

LINCOLN COLLEGE HIGHER EDUCATION

MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES – GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

Introduction – definitions, purpose and authority

1. The purpose of this document is to set out the College's expectations relating to mitigating circumstances.
2. Lincoln College aims to provide all students with the support and guidance they need to successfully complete their programme of study.
3. Mitigating circumstances are medical or personal issues which a student cannot overcome or manage without an impact on their ability to attend teaching and undertake assessments because they occur suddenly, unexpectedly or are severe in nature. There is no definitive list of such situations and the College recognises that difficulties impact people in different ways.
4. If a student considers that their studies are being affected by mitigating circumstances, they should discuss these circumstances with their personal tutor in the first instance or by talking to someone in the Student Services team. The earlier the College is made aware of any impacting circumstances; the earlier support options can be made available. Some of these options may become limited, or not be available at all, if a student waits until after an assessment period or until the end of an academic year before disclosing any mitigating circumstances.
5. This set of procedures applies to long-term extension requests (beyond 10 working days), mitigating circumstances requests and exceptional circumstances.
6. The HE Academic Affairs Committee is the final arbiter of the interpretation and application of this set of procedures.

Extension requests

Extending a submission deadline

7. The extending of a submission deadline applies to course work submission only. Other types of assessments such as examinations, for example, are held on fixed dates and, therefore an extension is not applicable.

8. It is the responsibility of the student to manage their time according to the assessment submission schedule and ensure that work is submitted by the published deadline. Missing a deadline will generally mean that work is subject to a penalty or may not be marked at all (see the relevant validating partner assessment regulations).
9. If a student is unable to submit a piece of assessed work by the date published, they may apply for an extension. This application must be made prior to the published submission date and supported by appropriate documentary evidence. Examples of acceptable forms of evidence are listed in Annex 1.
 - a. Extensions of up to 10 working days can be requested by submitting an HE Extension Request Form to the Programme Leader / Course Co-ordinator.
 - b. Extensions required beyond 10 working days must be made via a Mitigating Circumstances application.
10. Extension requests should be received no later than 24 hours before the submission deadline for that piece of assessment. Requests received after the submission deadline will not be considered.
11. It will be the responsibility of the student to meet the new deadline. A student should seek support from their personal tutor if an application for Mitigating Circumstances would be more appropriate.
12. Extending a submission deadline may help a student ease the impact of mitigating circumstances, however, it is important that the student is aware that this could impact on other submission deadlines which could impact on their overall performance.
13. Tier 4 students are not permitted to stay in the UK beyond the expiry date stated on their visa. Although an extension to studies may be approved, it may not be appropriate or legally advisable for the student to remain at the College or in the UK to complete their programme of study. Advice regarding whether or not the College will be able to support a further visa application needs to be sought by the relevant academic team, from the International Team, in advance of the case for granting the extension.

Mitigating Circumstances

14. As stated, in para. 3 above, mitigating circumstances are medical or personal issues which a student cannot overcome or manage without an impact on their ability to attend teaching and undertake assessments because they occur suddenly, unexpectedly or are severe in nature.
15. If a student considers that their ability to complete any type of assessment might be, or has been, adversely affected, a Mitigating Circumstances and Extension Request Form should be completed. Forms should ideally be submitted before the assessment deadline but they **must** be submitted no later than 10 working days after the examination or submission deadline. The Form must include a clear explanation of the circumstances. All mitigating circumstances

requests must be supported by appropriate documentary evidence. Examples of acceptable forms of evidence are listed in Annex 1.

16. All mitigating circumstances will be considered by the HE Academic Affairs Committee. Where this Committee is satisfied that the evidence submitted is appropriate and the request for mitigation is approved, one of the following outcomes will be applied:

- the student will be given the opportunity to submit the affected assessment with a revised deadline for submission (e.g. the next available exam period or submission date)
- if an attempt at the affected assessment or examination has been made, the student, after having received the mark, will be offered the opportunity of a new fresh attempt. Advice and support can be sought.
- if an attempt at the affected assessment or examination has been made, the student, after having received a capped mark, will have the cap removed.

