



Teaching Quality Handbook

Part 6

Assessment Policy (June 2017)

Part 6 sets out the policy for student assessment and provides links to marking guides and academic regulations for progression and awards.

Version Control

Version	Created by	Date approved by Academic Board	Summary of changes
June 2017	Asst Registrar QAE	17/07/2017	Changes to reflect organisational restructuring

Part 6: Assessment Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 All RAU academic programmes comprise a related group of modules, each with its own outcomes and assessment methods, which together lead to the full academic award.
- 1.2 Assessment activities for each module are specified within the individual Module Reference Sheets, are designed to test and confirm the achievement of specified module outcomes for the award of credit and for progression to the next level of study.
- 1.3 Education Strategy provides the framework within which assessments are conducted. A copy of the Education Strategy is available from the RAU website.
- 1.4 [Chapter B6 Assessment of Students and Accreditation of Prior Learning \(December 2011\) of the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) has also been used to ensure RAU assessment regulations meet national benchmark standards.
- 1.5 The RAU employs a group of External Examiners to oversee the assessment process and confirm the equivalence of RAU standards and awards with those of other HE institutions within the UK. Further details of the appointment and terms of reference of RAU External Examiners can be found in Part 5 of this Handbook.

2. Assessment Policy

- 2.1. All RAU modules and programmes are assessed by a range of assessment activities, each developed to provide the most appropriate means of demonstrating the achievement of specified module learning outcomes.
- 2.2. Assessment is an integral part of the learning experience of students as detailed within the Education Strategy, available from the [RAU website](#).
- 2.3. The Education Committee is a standing subcommittee of the Academic Board with responsibilities for making recommendations on appropriate teaching, learning and assessment activities, including recommendations for modifications to existing assessment policy and procedures, and of advising on alternative assessment activities that may be considered.
- 2.4. Student assessments are marked according to the University's Marking Criteria Guidelines, available from the [RAU website](#) and which detail the key aspects of each assignment or examination, at undergraduate or postgraduate level, for the award of marks within a specific range.
- 2.5. Credits are awarded for the successful completion of module assessments. Such credits are awarded at one of four levels, corresponding to undergraduate and taught postgraduate levels within the [QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#).
- 2.6. The pass mark for all RAU assessments is set at 40% for all undergraduate programmes and at 40% for all postgraduate programmes. Full details of the assessment regulations and requirements for progression and awards are contained within the Assessment Regulations available from the from the [RAU website](#).
- 2.7. The University also has clear guidance, rules and regulations in respect of academic misconduct, which is defined as the abuse of accepted academic conventions, and covers plagiarism, collusion and cheating in assessments. Full details of academic misconduct regulations are contained within the Assessment Regulations available from the [RAU website](#).
- 2.8. Students with documented disabilities (including dyslexia), and who have registered with the University's Disability Officer, will be permitted such assistance with assessments as required; an individual's requirements will be recorded on the student's Quercus notes page and will be available from the Disability Officer. For full details on the University's disability and dyslexia policy and procedures, and support services available, please refer to the online Student Support Resources information available from the RAU intranet.

3. Production and Scrutiny of Coursework Assessments

- 3.1 Module Leaders are responsible for the production of all module assessments and for responding to comments and suggestions from External Examiners provided retrospectively on forms of assessment format, structure and content.
- 3.2 Coursework assessments are required to contain clear guidance to students on the exact requirements for the assessment, including anticipated word length, submission details, marking guidance and weighting of the assignment in relation to the full module assessment. Such briefing materials should also state the anticipated return date for marked coursework to the student. A template for assessment briefs is available from the [Template Centre](#).
- 3.3 Module Leaders are responsible for ensuring copies of all coursework briefing documents are provided to the relevant Programme Managers prior to distribution, for which the module comprises an integral component of assessment, and for liaising with Programme Managers on submission dates to enable appropriate scheduling of work across a programme of study.
- 3.4 Module Leaders are responsible for ensuring the correct module records are maintained on the RAU student management information system (Quercus) and for inputting results accurately and in a timely manner.
- 3.5 Programme Managers are responsible for ensuring External Examiners are provided with copies of all coursework briefs at the end of each academic year to enable appropriate comment to be made in their annual reports.

