

RESEARCH STUDENT MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES POLICY

This policy applies to students studying on a research programme (students in stage one of the Doctor of Theology or the PsychD programmes need to refer to the [postgraduate mitigating circumstances policy](#)).

Definitions

1. Mitigating circumstances are factors which have a detrimental effect on a student's academic work. A student may ask for mitigating circumstances to be taken into account in order:
 - to explain absence from an examination;
 - to explain failure to submit work, or to submit work on time;
 - to support a request for an extension to a submission deadline, or to defer assessment;
 - to explain cases where the student's academic performance falls below expectations.
2. Mitigating circumstances must be:
 - *significant*, meaning that they should have a clearly detrimental effect on the student's academic work; and
 - *relevant*, meaning that they must relate directly to the timing of the class, assessment or deadline in question; and
 - *outside the student's control*, meaning that the effect could not be avoided, counteracted or reduced by the student taking reasonable steps in preparation or in response.
3. Mitigating circumstances relate to **non-academic problems only**. Any difficulties with the organisation or operation of programmes of study should be dealt with via the Student Complaints Procedure which can be found in the [handbook](#).
4. Mitigating circumstances must also be **contemporaneous**, i.e. occur at the time of the assessment or in the period immediately leading up to the assessment. If a student was unwell for two weeks at the beginning of term, this would not normally be expected to impact on assessment later in the year unless that student can demonstrate valid reasons to support this.
5. Further information on acceptable mitigating circumstances and the evidence that is required can be found in Appendix A.

Submission of requests

6. All requests for mitigating circumstances to be taken into account must be submitted by the student concerned via a Mitigating circumstances form alongside the relevant extension or interruption [Form](#). Requests from third parties may not normally be considered. A discussion between a student and a member of staff does not constitute a request for mitigating circumstances later to be taken into account.
7. In submitting a request, the student should set out all the relevant factors via a Mitigating Circumstances [Form](#), including details of the assessment or deadline in question, the nature of the circumstances and their effect on the student's work. Only that information which is included in the student's written submission may be considered.

8. Requests should be submitted at the earliest opportunity and within your maximum period of registration. Extensions to your maximum registration date **should be requested at least 6 weeks before the end of your maximum period of registration.**
9. Requests will **not normally be considered retrospectively** unless it is clearly communicated that the delay could not have been avoided or reduced due to the circumstances. Each case will be reviewed on an individual basis taking into account all factors leading up to the request. The private or confidential nature of the circumstances may restrict the documentary evidence submitted. In these cases confidential confirmation from support services e.g. Student Welfare Officer will be taken into account.
10. The University reserves the right to check the authenticity of all documentation submitted as part of a request for mitigating circumstances to be taken into account. Any student who submits inauthentic documentation, or who misrepresents material facts in the request, may be subject to proceedings under the Disciplinary Regulations.
11. All requests and evidence will be retained by the University in accordance with the Records Retention Policy. Documentation will not be returned to students unless it is specifically requested (a copy will be taken for our records).

Documentary evidence

12. Where possible, students should provide the original documentary evidence to corroborate their mitigating circumstances claims. All evidence must be submitted with the request. The University may exceptionally decide to accept documentary evidence which is presented at a later date if it is clear that the delay could not have been avoided or reduced by the student taking reasonable steps to obtain and provide evidence at the appropriate time. In such cases, however, the delay may limit the action which is available to the University in response to the student's circumstances.
13. The nature of the evidence will depend on the nature of the circumstances in question. As far as possible the evidence should come from a relevant official body. For medical conditions, this should be a note from a suitably qualified medical practitioner who has seen the student during the period of the condition and is not a close friend or relative (evidence relating to alternative methods of treatment may be accepted only in combination with a written diagnosis of the condition by a practitioner in conventional medicine).
14. Documentary evidence must normally be presented in English, or in the original language with a translation into English. Translation must be completed by a certified translator or by a member of Roehampton staff proficient in that language.

