

Mitigation Policy

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Students are responsible for managing their learning and assessment activities throughout their study at The College; it is recognised that occasionally illness or difficult circumstances arise but it is believed that this is part of normal life and should be managed by students to enable them to continue with their studies accordingly.
- 1.2 However, where prolonged illness or exceptional circumstances arise, The College operates a policy under which mitigating circumstances are recognised and appropriate action taken to ensure that a student's academic performance is not adversely affected by these circumstances.
- 1.3 It is important to note that circumstances which pertained before the student enrolled on the course, or which have developed during the course but are ongoing (such as responsibility as a carer) do not constitute mitigating circumstances. Students are expected to manage their life circumstances, and should not enrol for a course if they are unable to commit sufficient time to it. Students who find that their circumstances have changed should contact their Programme Leader to discuss the option of intermission.
- 1.4 The principles governing the mitigation process are that it should be:
- **Clear** – the claim form and process should be easily understood by all staff and students.
 - **Timely** – any mitigation claim should be dealt with at the relevant assessment point.
 - **Fair** – by dealing with claims under the same central system, decisions will be made by staff who are not directly concerned with the student, and who are following guidance laid down in the mitigation policy.
 - **Confidential** – only staff who are directly involved in the process will have knowledge of any claim.

1.5 If a student chooses not to notify The College of mitigating circumstances at the time that they affect assessment, it is highly unlikely that any retrospective allowance will be made through the appeal process.

2.0 Essential rules governing the process

NB A student is seeking mitigation for her/himself and whilst staff will provide help and support, it is ultimately the student's responsibility to make a mitigation claim.

- 2.1 A student wanting to claim mitigation should alert the Programme Leader/Unit Tutor prior to the assessment deadline.
- 2.2 Any claim must be submitted prior to the unit assessment deadline with a fully completed mitigation form and backed by appropriate evidence.
- 2.3 Evidence is needed to support any claim. Medical evidence must confirm a medical condition that is current and so a doctor's note that indicates a student was seen after the illness

occurred, and does not include a professional diagnosis, will not be accepted as evidence. A report from a professionally qualified counsellor will normally be required to support a claim of personal crisis.

3.0 Requests for extensions of one week or less on assessment deadlines

- 3.1 An individual Programme Leader or Unit Tutor (in consultation with the Programme Leader) is able to grant an extension of up to one working week in the event that they are satisfied that the student has particular or exceptional circumstances.
- 3.2 Only one week's extension should be allowed per student for any unit and no more than two such extensions should be permitted in all, per student per year.
- 3.3 The HE Senior Administrator should be informed of these decisions and a record maintained within the HE Unit.

4.0 Requests for extensions of more than one week on assessment deadlines

- 4.1 Where students seek extensions of more than one week, a formal claim must be submitted to the Programme Leader via completion of the mitigation form and the production of appropriate evidence. **This claim must be received prior to the assessment deadline.**
- 4.2 It should be noted that the extension should match approximately the number of days lost due to illness or other reason as indicated by the evidence provided.
- 4.3 The Programme Leader will review the form and supporting evidence. If fully satisfied with the claim, they should sign the form to signify their support and pass the form to the Assistant Director of Higher Education.
- 4.4 No claim will be accepted by the Assistant Director of Higher Education unless it has been correctly completed and evidence has been provided.
- 4.5 The Assistant Director of Higher Education will review the claim to ensure clarity of information, appropriateness of claim in terms of the evidence provided, and consistency with claims from students in other courses. Further clarification may be sought from the student as required.
- 4.6 Claims for extensions of four weeks or less will be submitted to the Head of Curriculum in which the student's course is placed. A summary paper will also be supplied by the Assistant Director of Higher Education outlining any particular issues associated with the claim.
- 4.7 The Head of Curriculum will consider the claims in the light of past practice and in line with the Mitigation Policy, discussing with the Director of Adult and Higher Education as required.
- 4.8 When a claim is received requesting an extension of more than 4 weeks, this will be considered by the relevant Head of Curriculum and the Director of Adult and Higher Education, or in their absence, the Assistant Director of Higher Education.
- 4.9 Where a proposed extended submission date falls after The College deadline for marking to be completed, consideration of the assessment will automatically take place at the Resit Board in September. For final year students this means that they will be unable to complete assessment in time for graduation. On successful completion of the course, the student will therefore be invited to the following graduation ceremony. If continuing students do not successfully complete all outstanding assessment by the Resit Board, this may affect their ability to progress to the next year of study.
- 4.10 A claim for mitigation should be made in agreement with the Programme Leader. If the Programme Leader does not support the student in making a claim, the student may present the completed form and evidence to the Assistant Director of Higher Education for consideration; such claims will only be considered by a full meeting of the Mitigation Board. It should be noted that this would require an extraordinary meeting of the Board and is likely to extend the timeline in processing the claim.

