



Higher Education A GUIDE TO MITIGATION

Mitigation and Extension at the point of Assessment explained

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How does this work?

It is a basic principle of the College that all students should be treated alike, and given equal opportunity to succeed. However, the College also recognises that through unforeseeable and unpreventable circumstances students might be unable to complete or submit an assignment; might have missed an examination or presentation; or have not performed to the best of their ability in one or more of these assessments. These are called **extenuating circumstances**.

In such cases the College operates **Mitigation** in line with the NCG Higher Education Academic Regulations to enable students to request that their extenuating circumstances are taken into consideration. Students are required to submit an application with supporting evidence of their extenuating circumstances. The application is considered and, if appropriate, remedial action, which normally involves a new assessment hand-in date, is agreed.

Mitigation is normally defined as:

Circumstances outside the control of the student that have significantly affected performance in any summative assessment.

The College recognises that it is not always appropriate to wait until a Board of Examiners in order to consider remedial action. It therefore has **two routes** for considering extenuating circumstances and agreeing mitigation if appropriate.

1. Action to enable the *completion* of assessment (Extension at the point of Assessment)

This addresses issues related to:

- Difficulties in completing assessment by the assessment hand in date. This is normally linked to an unforeseen, *single-instance/single reason*, inability to attend for an examination; a presentation; a practical; or other scheduled assessment.

2. Action to address *other circumstances* (Mitigation)

This addresses the issues below, especially where there is more than one instance of any of them.

- Late submission of assessment work
- Non-submission of assessment work



- Failure to attend one or more examinations or other scheduled assessments
- Under-performance in assessments.

The type of circumstances considered as part of mitigation are:

- Serious illness (which may include an acute episode, a disability or a chronic condition which is not covered by agreed support already in place)
- Significant personal accident or injury
- Acute personal or emotional trauma (which may include acute anxiety or depression, family breakdown, breakdown of a personal relationship, death or serious illness of family member, significant other)
- Complications in a pregnancy
- Victim of crime
- Additional impact of a disability
- Car accident/other type of accident
- Attendance at Court/Involvement in legal proceedings

Please note this list is a guide, and not exhaustive.

Appendix 1 at the end of this document provides you with a quick guide to evidence and acceptable reasons for mitigation.

What do I do?

It is important to know which of the routes is appropriate to your particular circumstances and to take the right kind of action. This document explains how the process works. It:

- Details the responsibilities of the student and the College.
- Explains the different methods of mitigation and what students need to do in order for their extenuating circumstances to be considered.
- Explains what will happen after mitigation has been submitted.
- Provides information on confidentiality and retention of records.
- Provides information on where further assistance can be obtained.

Ask

All extenuating circumstances are unique to the individual. Your own situation might be more complex than those provided within this document, or you might need re-assurance that you are on the right lines. If in doubt: *ask someone*.

Responsibilities of the Student

Your KEY responsibilities are:

Inform: You must inform the College of any extenuating circumstances which you want to be taken into consideration.

Writing: Your application for mitigation must be on the standard form which can be submitted in person, by e-mail or through the post. The form is available via HE Student Intranet

<http://students.ncgrp.co.uk/he/Pages/Policies-Procedures.aspx>

Evidence: To accompany your form you must provide independent evidence which supports your reason for applying for extenuating circumstances to be considered. Evidence may include doctors certificate, medical evidence, death certificate (in the case of bereavement etc.). More details regarding the type of evidence required is provided within this document. (Page 8)

Submission: You must submit the completed standard form to the programme leader and it is your responsibility to ensure that it has arrived if you send it through the post. Please refer to your Programme Handbook for details on how and who to submit your form to.

Timescales: You must complete and submit within the defined timescales. Deadline dates when applications for mitigation are considered are published on the HE Student Intranet

<http://students.ncgrp.co.uk/he/Pages/Policies-Procedures.aspx>

Information: It is important the information you provide is accurate, authentic and supports your claim. For example include dates of the circumstances, modules affected, original assessment deadlines.

YOUR responsibility

You need to remember the following:

- It is NOT ENOUGH to have discussed your problems or difficulties with a member of staff (eg. Programme Leader, Personal Tutor, Counsellor).
- You need to make a formal, written, request for consideration of these circumstances if you want extenuating circumstances to be considered.
- Extenuating circumstances can include things like illness, accidents, robbery, family difficulties, finance.
- A member of staff may be willing to write a letter of support on your behalf, but you need to ask them to do this, and **YOU** have to submit it.

Responsibilities of the School/Division

To enable you to understand the requirements for a mitigation application your school/division will provide you with the details of the procedures to be followed (eg. who do you go to, what timescales operate) in respect of:

- extensions to assessment/coursework submission dates
- missed examinations/presentations, etc.
- extenuating circumstances that are longer than **5 days** will need to go to the Mitigation Panel.