4. Policy on electronic submission of coursework

- 4.1 Dissertations must be submitted in electronic format.
- 4.3 Students are required to submit coursework in an electronic format unless stipulated within the assessment brief.
- 4.4 If required Hard copies must be submitted to the Centre Administration Hub and a receipt obtained.
- 4.5 All electronically submitted work must be submitted via the Gateway VLE. Work submitted via any other means, not stipulated within the assessment brief will not be accepted. Electronically submitted work will not be treated as received and accepted until it has been acknowledged. It is the responsibility of the student to obtain acknowledgement / confirmation of receipt for electronically submitted coursework.
- 4.6 Both hard and electronic copies are subject to the same deadline for submission, as stated in the assessment brief. The maximum mark awarded for submissions received up to one week late will be the pass mark. Submissions received after this date will receive a zero mark.
- 4.7 A sample of all coursework may be submitted to *Turnitin*, plagiarism detection software.
- 4.8 Students are expected to word process all coursework. Electronically submitted work must be in Word or PDF format. Multiple files (two or more) must be submitted as a single ZIP file otherwise only part of the file may be marked. Electronically submitted work must be clearly identified by student ID in the filename, e.g. 123456-Dissertation.doc or 486937_Integrating_Project.pdf, and must adhere to any stipulated file size limits, e.g. a maximum file size for dissertations of 37 megabytes.
- 4.9 The onus is on the student to ensure that their submission contains all the material to be assessed in an appropriate format and is the correct version. Students will not normally be permitted to resubmit either in hard copy or electronically if it subsequently transpires that incomplete or incorrect work has been submitted.
- 4.10 It is always the student's responsibility to retain at least one electronic copy of all coursework which must be available for immediate resubmission if required.
- 4.11 External Examiners must have access to all coursework, whether hard or electronic copy.
- 4.12 The format of coursework feedback, i.e. hard or electronic, is at the discretion of the module leader and should be stated within the assessment brief.

5. Preparation and Scrutiny of Examination Papers

- 5.1 The process and the responsibilities of the persons, administrative offices and Academic Centres involved in the preparation and scrutiny of Royal Agricultural University examination papers. The schedule detailed in Figure 1 (below) provides the deadlines by which specific activities must be completed within that process in order that papers can be finalised, printed and prepared by Registry, in time for examination sittings.
- 5.2 The Academic Centres of study are required to appoint a named Academic Centre Exam Paper Co-ordinator who will oversee the internal and external preparation of examination papers, with authority to request cooperation from Module Leaders and External Examiners.
- 5.3 Module Leaders are responsible for ensuring completed draft examination papers are submitted to the Academic Centre Exam Paper Co-ordinator by the specified deadline.
- 5.4 External Examiners are required, under their contract with the RAU, to review scrutinised examination papers making comments on their appropriateness for the subject area and level of academic challenge while also recommending any relevant changes. For further details on External Examiner responsibilities, please refer to Part 5 of this Handbook.
- 5.5 The information below details the complete process:

Process for preparation and scrutiny:

Exam Paper Compilation

Module Leaders to compile **minimum of four documents for each module**, as follows: 1 x full Main Exam Paper, 1 x Outline Answers, 1 x Re-sit Exam Paper and 1 x Re-sit Answers, to be submitted to relevant Academic Centre Exam Paper Co-ordinator. If the exam requires an additional document such as a Journal Extract, Multiple Choice Answer Sheet or Review Article, a copy of this should also be submitted to the Co-ordinator. The Main Exam Paper and Re-sit Exam Paper should be compiled using the latest exam paper template, provided to the Co-ordinator by Registry at the start of each academic year's Prep & Scrutiny process.



Internal Scrutiny

Academic Centre Exam Paper Co-ordinator is to ensure all papers are received from Module Leaders and that the Main and Re-sit papers have been compiled using the latest exam paper template. Internal scrutiny of the papers is carried out and the Co-ordinator liaises with Module Leaders on any required changes.



External Scrutiny

Academic Centre Exam Paper Co-ordinator emails internally scrutinised papers to each relevant, appointed External Examiner for their consideration and review. Comments and recommendations are returned to the Co-ordinator, catalogued and in turn reported back to each relevant Module Leader for final discussions. Any required and/or decided upon changes to the papers are then made.