5.0 Requests for action other than an extension

- 5.1 It is anticipated that an extension of time in which to complete outstanding work will resolve the majority of claims under the mitigation process; however, exceptionally, circumstances may be such that an extension is not the most appropriate way to resolve the situation; following discussion with the Programme Leader, other types of action that could be requested are:
- 5.1.1 Where the student has produced sufficient work as a result of complete or partial fulfilment of a unit, a mark may be awarded taking into account the student's overall mark profile.
- 5.1.2 A reduction in the assessment load may be negotiated, which ensures that appropriate learning outcomes are still met.
- 5.1.3 If insufficient work exists to enable assessment to take place, evidence of learning by other means such as viva voce examination may be sought, for which a mark may be awarded.
- 5.1.4 In extremely severe cases, credit may be awarded without a corresponding mark. It should be noted that where no mark is given, this unit will not be taken into account within the final award calculation.
- 5.2 Where other action is requested, a formal claim must be submitted to the Programme Leader via completion of the mitigation form and the production of appropriate evidence. This claim must be received prior to the assessment deadline.
- 5.3 The Programme Leader will review the form and supporting evidence. If fully satisfied with the claim, they should sign the form to signify their support and pass the form to the Assistant Director of Higher Education.
- 5.4 No claim will be accepted by the Assistant Director of Higher Education unless it has been correctly completed and evidence has been provided.
- 5.5 The Assistant Director of Higher Education will review the claim to ensure clarity of information, appropriateness of claim in terms of the evidence provided, and consistency with claims from students in other courses/Schools. Further clarification may be sought from the student as required.
- 5.6 When a claim is received requesting action other than an extension of time, this will be considered by the relevant Head of Curriculum and the Director of Adult and Higher Education, or in their absence, the Assistant Director of Higher Education.

6.0 Decisions under the mitigation process

- 6.1 When evaluating a mitigation claim, the following will be taken into consideration:
- The severity and the timing of the circumstances alleged.
 - The appropriateness of the evidence provided.
 - The extent to which the circumstances would have affected the assessment indicated in the claim.
 - The extent of work affected by the mitigating circumstances and the implications of any extension of time or other requested action on the whole assessment portfolio.
- 6.2 In order to ensure parity of treatment for all students, decisions will always be made in the light of past practice with regard to similar claims.
- 6.3 The College has a duty of care for its students; the decision taken on a mitigation claim will ensure that a realistic timeframe is agreed for a student which enables them to complete outstanding assessment requirements without undue pressure. Where there is clear evidence of mitigating circumstances affecting a student over a lengthy period of time, this may mean that a student is recommended to intermit and complete studies in the following academic year.

7.0 Communication of the decision following a mitigation claim

- 7.1 Decisions regarding any claim will be communicated to the Senior HE Administrator.
- 7.2 It will be the responsibility of the Senior HE Administrator to write to students informing them of the outcome with copies sent to the HE Unit and Programme Leader.

8.0 Meeting of the Mitigation Board

- 8.1 The Mitigation Board chaired by the Assistant Director of Higher Education will normally meet once a year to coincide with summer assessment deadlines to consider:
- Any outstanding claims.
 - A review of the decisions made throughout the year to ensure consistency and parity of treatment.
 - Any issues that have arisen during the year in relation to the process.
 - Possible changes to any regulations appertaining to mitigation or the mitigation process.

9.0 Maintaining records and monitoring the process.

- 9.1 A log of all claims and decisions will be maintained within HE Unit together with the original claim form. This log will be available through controlled access to Heads of Curriculum and the Student Services Manager during the year for oversight of the process.
- 9.2 Copies of all the documentation will be retained within HE Unit and in the student file for two years. Following this a copy of the claim and the outcome will be maintained within the student file for six years in line with The College recommended retention periods for student assessment records. All supporting evidence and other associated documentation will be destroyed after two years.
- 9.3 The operation of the process will be reviewed the HE Strategy and Planning Group on an annual basis. This review will include analysis of claims by ethnicity, gender and disability to ensure that the process meets equality and inclusivity requirements.

10.0 Complaints and Appeals

- 10.1 If a student is not satisfied with the decision made, they are entitled to request that their claim is reviewed. The student should make this request in writing to the Director of Adult and Higher Education, outlining the reasons for their request within 10 days of notification of the decision. The Director of Adult and Higher Education will request the Assistant Director of Higher Education and another member of the Mitigation Board, who have not had any connection with the original decision, to review the claim.
- 10.2 If a student is still dissatisfied with the decision made, he/she may appeal in writing to the Director of Academic Services - AUB. The letter of appeal must be lodged with the Director of Academic Services' office within ten working days of the date of notification of the decision.
- 10.3 A student may appeal on the following grounds:
- 10.3.1 That new substantive evidence has become available which is pertinent to the case and has material impact such that the outcome may have been affected.
 - 10.3.2 That due process was not followed and that this had a material bearing on the outcome of the case.
 - 10.3.3 That the decision of the Mitigation Board was perverse, taking into account all the evidence presented.

10.4 The Director of Academic Services will conduct a full review of the documentation relating to the case, including all documentation considered by the panel and its decision. He/she will not normally meet with the parties concerned but may request a meeting with the Director of Adult and Higher Education who has undertaken the review of the claim to request clarification of any points raised by the student in his/her appeal, or to discuss the impact of any new evidence. The Director of Academic Services will reach a judgement on the balance of the evidence, and will either:

- Confirm the original decision
- Uphold the appeal and require the Mitigation Board to reconsider its original decision.

10.5 The Director of Academic Services will write to the student to confirm his / her decision. This will normally be within 10 working days of receipt of the letter of appeal although, as this authority cannot be delegated, there may be occasions where a longer time period is required, and in these cases the Director of Academic Services Office will contact the relevant parties to explain the circumstances. The Director of Academic Services' letter of decision will also be copied to the Head of Curriculum and the Director of Adult and Higher Education to enable the record of decisions to be updated.

The Bournemouth and Poole College is committed to the provision of a working and learning environment founded on dignity, respect and equity where unfair discrimination of any kind is treated with the utmost seriousness. It has developed and implemented a Single Equalities Scheme (SES) to guide its work in this area. All The College's policies and practices are designed to meet the principles of dignity, respect and fairness, and take account of the commitments set out in the SES.