

Report concerning the work of the Mitigating Circumstances Review Working Party

A note by the Deputy President (Education)

I have sat on a working party that has just met twice to review College's policy on students with mitigating circumstances. I am distributing the new draft policy now; it is not actual College policy yet because it must be approved by the Quality Assurance Advisory Committee and Senate first. However, it will probably go straight through, and now is your chance to give your feedback before it is finalized. Send any feedback to me at Council and I will pass it on.

Here is the text of the policy, and at the bottom is the new form for applying for consideration of mitigating circumstances in an exam:

**EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES AFFECTING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE:
POLICY AND PROCEDURES (OCT 09)**

1 Principles

The policy embodies the following principles:

- The extent of discretion which may be exercised by Boards of Examiners in relation to extenuating circumstances should be consistent throughout the College.
- Students presenting extenuating circumstances in mitigation of poor academic performance should receive a fair hearing.
- Procedures for consideration of extenuating circumstances should be consistent throughout College to ensure equity of treatment.
- Student confidentiality should be respected as far as possible.
- Decisions regarding what evidence is presented to a Board of Examiners should be made by more than one member of staff
- Procedures should be backed by adequate documentation, i.e. in their promulgation to students, in confirmation of evidence and in the recording of decisions.

2 Extent of discretion

Boards of Examiners may use their discretion where extenuating circumstances are judged by the advisory panel to be sufficient to have affected performance as follows:

- To allow candidates who miss an examination or major element of coursework an opportunity to sit/submit and receive an uncapped mark
- To allow candidates who sit but who are considered by the advisory panel to have performed significantly below their normal ability (based on prior performance) to resit the assessment and receive an uncapped mark or to complete an alternative SQT (this option may not be offered to medical students who must meet the required standard in all major assessments for GMC accreditation).
- To raise to a pass the mark of a candidate with marginally less (as defined by Senate) than the pass mark in an element of a degree examination.
- In the consideration of the award of degree classification/distinction where a student's marks are close to a class/distinction boundary.

3 Procedures for the Implementation of Policy

The following procedures are based on current best practice and should be followed by all departments

1. Students should be informed of welfare arrangements in their written induction material and should be specifically advised at induction meetings to inform the Senior Tutor/Personal Tutor of any problems affecting their academic performance. Information about the welfare arrangements should also be clearly accessible from relevant departmental teaching websites.
2. The procedure for requesting mitigation, including details about the type of independent evidence required to support requests and the possible outcomes of successful requests for mitigation (section 2 above) should be made clear to students.
3. Students should be written to a few weeks before the examination inviting them to submit details any problems affecting their academic performance to the Senior Tutor or other designated member of staff in writing on the appropriate form (Appendix 1). They should also receive a final reminder when they are emailed with information about examination arrangements.
4. All requests for mitigation should be made on the relevant form and accompanied by independent corroborative evidence. This evidence and details of the outcome should be kept on the individual's file.
5. Submissions by students should be considered prior to the meeting of the Board of Examiners by an advisory panel consisting of a small group of key staff, at least one of whom should be a member of the relevant Board of Examiners (e.g. Head of Department, Senior Tutor, DUGS, Chairman of Board, year coordinators), which makes recommendations to the full Board. The advisory panel should determine the amount of information which may be released to the Board.
6. A simplified process should be adopted for students to report any mitigating circumstances resulting in missed or late coursework where the work make only a minor contribution to the end of year mark. Students should complete a standardised form to document the circumstances (Appendix 2). The amassing of several forms for an individual student should trigger an investigation by a Senior or Personal Tutor to establish whether further action should be taken.
7. The justifications for any action taken in consideration of extenuating circumstances should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting of the Board of Examiners.
8. A written record of submissions by students and the outcomes recommended by advisory panels should be kept with the examination records.

4 Student confidentiality

The more information which is revealed to the advisory panel, the more able they will be to make an informed and fair recommendation to the Board of Examiners. However, it is acknowledged that requests for mitigation may require a student to reveal information of a highly personal and sensitive nature. In order to balance these conflicting needs:

- Students should be encouraged to release complete details of their circumstances to the advisory panel and invited to indicate what information may not be released to a Board of Examiners
- Advisory panels should take all revealed information and corroborating evidence into account when making their recommendation to the Board of Examiners.
- Advisory panels should report their recommendations and the nature of the evidence provided to Boards of Examiners. Where a student has requested the withholding of specific information, his or her wishes must be respected.

Council

2nd November 2009

For this reason, advisory panels should always include one or more members of the Board of Examiners.

5 Aegrotat provision

The College Requirements for the award of the degrees of BSc, MSci, BEng and MEng provide for the award of an aegrotat degree and for the procedures for consideration of eligibility to be awarded such degrees. The proposals outlined above would apply where the award of an aegrotat degree would not be appropriate.

May 2009

REQUEST FOR MITIGATION FORM

To be used for examinations and major elements of coursework.

For consideration of mitigating circumstances for an assessment this form must be submitted within 7 days of the examination or coursework submission date.

Personal Details:

Name:

CID:

Department:

Programme of Study:

Year of Study:

Nature of Mitigating Circumstances:

Please tick appropriate box

Own illness		Family illness/bereavement		Accident		Victim of crime		Other unforeseen circumstances	
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Please give details of the nature of your mitigating circumstances including dates:

Documentation:

Have you attached appropriate documentation to support your case?

YES/ NO

If **YES**, please indicate what documentation is attached.

Examples of suitable documentation include:

Please tick appropriate box

<input type="checkbox"/>	Medical Certificate or doctor's letter (if from a UK based practitioner, they should be GMC registered)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Email/letter from Imperial College Health Centre
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hospital Admission note
<input type="checkbox"/>	Death Certificate
<input type="checkbox"/>	Police Crime Number/report
<input type="checkbox"/>	Letter from counsellor
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other: Please specify...
<input type="checkbox"/>	

Translations should be provided of any documentation not submitted in English

If **NO**, please state when you will be able to provide suitable documentation, or explain why this is not possible:

Please note that the more information the Department receives to support your mitigating circumstances

the more able it is to reach an informed decision.

Details of Assessment Missed or Performed with Mitigating Circumstances				
Course code	Assessment item (i.e. exam /major item of coursework e.g. project write up)	Date of assessment/ submission deadline	Indicate whether you sat/submitted the assessment	
			Taken	Not Taken

Please tick here if all assessments during the academic year have been affected by the circumstances detailed above.

Please note that the information on this form will remain confidential and will only be viewed by the exam board advisory panel for consideration of details to be released to the board. Please state below if there is any information contained on this form which you DO NOT wish to be released to the Exam Board. Please bear in mind that the more information that is received by the board the more able they are to reach an informed decision.

Council
2nd November 2009

I wish for the appropriate Board of Examiners to take into account my mitigating circumstances for the assessments listed above. I declare that the information I have given to be true to the best of my knowledge and understand that false claims for mitigation are a serious examinations offence.

Signed (student).....
Date:.....

Signed (member of staff - to confirm receipt).....
Date:.....

Please note that for minor pieces of assessed work, independent corroborating evidence is not required and the minor coursework mitigating circumstances form should be used. Your Personal Tutor, Senior Tutor or Course Leader will advise you which pieces of coursework, if any, are categorised as minor