Finalised Papers Submitted to Registry

Final agreed paper (following internal and external scrutiny) submitted to Registry. Finalised exam papers are given a final proof read.



Exam paper Sign-off

Registry emails the relevant Module Leaders – attaching 1 x copy of each relevant Main Exam Paper and Re-sit Exam Paper – requesting that they give a final check of each before signing them off for use.



Exam Paper Printing

Registry prints finalised papers and prepares exam paper bundles in readiness for examination sittings.

5.6 Module Leaders are required to:

- Compile and submit completed examination paper sets. These must include **a minimum of four documents**: 1 x full Main Exam Paper, 1 x Outline Answers, 1 x Re-sit Exam Paper and 1 x Re-sit Answers, to be submitted to relevant Academic Centre Exam Paper Co-ordinator and should be compiled using the latest exam paper template (provided by Registry to the Co-ordinator), by the deadline as specified in Figure 1.
- Respond to questions from Academic Centre Exam Paper Co-ordinator promptly and clearly.
- Respond to comments and recommendations received from External Examiners, and communicated via Academic Centre Exam Paper Co-ordinator as quickly as possible.
- Respond to Registry email request to check and sign-off Main and Re-sit Exam Papers as soon as possible after being invited to do so.

5.7 Academic Centre Exam Paper Co-ordinator is required to:

- Secure all relevant and complete sets of exam papers from Module Leaders by the required deadline.
- Review the papers to ensure accuracy in relation to rubric, structure, grammar etc.
- Liaise with the originator of the paper on suggested amendments and corrections.
- Convene an overall internal scrutiny meeting once papers are correct, to review appropriateness of questions in relation to module level, content, etc.
- Submit agreed and internally scrutinised papers to Registry by the required deadline.

- Receive comments from External Examiners (via Registry), liaise with Module Leaders on any stated comments and/or recommendations making appropriate amendments before returning finalised papers to Registry.
- Provide a brief report to AQSC annually on the number of papers reviewed at each academic level, generic issues arising and recommendations for future changes, including aspects of good practice/innovation for wider dissemination.

5.8 Registry is responsible for:

- Distributing this guidance document and the latest exam paper template, and setting the deadlines for each stage of Prep & Scrutiny of exam papers.
- Receiving internally scrutinised papers from Academic Centre Exams Co-ordinators by the agreed deadline and then proof reading those papers.
- Sending internally scrutinised papers to External Examiners for comments and/or recommendations.
- Reporting External Examiner comments back to Academic Centre Exams Co-ordinators as soon as received.
- Receiving finalised papers from Academic Centre Exams Co-ordinators by the agreed deadline.
- Inviting Module Leaders to sign-off finalised exam papers.
- Printing the required number of exam papers for each examination sitting.

Figure 1: Deadlines for exam paper preparation

5.9 The schedule below provides the latest dates by which the specific activities must be completed in order that papers can be finalised and printed by Registry in time for the examination period. Where the date relates to a non-working day, the last working day prior to this date shall be taken as the deadline.

Examination Period	Draft Papers submitted to Centre coordinator	Scrutiny completed	Papers to External Examiner	Papers signed off by Module Leader
Semester 1	tbc (in-line with changed curriculum structure)	tbc (in-line with changed curriculum structure)	tbc (in-line with changed curriculum structure)	tbc (in-line with changed curriculum structure)
Semester 2	tbc (in-line with changed curriculum structure)	30 th January	10 th February	20 th February

6. Requirements for Moderation

- 6.1 Module Leaders are responsible for ensuring that moderation takes place.
- 6.2 All examinations and the highest weighted coursework assessment (or one of any equally weighted coursework assessments) for each module must be moderated.
- 6.3 When setting an assessed piece of work on any taught undergraduate or postgraduate degree programme, the Module Leader must ensure that marking guidance for coursework, or outline answers for examinations, has been prepared for the internal moderator and External Examiner(s). This guidance should make reference to the appropriate generic University marking criteria for the relevant academic level, and the specific assessment criteria as detailed within the assessment brief.
- 6.4 It is important for effective moderation that the reasons for awarding a particular grade are made explicit in the feedback of a piece of coursework or on an examination script.