Where would you find this?

Your Programme Handbook should give you details of what you would do to request an extension, and what you should do if you have missed an examination or other scheduled assessment.

More detailed information on submission of extenuating circumstances to the Mitigation Panel, and the deadlines for this, can be found in the following:

- In your Programme Handbook
- From your Programme Leader
- On the HE Student Intranet
<http://students.ncgrp.co.uk/he/Pages/Policies-Procedures.aspx>

Extension at the point of assessment

When do I use this process?

A request for extension at the point of assessment

This process is carried out within your School/Division. If accepted you will be given up to **5 days** after the original assessment date to submit your work.
This process can be used throughout the academic year, as circumstances require.

What is it for?

Coursework Assignments: where you have valid reasons for being unable to submit an assignment/assessment on the due date.

Examinations, Presentations, Practicals etc: where you have a valid reason for failing to attend an examination or other scheduled assessment.

What should I do?

If, for good reasons, you cannot complete an assignment by the due date, then you would ask for an **extension** to the submission date.

You need to complete the standard mitigation form, a copy of which can be found on the HE Student Intranet site. The completed form, with appropriate evidence to support your claim, should be given to the Programme Leader for consideration. This may vary from School to School, so check with your Programme leader (see Responsibilities of the School/Division, above).

- You **must** submit this request before the submission date for the piece of work/assessment
- You **must** submit a request for **each** extension requested
- You **must** provide evidence to support your extension request

If, for a good reason, you failed to attend an **examination, presentation, practical** etc. then you would ask for approval (as relevant):

1. to be permitted to take the examination at the next opportunity, without penalty

OR

2. to do the presentation, practical etc at a later date – also without penalty

In general, a request for ‘extension at the point of assessment’ relates to examinations, presentations, practicals and would normally be a single-instance reason (like a broken-down train, short illness). It may be a single-reason which applies to all examinations in a given period, for example a broken arm. In such a case, where several assessments are affected, you should discuss the best course of action with your Programme Leader or Personal Tutor. You may require **longer than 5 days** to complete your assessments.

If longer than 5 days it will involve your evidence being submitted to the **Mitigation Panel** for consideration (more information about this process on Page 9).

What details do I need to give for an extension at the point of assessment?

You need to identify the circumstance/s and provide independent documentary evidence to support the claim.

What is independent documentary evidence?

Essentially, this is simply something which verifies what you say:

Examples of this are:

- Medical certificate – a prescription will not be acceptable without some other confirmation of the illness ***The certificates must be signed, dated and stamped by a registered medical practitioner; certificates which do not contain this information may be rejected by the mitigation panel.***
- Letter from a medical professional treating yourself or a family member
- Death certificate
- Letter from employer confirming that you had to work to cover a sick colleague with full details of supervisor name/telephone number
- Police report and crime number – evidence also needs to be given previous work/notes/rough drafts etc of work has been stolen
- Statement from a member of academic staff – student must request the staff member to provide this
- Statement of attendance from a counsellor if appropriate

All evidence must be directly relevant to the circumstances and the timing of assessments, as appropriate.

What happens next?

Extensions: if this is agreed, you will be told how long the extension is for. It will only be up to **5 days**, you will be given a new submission date. ***You must make sure you keep to this submission date.***

Examinations: if your reason is found to be valid, you will be told that you can sit the examination at the next opportunity and it will be marked as a first attempt (i.e. not capped at 40%).

I had an extension at the point of assessment, but still didn't do well. Can I also submit to the Mitigation Panel?

The simple answer is: **NO**.

The extension is the **ONLY** mitigation permitted.

You cannot have **BOTH** an extension at the point of assessment **AND** the right to ask a Mitigation Panel to consider poor performance. The extension is intended to address your difficulties sufficiently and therefore double-consideration of the circumstances will not be given. The only exception to this is where the extenuating circumstances continue and has had an affect on other assessments. You will be expected to provide additional evidence to support the request for mitigation and submit your request to a Mitigation Panel for consideration.

What if my application is refused?

If your application for an extension is declined by your Programme Leader you can submit an application for mitigation to be considered by the Mitigation Panel. However if the application is also rejected by the Mitigation Panel your work will be considered a fail/resit and a maximum of up to 40% will be awarded.

Mitigation

Circumstances outside the control of the student that have significantly affected performance in any summative assessment.

When do I use this process?

Normally this process is used where extension at the point of assessment to allow you to complete work within 5 days of the assessment deadline has not been possible. This is likely to be because, for example, there are several modules involved; the circumstances are expected to continue for a period of time or the circumstances are very complex.

What is it for?

You can ask a Mitigation Panel to consider extenuating circumstances in respect of any of the following:

- late submission of coursework/assessment
- non-submission of coursework
- failure to attend one or more examinations or failure to submit work for other scheduled assessments
- under-performance in assessment

Once mitigating circumstances have been taken into account by a Mitigation Panel, they may not normally be used again by a student in a future application for mitigation

How do I do this?