Consideration of mitigating circumstances

15. Requests may be rejected without further consideration:
 - if the circumstances described therein are not significant, not relevant and not outside the student's control; or
 - if the request was submitted late without acceptable cause or was submitted without adequate supporting evidence.
16. The procedures for considering requests must promote consistency and confidentiality. To this end, all requests from within a single academic unit should be considered by one individual, or in the case

of more significant assessment decisions, by a small group. Records should be kept of decisions taken for future reference and so that similar allowances can be applied to similar circumstances in future.

17. Academic judgments can only be based upon academic evidence in the form of student work. Whilst evidence of mitigating circumstances might suggest that a student may not have had a fair and uncompromised opportunity to demonstrate his/her academic achievement, it cannot indicate what the academic outcome should be. Therefore, the preferable response is to provide the student with a further attempt at the assessment without penalty at the next available opportunity. In all circumstances, the academic outcome must reflect a valid and justifiable assessment of work submitted by the student.
18. Those who are involved in considering requests should be aware of their duties under the Disabilities Discrimination Act. For students who have registered with Disability Services at the start of their studies and have been given reasonable adjustments during the year and at the point of assessment. No further action need be taken in these cases, provided that the adjustments were implemented and the student has not raised material concerns. However, it can happen that a student's disability is diagnosed part-way through the programme, or that a student does not report a long-term illness or condition until the very end of his/her studies. Examiners do have a duty to consider: (a) whether the student has been substantially disadvantaged compared to students without the same disability; (b) whether the substantial disadvantage was caused by University provision (e.g. arrangements for viva and submission of thesis); (c) what steps could be taken at this stage to counteract any disadvantage; (d) whether it would be reasonable to take those steps. Under the terms of the Disability Equality Duty (2006), we are required to take steps to take account of students' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled students more favorably than other students.
19. Where a student has formally reported mitigating circumstances previously the evidence should be carried forward for consideration for as long as it remains relevant. However, requests should still be submitted at the appropriate time to identify which assessments have been affected.

Extensions to milestones

20. A student may apply on grounds of mitigating circumstances for permission to extend the deadline of one of their academic milestones. These requests should be sent directly to the school, using the mitigating circumstances form with accompanying evidence, rather than to the graduate school.
21. The extension may only be granted where the mitigating circumstances and supporting evidence are judged to be sufficient.
22. The application for an extension should be submitted at least 2 working days in advance so that the student would still have the opportunity to undertake the milestone at the normal time if the application were to be refused. In all cases the application must be submitted before the date and time of the milestone in question.
23. Circumstances may prevent a student requesting an extension to a deadline before the milestone, in this case the school will assess whether the circumstances for the late request are sufficient to be granted.
24. Under normal circumstances, all applications and supporting evidence must be submitted with the

application and in accordance with the University's policy on Mitigating Circumstances.

25. An extension to a milestone will only be granted where an extension to the maximum period of registration would not be appropriate.

Appendix A – Acceptable Mitigating Circumstances and Documentary Evidence

A1 Illness or Injury

- (a) The illness or injury relates to the student or to a relative/dependant.
- (b) Medical conditions must be supported by written evidence. Evidence can be submitted in the form of a GP medical certificate, a letter or equivalent from a certified medical professional. Letters from the university wellbeing team can also be used as evidence.
- (c) Evidence must be contemporaneous and give a clear diagnosis. The date of the evidence must demonstrate that the student visited the medical practitioner at the time the mitigating circumstances occurred. Statements that a student reported that they were ill, or which do not include a clear diagnosis, will not be accepted.
- (d) Students with long-term medical conditions and/or disabilities, including those with mental health difficulties, may have difficulty in obtaining medical evidence for each instance when their health has been affected. Their evidence may instead show that their condition is fluctuating and that they had an extended period of ill health.