Moderation procedures

- 6.5 Module Leaders are responsible for identifying an appropriate sample of marked assessments for moderation: 10% of each examination and the highest weighted coursework assessment (or one of any equally weighted coursework assessments) for each module, subject to a minimum of five assessments, which should span the full range of marks awarded, and include, where applicable, examples of borderline grade assessments, first class and fail submissions. The work sampled and marks awarded should be recorded on an [internal moderation form](#) that should accompany the sample to the moderator.
- 6.6 The moderator (who may be from outside the subject discipline) should review the work with the sight of the marker's comments and mark, but should focus on establishing the appropriate grade/class of each assessment rather than being excessively concerned with a precise numerical score. Evidence of moderation should be clearly indicated on the relevant assessment feedback.
- 6.7 Where the moderator identifies a consistent difference (over or under) across the moderated sample, they should first request an additional sample. Should this second sample also indicate the same consistent difference, then an agreed adjustment to the initial marks should be identified and applied uniformly to all assessments, not merely to the sample. Where internal moderation indicates a mark difference greater than one grade/class, it may be appropriate to engage a second moderator.

- 6.8 Where the moderator identifies an inconsistent difference across the moderated sample, then they should request a full re-assessment, by the examiner, of all assignments prior to a subsequent moderation of a different sample.
- 6.9 The moderated 10% of assessments (or minimum of five assessments) must be placed within the module box, together with 10% (or minimum of five assessments, and spanning the full range of marks awarded) not moderated from any coursework assessment forming part of the module from which no moderation sample has already been taken due to the coursework assessment being of equal or lower weighting to that selected for moderation (see paragraph 6.5).
- 6.10 It is not a University requirement for assessment briefs to be subject to External Examiner scrutiny,. External Examiners are provided with all coursework briefing materials at the end of each academic year so that they can comment retrospectively on the assessment briefs in their annual reports. Furthermore, Centres are required to establish peer review systems for the internal scrutiny of assessment briefs, with peer reviewers not necessarily having to be someone with similar subject expertise.

Double marking

- 6.11 Where a single piece of assessment is presented for the achievement of 30 credits or more, and marked by one individual, such as an undergraduate or postgraduate dissertation, the work should be doubled marked, the second marker assessing the work independently without sight of the mark or feedback of the first marker. The two examiners will then agree an appropriate final mark for submission to the examination board.
- 6.12 Where first and second markers cannot agree a final mark, a third marker will be employed on the same basis as the second marker, and they shall determine the final mark to be presented to the examination board through discussion with both first and second marker. It is the responsibility of the institution to ensure all cases of disagreement on marking are resolved internally prior to submission of sample assessments to an External Examiner. However, in particularly difficult cases, it is appropriate to involve the External Examiner as an adjudicator. This should be conducted in advance of any examination board such that a final agreed mark is always presented.
- 6.13 Programme teams may also decide to use unsighted second marking as part of their own moderating process, for the staff development of members of their programme team who are less experienced assessors, and/or for the first run through of any new or innovative form of assessment.

Team marking

- 6.14 Team marked work, i.e. work marked by more than one person, does not need to be moderated. Presentations, unless peer-assessed, require two markers: the module leader and one other appropriate member of academic staff.

Recording marks on Quercus

- 6.15 Coursework marks must be entered on Quercus prior to returning work to students.
- 6.16 In preparation for the exam boards modules in Quercus will be 'locked', following advance notice, so that marks can no longer be entered by academic staff.

External Examiners

- 6.17 Following internal moderation, and double marking if appropriate, a further sample of all assessed work will be made available for the External Examiner. All other work contributing to the final assessment should also be available for the External Examiner to review should they so wish.
- 6.18 Normally, unless the number of assessment items is sufficiently small for all to be scrutinised, an agreement with External Examiners will be reached on the sample of work to be submitted for moderation. This should include representative samples of each grade or class of degree, together with all first class/distinction candidates, cases of failure and those cases likely to be the subject of discussion at the examination board meeting.

