only after the timeframe for application to the IOA has elapsed.

2. Extensions for coursework

2.1 Overview

Students are expected to plan their workload to avoid being impacted upon by a minor illness or other cause. However, they may apply for an extension if a significant and serious event that prevents submission arises before the published submission deadline for an individual coursework assignment.

Points to note:

- As the work is submitted after the deadline a student may receive their mark later than the rest of the cohort;
- It is not expected that a student would require repeated changes to deadlines;
- Repeated requests for extensions to deadlines would normally activate a detailed review of a disabled student's current support, or to consider whether a student who does not have reasonable adjustments in place, requires them;
- It must be possible to provide parity for all students registered on the module. Granting an extension must not disadvantage other students, or unduly advantage the student who is applying for the extension;
- Due to the type and timing of some forms of assessment, it may not be possible for an extension to be given. Where the nature of the assessed work is such that an extension cannot be granted, and the student does not submit or undertake the assessed work, a 'non-submission' will be recorded;
- Any extension deadline must allow all processes, such as moderation and mark verification, to be completed prior to the Board Reporting Deadline (BRD); and
- A student is permitted to submit the work earlier than the expiry date of the extension period if they wish.

2.2 The process for applying for an extension

A student making a request for an extension must be directed in all cases to the Module Leader or named alternative. If an extension to a deadline is granted by the Module Leader or named alternative, the assessed work will be marked as if on time.

The extension request must normally be submitted at least two full working days (48 hours) before the deadline. An extension request will normally only be considered if the request is submitted within the permitted timescale.

Work granted an approved extension must be submitted by the revised deadline date.

2.3 Late extension requests

Requests made after the assignment deadline will normally not be considered. Exceptionally, a late request may be considered for applications submitted during the two full working days (48 hours) before the deadline and where the student provides independent documentary evidence to the module leader of a situation that demonstrates why they could not meet the deadline.

2.4 Requests that are not accepted

A student will be expected to submit their work by the original deadline if an application for an extension request is not accepted. However, a student may still be eligible to submit a separate 'non-attempt at assessment' application if they are unable to submit the work.

3. Non-attempt at assessment and Special Mitigation

3.1 Overview

A student may use the 'non-attempt at assessment' process if they do not submit an assessment or do not attend an examination or other controlled conditions assessment such as a presentation.

If a student has chosen to submit an assessment or attend an exam, they have made a judgement they were fit to do so, and so **cannot** apply under the non-attempt at assessment process.

Applications accepted for non-attempt at assessments will subsequently be deemed "Not Valid" by the Board of Examiners if a student goes on to submit their work.

A student may apply to have their mark for an assessment removed after attempting the assessment if the student attended an examination / timed assessment (such as a presentation) but was taken ill during the event and was unable to complete the assessment.

If a student leaves an exam due to illness, it is their responsibility to inform the responsible person/s so that the circumstances can be recorded for future reference.

A student who declares themselves 'fit to attempt' a summative assessment item may request that a Personal Circumstances Panel withdraws their declaration when there is clear evidence that the student was not in a fit state to decide whether they were fit to submit/sit the assessment concerned.

3.2 Using the Non-Attempt at Assessment and Special Mitigation Process

Students are strongly advised to obtain guidance or advice from Student Engagement Officers prior to submitting their form. Such advice will be limited to the procedures to be followed and the required evidence. The responsibility lies with the student to make the final decision as to whether or not to submit their form. Staff must not attempt to judge the likely outcome of an application submitted under the process.

The John Moores Students' Union Advice Centre provides independent advice and assistance with applications for all students: <https://www.jmsu.co.uk/advice>

Where a student is studying with an academic partner, they should contact their local administration office for guidance.

Applications should be made online via the My LJMU Portal. Students who are not able to apply using the online form should contact the University (Programme Leader or named alternative) as soon as possible.

It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the form is completed and that all relevant information is made available to the University. A verbal notification regarding personal circumstances is not sufficient.

When filling out the form, students must ensure they record exactly which assessments have been affected and unambiguously link this to the modules they relate to. **They must clearly**

state why the circumstances adversely affected their ability to attend or to submit the assessment, and the reasons given must be linked to the dates of the assessment.

All the following pieces of information are essential:

- personal details - name, student number, award title;
- details of how the circumstances affected the student's studies/assessment and relevant dates and details;
- independent, third party documentary evidence.

Note: Supporting statements from members of academic staff or appropriate professional services staff (e.g. Student Advice and Wellbeing) may be provided for additional contextual information but not as a form of evidence.

Electronic submission grants permission the claim to be considered and provides confirmation of the application submission date.

A student's application will not be carried forward between assessment opportunities, e.g. from one year's assessment period to the next. A new application will need to be submitted which demonstrates that the circumstances are on-going and affecting the student's ability to submit or attend assessments.

3.3 Final deadlines for submission of applications

A non-attempt at assessments or special mitigation application should be made no later than five working days following the affected assessment event. However, if the student's situation prevents submitting an application, this may be considered outside of this period (see 4.0 below).

3.4 Making decisions on applications

Non-attempt at assessments and special mitigation applications will be considered by a designated Personal Circumstances Panel (which may be convened at Faculty or School level), who may consult with academic colleagues before a decision is made.

If a non-attempt at assessment application is accepted then the Board of Examiners may:

- defer the student's module attempt until the next assessment opportunity.

Acceptance of a non-attempt at assessment application does not permit the following:

- an adjustment to the marks for individual modules;
- to allow students who have passed a module to retake it.

If a special mitigation application is accepted then the Board of Examiners may:

- defer the student's module attempt until the next assessment opportunity;
- assign a mark for the assessment item where there is sufficient evidence to do so and where this is approved by the Chair of the Board of Examiners and supported by the External Examiners.

3.5 Notification of decisions

The decision to accept or reject a non-attempt at assessment and special mitigation application will be recorded on the Student Record system. Students will be notified of the outcome via

email in a timely manner and any subsequent Board of Examiners action will be available on My LJMU following the publication of results.

4.0 Late applications

In exceptional circumstances, where a student can demonstrate, with the support of independent documentary evidence, that they could not reasonably have been expected to comply with the University's regulations owing to the specific nature of the issues involved, an application submitted beyond this time frame may be considered.

Where appropriate, if the late application is upheld after the relevant examining board has met, the Chair of the Examining Board will be notified and the student's academic profile will be reconsidered.

In extreme circumstances, the University reserves the right to apply Special Mitigation following a student's attempt at any assessment item.

4.1 Appeals

A student may appeal against the outcome of a Personal Circumstances Panel if they can demonstrate:

- i. that there has been a material administrative error, or
- ii. some other material irregularity has occurred, or
- iii. that the decision of the Personal Circumstances Panel was unreasonable.

Disagreement with the decision of a Personal Circumstances Panel is not in itself grounds for appeal.

There are strict deadlines for the submission of an appeal. Students must lodge the appeal with the Student Governance Office **within 10 working days of notification of the outcome of the Personal Circumstances Panel.**

Guidance notes on the appeals process and appeals forms are available at

<https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/about-us/public-information/student-regulations/student-appeals>

Appeals forms are completed at

<https://myservices.ljmu.ac.uk/>

If the appeal is upheld the Personal Circumstances Panel may be required to reconvene to reconsider its decision. Where the decision(s) of the Personal Circumstances Panel is modified, the Board of Examiners may also be required to reconsider the student's profile in the light of any change(s) made by the Personal Circumstances Panel.