A2 Bereavement

- (a) Where the mitigating circumstances relate to:-
 - (1) in the event of the death of a parent, close relative or a child
 - (2) in the event that a pregnancy is lost before 24 weeks whether the Student:
 - (i) experiences this loss directly
 - (ii) is the partner, of someone who experiences the loss
 - (iii) loses a baby via surrogacy
- (b) student, a death certificate or an officially certified copy of a death certificate should be provided.
- (c) Where a student has been affected by the death of someone other than a relative they should explain their relationship to the deceased and the impact upon their studies.
- (d) Bereavement will normally be considered to cover milestones within the term when the death occurred, and shortly afterwards. Students who feel that they have been affected by a death beyond this time will need to provide additional evidence to indicate how the death has affected them personally e.g. a doctor's certificate, report from a counsellor.
- (e) Evidence can be submitted in the form of a GP medical certificate, a letter or equivalent from a certified medical professional.

A3 Personal problem/trauma/family problem

- (a) This can include a range of issues such as separation from a partner, family conflict, caring for a dependant.
- (b) Examination stress specifically is not considered to be a mitigating circumstance as this is common to all students. However, we acknowledge that students who suffer from anxiety could feel the stress of a viva or an academic milestone. If this exists in an acute form

documented by a registered medical practitioner, students can apply for reasonable adjustments. Students who suffer from examination stress should seek support available at the Graduate School.

A4 Court attendance

- (a) This can include jury service, attendance at tribunals and the requirement to attend court as a witness, defendant or plaintiff.
- (b) It is normally possible to apply for deferral of jury service if it clashes with an examination. If deferral is not granted, documentary evidence from the relevant Court official must be produced to show that the clash cannot be avoided.

A5 Victim of crime

- (a) Students who consider that they have been adversely affected by being a victim of crime must provide relevant details, such as a police reference number or a report from an expert, confirming the impact of the crime upon. Examples may include theft of a laptop, being assaulted, or being burgled.
- (b) Where the crime committed is of a very personal nature, i.e. sexual assault, it may be difficult to obtain a police report. Likewise, some students may not wish to report the crime to the police. In such circumstances appropriate documentary evidence can be provided from a medical professional, counsellor or other professional body (i.e. rape support service or the School's [Student Advice and Wellbeing](#) team).

A6 Exceptional financial or accommodation problems

- (a) Many students may experience financial and accommodation problems as part of daily life. These circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case basis where they are significant and significantly disrupt a student's academic performance.
- (b) Typical evidence may include a letter from a bank or other financial agency, letters from landlords or housing support agencies.

A7 School IT problems

- (a) Failures of equipment, including IT systems and computer viruses, will only be accepted when they occur Roehampton -wide, nationally or internationally, and are verified by the IT helpdesk. This would only be relevant if you have been working on a university computer such as in the library and the incident happens as you are using the computer; all work should be saved to secure online spaces after work has been completed and should not be stored locally.
- (b) Evidence required will be provided by the School's IT department.
- (c) Routine computer issues such as viruses, corrupt files and printer problems are not acceptable as mitigating circumstances. Students must take adequate precautions to reduce the potential impact of these problems such as backing up files.

A8 Exceptional work commitment (part-time students only)

- (a) The Graduate School appreciates that some students work to finance their studies but assumes that students will make their studies a priority. It is a student's responsibility to evaluate whether they can comply with the requirements of their research programme before enrolling at Roehampton.
- (b) Full-time students will not normally be eligible to claim for mitigating circumstances in relation to employment.
- (c) Part-time students may submit a claim for mitigating circumstances if the work requirement is unexpected and/or non-negotiable and this prevents them from attending examinations or completing coursework by the published deadline. The student must provide documentary evidence from their employer confirming the work requirement and its duration.

A9 Other serious circumstances deemed acceptable by the Graduate School

The list of mitigating circumstances is not exhaustive, and the School appreciates that other circumstances may arise which meet the criteria outlined. If you are in doubt, please contact the Graduate School.