7. Placement and Work-Based Learning (WBL) Activities

- 7.1 The RAU is a member of the Association for Sandwich, Employment and Training (ASET). All RAU placement and WBL activities should be designed in line with [ASET good practice guidance](#).
- 7.2 Placements normally form part of a specific and discrete module within a programme whereas WBL activities may be concentrated across a number of modules within a programme.
- 7.3 The length of placements and WBL activities may vary between programmes and is not necessarily calculated purely on the basis of the credit weighting of its associated modules.
- 7.4 The location (i.e. UK and/or overseas) and nature of placements and WBL activities will be as stipulated within the programme specification and Module Reference Sheet and/or Handbook.
- 7.5 Placement supervisors must aspire to visit as many students on placement as possible. However, where visits are deemed not practicable, contact should be made by other means (e.g. Skype, email, telephone) as often as deemed appropriate by the placement supervisor to ensure that appropriate monitoring of activities takes place given the particular nature of the placement at hand.
- 7.6 Placement and WBL activities may be assessed by a variety of means, (e.g. PDP, portfolio, employer's report, self-reflective report, case study, presentation). Such assessments may be graded pass / fail or may carry specific weightings and be allocated marks in line with the University marking criteria.
- 7.7 Programmes may offer contingency / alternative arrangements under exceptional circumstances for students unable to undertake the placement or WBL activities normally required as part of a programme.

8. Policy for Alternative Forms of Assessment

- 8.1 An alternative form of assessment may be required in order to minimise the impact of a student's disability (including dyslexia) or mitigating circumstance upon assessment performance. An alternative assessment differs from a 'reasonable adjustment' for an existing assessment, such as extra time in an examination. Alternative forms of assessment might include an oral examination instead of a written examination or written coursework instead of a written exam.

Criteria for providing alternative assessment

- 8.2 Students must provide appropriate documentary evidence from a suitably qualified professional that makes clear why the usual form of assessment puts the student at a disadvantage and/or clarifies why an alternative specified format is necessary.
- 8.3 In relation to disability, the student's disability must fit the legal definition of 'disabled' and they must be registered with the University's Disability Service.
- 8.4 In relation to mitigating circumstance, the student's mitigating circumstance must have been considered and accepted by an extraordinary Mitigating Circumstances Panel.
- 8.5 The alternative assessment must enable achievement of the original assessment's required learning outcomes, academic standards and any competence standards; whilst the assessment method is likely to be different the alternative assessment must mirror the original assessment in terms of coverage as closely as possible.

Procedure for applying for an alternative assessment

- 8.6 Students must apply to the Disability Officer in relation to disability, or to the Academic Registrar (as Chair of the Mitigating Circumstances Panel) in relation to mitigating circumstance, in sufficient time for a suitable alternative assessment to be provided at the same time as the original assessment.
- 8.7 Students must supply appropriate documentary evidence to the Disability Officer in relation to disability, or to the Academic Registrar in relation to mitigating circumstance, for evaluation by the Disability Officer or extraordinary Mitigating Circumstances Panel respectively, either at the start of the academic year or as soon as the disability is diagnosed or mitigating circumstance arises.
- 8.8 The Disability Officer in relation to disability, or Academic Registrar in relation to mitigating circumstance, discusses with the Module Leader developing an alternative form of assessment which satisfies the requirements of point 8.5 above.

- 8.9 Suitable quality control measures must be agreed in advance, e.g. videoing an oral presentation, audio recording an oral exam, and/or an additional staff member present.

9. Examination Boards and Examination Committee

- 9.1 All assessment results are considered by a Subject Examination Boards, chaired by the Centre Head, and including relevant External Examiners.
- 9.2 The decisions of each Subject Examination Board are interim results only and are not published until formally ratified by the main University Examinations Committee.
- 9.3 Examination Boards will not discuss mitigating circumstances directly during the meeting. Such information will be considered, prior to an Examination Board, by a Mitigating Circumstances Panel according to the guidance contained within the RAU Academic Regulations and section 10 below. The Academic Registrar will report only whether the Board should consider permitting special consideration in respect of particular module assessments.
- 9.4 The University Examinations Committee (UEC) has the authority, vested by Academic Board, to confirm results, progression and award decisions for publication. The UEC is responsible also for ensuring fairness in all decisions taken by the various Subject Examination Boards, and has the power to overturn such decisions it deems to be unfair.
- 9.5 Full details of membership and terms of reference of Examination Boards and the Examination Committee are contained within Part 2 of this Handbook.