*A fresh attempt shall be interpreted to mean, in the case of a first attempt, that the candidate is offered a new first attempt, and in the case of a reassessment, that the candidate is offered a new reassessment. The original mark will be void.

17. If the mitigating circumstances claim is declined it is likely to be for one of the following reasons:

- a) it has been submitted late (more than 10 working days from the submission deadline, without sufficient evidence to prove exceptional circumstances);
- b) there is insufficient evidence to support the reported circumstances.

18. The HE Academic Affairs Committee will not consider more than 3 applications for Mitigating Circumstances within an academic year per student.

19. The student will receive an email informing them of the outcome of the mitigating circumstances claim after the HE Academic Affairs Committee has convened. Applications for Mitigating Circumstances are considered by the committee by remote correspondence so that a response can be communicated back within 4 weeks of submission.

20. The HE Academic Affairs Committee must comprise no fewer members than a chair, a secretary and one other member of staff.

Exceptional Circumstances

21. Many student support needs can be met by reasonable adjustments or can be catered for through either the extensions process or the mitigating circumstances outlined above. There are however, some exceptional circumstances which may need further support measures to be implemented. In such circumstances, students may not be in a position to engage with the above processes either because of a sudden deterioration in a physical or mental health issue or because of a traumatic event/series of events which may make it extremely difficult to engage with the above processes.

22. Students with such circumstances should complete an Exceptional Circumstances application form which will be considered by the HE Academic Affairs Committee and the outcome recorded on ProMonitor. Examples of Exceptional Circumstances are:
- a) domestic violence or other forms of abuse or physical assault;
 - b) rapid deterioration in student mental health in the weeks leading up the assessment;
 - c) serious deterioration in physical health condition;
 - d) significant caring responsibilities which may impact on attendance and performance;
 - e) ongoing, long term mental or physical health issues.
23. The standard of evidence required for the above can vary and it is expected that a student should only need to submit this evidence once.
24. Once a student has had Exceptional Circumstances reported against their record, and a further extension is requested or further mitigating circumstances occur, the student will need to complete the required forms (as noted above), but any further evidence will not be required.

Annex 1

The following provides guidance as to the type of evidence expected to support requests for Extension Requests, Mitigating Circumstances Requests and Exceptional Circumstances. This is not an exhaustive list. A student may also provide supporting evidence from a member of Lincoln College staff. This may be the personal tutor or a member of staff from Student Services.

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS

Reason for mitigation	Form of accepted evidence
Personal illness*. * <i>physical or mental health illness</i>	Letter from a medical practitioner, doctor's note, hospital letter, hospital appointment letter, copy of prescription.
Illness of a close family member/dependent or friend.	Letter from medical practitioner, doctor's note, hospital letter, hospital appointment letter, letter of confirmation from a relevant support organisation.
Serious personal accident or injury of self or close family member/friend.	Copy of accident report, doctor's letter, insurance claim letter or a letter from a medical practitioner.
Significant adverse personal or family circumstances.	Letter from any one of the following: a medical practitioner, social worker, member of staff from Student Services at Lincoln College
Serious personal disruption (e.g. victim of a crime, court attendance, relationship breakdown etc.)	Letter from any one of the following: a medical practitioner, social worker, member of staff from Student Services at Lincoln College, written evidence from the police.
Bereavement of a family member/friend.	Death certificate, order of service, letter from a medical practitioner.

Annex 2

SELF-CERTIFICATION

What is self-certification?

You may use the self-certification procedure to report circumstances which are preventing you from submitting assessments. This means you complete a formal written and signed declaration to confirm you have experienced circumstances which were severe enough to prevent you from either attending a fixed assessment event, such as examination or presentation or submitting your course work by the deadline.

Any self-certification forms you provide must:

- contain a clear description of the reasons for non-attendance not merely a claim that you felt unwell
- be submitted to support your Mitigating Circumstances or Extension Request Form.

Limits on the use of Self Certification

You can use the self-certification process for a maximum of two absences in a particular trimester and a maximum of three absences in an academic year. If your period of illness is longer than five days, or if you have already used the self-certification process for the number of times as stated above, then you should seek medical advice and submit evidence as appropriate with your request.