As with requests for extensions at the point of assessment, you need to complete all sections of the standard mitigation form as fully as possible for an application to be considered by the Mitigation Panel. A copy of the form can be found on the HE Student Intranet site. The completed form along with appropriate evidence to support your claim (example of evidence listed on page 8) should be given to the programme leader or school administrator to enable them to submit your application to the Mitigation Panel for consideration. Your programme leader will also explain the process, in more detail, during induction.

- You **must** submit this request **before** the submission/hand-in date for the piece of assessed work.
- You **must** submit a request for **each** extension requested
- You **must** provide independent evidence to support your extension request



There are key differences between extension at the point of assessment and mitigation. The following explains the process in more detail for you.

Consideration of a Mitigation Request – Mitigation Panel

Mitigation Panels are held throughout the academic year. A schedule of the meetings and dates when your mitigation form and evidence must be submitted can be found on the HE Student Intranet. <http://students.ncgrp.co.uk/he/Pages/Policies-Procedures.aspx>

Once your request for mitigation has been received, all requests are forwarded to the HE Registry for consideration by the Mitigation Panel. The panel comprises of experienced academic staff drawn from across the institution. They consider the validity and seriousness of extenuating circumstances and make recommendations in respect of your assessments.

*These recommendations do not disclose the precise nature of the extenuating circumstances. **The process is confidential.***

The benefit of the Mitigation Panel is that:

- It facilitates equality of treatment for similar cases
- It ensures the details of your mitigation request are viewed by a limited number of people.

What do I need to include?

Remember most members of the Mitigation Panel will not know you therefore your application will stand or fail on the basis of what you present. It is **essential** you complete the standard mitigation form correctly and provide acceptable independent documentary evidence. This enables the Panel to make a proper judgement.

It is up to you to provide the Panel with the full details. They will not make enquiries on your behalf. Think about it like a job application – you would not expect a potential employer to try to find out details which you had left out!

Students should keep a copy of their Mitigation Form and associated evidence. Documents supplied as part of the application process, including medical evidence, will not normally be returned. Where photocopies of documents are submitted, the student may be required to provide the Chair of the Mitigation Panel with sight of the original documents in order to verify their authenticity or, in exceptional cases, ask for their authenticity to be notarised



by a public notary. Any costs incurred in supplying evidence are the responsibility of the student.

There are **two** other important matters:

Timescales: The institution expects you will submit any requests for consideration by the mitigation panel as soon as possible. *You should not wait to see whether you have or have not passed the module/s.* It is expected applications for mitigation are normally submitted **before** the assessment deadline.

Deadlines: Your School/Division will tell you the **final date** by which submissions should be received, the dates are also published on the HE Student Intranet:

<http://students.ncgrp.co.uk/he/Pages/Policies-Procedures.aspx>

If you miss the deadline ***it is essential*** that you say why. The institution does not guarantee to consider submissions which are received late, although it will consider them if it is clear there are good reasons why the deadline was missed.

For example if you are applying for mitigation for an assessment which was scheduled to take place in December and you submit your application for consideration in April the panel will require a detailed explanation as to why the application is late.

Submitting an application which is late could result in your application being rejected by the panel.

What happens next?

Decision by the Mitigation Panel

The Mitigation Panel considers your application and will make a decision using one of the following categories:

- A - Very serious circumstances**
- B – Extenuating circumstances, sufficient to make appropriate decision to defer an assessment**
- C – Extenuating circumstances which are not deemed sufficiently serious to make a deferral of assessment appropriate**



You will be informed in writing **within 10 working days** of the decision of the Mitigation Panel. The possible outcomes are explained in more detail:

- **Category A** Your application has been granted. You need **not** submit for re-assessment, the Board of Examiners will determine the range of options possible.

The range of options open to a Board of Examiners for **Category A** circumstances are:

- Permit a different form of assessment (eg a viva)
- Deem the student to have passed the assessment
- Award a mark for the work
- Raise the mark for the work, or allow re-assessment to raise the mark
- Offer the relevant award if it is the final stage.
- **Category B** Your application has been granted. You **may** submit for re-assessment. You will be given a new submission date. You must keep to this date. Your work will be marked as if you had submitted for the first time using the full range of marks available.
- **Category C** Your application has been rejected. Any re-assessment will be marked as a referral (receiving up to a maximum mark of 40%).

Outcomes explained

To be classed as **category A**, circumstances have to be very severe or very prolonged. Consequently, the more usual outcome where mitigation is accepted is a **category B**, which results in a decision that the assessment can be **deferred**. A deferral is normally the sole form of mitigation offered by a Mitigation Panel.