10. Assessment and Progression

- 10.1 The RAU is permitted under its Academic Charter and Degree Awarding Powers to award taught degrees, diplomas and masters awards. The University does not have the power to award research qualifications.
- 10.2 Student progression and awards are confirmed by the University Examinations Committee on behalf of Academic Board, according to the Academic Regulations available from the [RAU website](#).
- 10.3 BSc Honours students are required normally to achieve a total of 360 credits through successful completion of module assessments, to include 120 credits at each of three levels of academic study, corresponding to Certificate, Diploma and Honours level standards as detailed in the [QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#).
- 10.4 Foundation Degree students are required normally to achieve a total of 240 credits through successful completion of module assessments, to include 120 credits at each of two levels of academic study, corresponding to Certificate and Diploma/Foundation Degree/Intermediate level standards as detailed in the QAA Framework.
- 10.5 Postgraduate Diploma students are required normally to achieve a total of 120 credits at level 7/Masters level of the QAA Framework. For the award of an MA, MBA or MSc, students will normally be required to achieve 60 credits at level 7/Masters through the completion of a dissertation, in addition to the credit requirements for a Postgraduate Diploma.
- 10.6 Credits are only awarded following the achievement of an overall module average score of 40% for undergraduate programmes and 40% for postgraduate programmes, determined according to the assessment weighting detailed on the Module Reference Sheet and approved by AQSC.
- 10.7 Referral opportunities will be allowed according to the academic regulations applicable to the cohort of students as approved by Academic Board. Any referral assessments allowed must be successfully completed at the time specified by the University Examinations Committee for the award of a pass for the module and the specified credit points.
- 10.8 Students who fail more than the maximum permissible credits will not normally be permitted referral opportunities. In such situations, a student will be required to reapply to the University to recommence their studies on all failed modules as if for the first time. Repeated failure in a module will result in the termination of the student's study programme with the University.

11. Appeals against Academic Decisions

- 11.1 Students may not appeal to the Examination and Assessment Appeals Committee against the academic judgement of a member of academic staff or the decision of a correctly constituted Examinations Board, unless they can produce evidence that the decision was based on incorrect or flawed information.
- 11.2 A student may appeal against the decision of an Examinations Board only on the grounds that there was bias in the assessment process, prejudice on the part of one or more examiners, or that information which could not, for legitimate reasons, be made known at the time the Examinations Board made their decision is now available and may be considered as providing mitigation in respect of any Examination Board decision. Details of appeal regulations are contained in the general Academic Regulations for the University, available from the [RAU website](#).
- 11.3 An appeal based on mitigation in respect of accident or illness which was not presented in advance of the Examinations Board meeting, and considered by the Mitigating Circumstances Panel, will not be accepted unless the information could not, for legitimate reasons, be made known at the time the Examinations Board made their decision.
- 11.4 Details of the membership and terms of reference of the Mitigating Circumstances Panel are contained in the main Academic Regulations, available from the [RAU website](#).
- 11.5 If an appeal is successful, and further attempts at examinations and/or assessments are recommended by the Committee, the Head of the relevant Centre, in liaison with the programme manager, will determine the reassessment requirements. This will be done promptly and before the student is informed of the requirements as a result of the decision. The module leader or, if necessary, another appropriate member of the programme team, will then supply the student with a reassessment briefing for each of the modules concerned.
- 11.6 Students who consider that any appeal against an academic decision has not been treated in accordance with the published Academic Regulations may lodge a subsequent appeal directly to the Vice Chancellor, in writing, within 14 days of the announcement of the decision of the Examination and Assessment Appeals Committee, setting out the grounds on which the appeal is to be lodged.
- 11.7 Students who still feel aggrieved following appeal to the Vice Chancellor, and who consider the University to have failed to follow published procedures and regulations, may appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education. Online details are available from <http://www.oiahe.org.uk>.