The institution has procedures by which you can appeal against the decision to the Board of Examiners [refer to the NCG HE Academic Regulations C14 Appeal against a decision of the Board of Examiners].

Please do not assume that you can submit your mitigation via the Appeal Process as an alternative to the processes described within this document. If you have not submitted your extenuating circumstances to the Mitigation Panel in the first place, you cannot then submit them as valid grounds for an Appeal.

Good cause

There are **rare instances** where a student may find it difficult or impossible to submit their mitigation through the normal process. In such cases an Appeal



may be allowed. However please note the reasons for non-submission at the normal time will be stringently examined.

What if my application is declined?

If your application for mitigation is declined you cannot take it any further at this point.

You have the right to lodge an appeal against this decision if you feel you have grounds to do so. Appeals must be submitted after the Board of Examiners meeting has taken place [refer to the NCG HE Academic Regulations C15 Mitigating Circumstances].

Confidentiality

The use of a Mitigation Panel is designed to ensure the details of your circumstances are only seen by a few members of staff, and they are treated confidentially. The Mitigation Panel reports its recommendations to the Board of Examiners but does not disclose the precise circumstances. The fact you have requested consideration for mitigation is confidential to the Board of Examiners.

Access to a student's application for mitigating circumstances and supporting evidence is normally restricted to the Chair and Secretary of the Mitigation Panel. The only occasion on which further disclosure would occur is if you invoked the procedures for Appeal. There are a limited number of professional bodies which require more than this; these are very few in number, and if your programme is one of these the details will be in your programme handbook.

Further information – Sources of help

If you are experiencing difficulties in presenting your mitigation or you would like further advice on how to proceed, the following resources are available.

Academic Staff: Personal tutors, Module Tutors or Programme Leaders, HE Manager.

They will be able to help you with information on the procedures, and the kind of evidence which is required, but the *presentation and submission* of the material remains your responsibility.



Suspension of studies – interruption to your studies

Where a student's circumstances are such that the student is unable to continue to engage with their studies for a significant period of time, the College operates a separate process for the suspension of studies.

APPENDIX 1

Quick Guide to Mitigation

Please note: The request for consideration of mitigation or extension at the point of assessment should normally be submitted before the assessment hand-in date.

Please consider the following information carefully when completing your application for mitigation or extension at the point of assessment.

Note that this list is a guide and not exhaustive.

Acceptable Circumstances (examples)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Serious illness (which may include an acute episode, a disability or a chronic condition which is not covered by agreed support already in place)• Significant personal accident or injury• Acute personal or emotional trauma (which may include acute anxiety or depression, family breakdown, breakdown of a personal relationship, death or serious illness of family member, significant other)• Complications in a pregnancy• Victim of crime• Additional impact of a disability• Car accident/other type of accident• Attendance at Court/Involvement in legal proceedings
Acceptable independent documentary evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Medical certificate – a prescription will not be acceptable without some other confirmation of the illness• Letter from a medical professional treating yourself or a family member• Death certificate• Letter from employer confirming that you had to work to cover a sick colleague with full details of supervisor name/telephone number• Police report and crime number – evidence also needs to be given previous work/notes/rough drafts etc of work has been stolen• Statement from a member of academic staff – student must request the staff member to provide this• Statement of attendance from a counsellor or if personal problems are affecting your work

Unacceptable Circumstances (Examples)

- Study related issues (personal equipment failure, printer problems, failure to back-up copy work, misreading examination timetable, oversleeping)
- Normal exam stress or anxiety during assessment period
- Personal disruptions within the student's control (moving house, change of job, normal job pressure, financial issues, holidays, weddings, family celebrations, poor time management, routine medical appointments, disruption to routine caring responsibilities)
- Complaints against staff or in relation to the delivery of the module/programme (these are managed through Complaints Policy).
- Medical circumstances for which the student is already receiving reasonable and appropriate adjustments
- Long term health condition, for which the student is already receiving reasonable and appropriate adjustments
- Medical condition supported only by retrospective evidence (such as a doctor's note stating that the student was seen after the illness and that the student declared they had been ill previously).
- Late disclosure of circumstances, where the student could reasonably be expected to have contacted a member of staff about the problem, but did not do so.
- Foreseeable and preventable circumstances
- Grounds of religion, unless notification was given at the start of the academic year

Confidentiality

All submissions giving details of extenuating circumstances will be confidential to the College staff authorised to receive and consider them except:

- Where the written requirements of a programme of study accredited by a Professional Statutory Body, and accepted at the validation of that programme of study, require a wider disclosure.
- Where a student requests and is subsequently granted, an Appeal Hearing.

Note: Students declaring a disability or specific learning need should normally access the Alternative Assessment Agreement to negotiate any changes to assessment dates. Full details and information can be obtained by following the link: <http://www.ncl-coll.ac.uk/higher-education/studentinfo>