12. Guidance Note for Mitigating Circumstances claims

Definitions

12.1 Mitigating circumstances are circumstances which:

- are exceptional;
- are outside the student's control;
- can be corroborated by independent evidence;
- occurred during or shortly before the assessment in question; and
- may have led to an unrepresentative performance in relation to the student's previously demonstrated ability.

12.2 It is difficult to lay down hard and fast rules about mitigating circumstances which may be deemed valid or not, but examples of specific circumstances are given in an Appendix to this guidance note, for the guidance of students and staff.

Submission of information on mitigating circumstances

12.3 Students who wish mitigating circumstances to be considered should obtain a Mitigating Circumstances Form from Gateway. The form should be completed, corroborating evidence attached, and the form submitted directly to Registry.

12.4 Mitigating circumstances claims should be submitted as soon as feasible. In the case of assessed coursework / major project / dissertation or equivalent, mitigating circumstances claims should be submitted as soon as possible, so that, where appropriate, claims may be considered before the submission deadline, and no later than five working days after the deadline for the submission of the work (except where prevented by the nature of the circumstance from so doing). Mitigating circumstances claims with respect to formal examinations should be submitted no later than the Monday after the end of the formal examination period within which the examination took place.

Corroborating evidence

12.5 All claims of mitigating circumstances must be accompanied by independent corroborating evidence. That evidence must be specific about the nature, timing and severity of the problem and, if possible, provide an independent assessment of the effect the problem may have had on the student's performance.

12.6 Corroborating evidence may include:

- A medical note confirming a medical or psychological condition (***provided at the time when the student was suffering from that condition***).

- A letter from a counsellor confirming a personal, psychological or emotional problem for which the student has been receiving counselling.
- An official document such as a police report including a police reference number, court summons or other legal document.
- A letter from a solicitor, social worker or other official agency.
- An insurance claim document supported by a letter from the insurance company.
- A letter from a family member confirming a family bereavement.

The University will consider the following as unacceptable forms of corroboration:

- Self certification of illness.
- A letter written by a friend or acquaintance.

12.7 Full-time students may not make a mitigating circumstances claim relating to pressures of work, since such students have by implication made a commitment to make available the time necessary for study. Part-time students in full-time employment, who wish to make claims based on exceptional pressures in their employment, must submit corroborating documentary evidence (e.g. a letter from their employer) which confirms the particular circumstances, explains why they are exceptional and outside the student's control and formally supports the student's claim. Where a student is self-employed, she or he must provide independent evidence to support the claim that the pressures are exceptional and outside the student's control.

12.8 Students should not seek to obtain corroborating evidence retrospectively. Any certificate or other medical note where the date of the certificate is after the date(s) of the illness may not be accepted.

Confidentiality

12.9 The University understands that students may be reluctant to disclose confidential personal information. However, students can be assured that all claims of mitigating circumstances are deemed to be confidential to the Mitigating Circumstances Panel.

Appeals

12.10 A student who has not submitted a claim of mitigating circumstances under this Regulation will not normally be able to use mitigating circumstances as the basis for a subsequent appeal.

Appendix

The following are only examples of claims, which may or may not normally be considered valid. The key issues in all cases will be whether the claim meets the requirements in the Regulations that the circumstances are exceptional, outside the student's control and corroborated by independent evidence.

Full-time students may not claim pressure of work as a mitigating circumstance, since the commitment to full-time study implies a commitment to make available the time necessary. Part-time students in full-time employment may claim pressure of work, corroborated by independent documentary evidence that the pressures are exceptional, unpredictable and outside the student's control.

Examples of circumstances that would not normally be considered valid

- Alarm clock did not go off.
- Car broke down, train / bus delayed or cancelled, other public transport problems (unless the student can demonstrate that he or she had allowed adequate time to compensate for such problems as might reasonably have been anticipated).
- Child care problems which could have been anticipated.
- Accidents or illness affecting relatives or friends (unless serious, or the student is a sole carer).
- Unspecified anxiety, mild depression or examination stress.
- Common minor ailments, such as a cough, cold, upper respiratory tract infection, sore throat, minor viral infection, unless the illness was at its peak at the time of an examination, end-of-module test or in-class test, and the corroborating evidence refers to the impact on the student's performance.
- Financial problems (other than cases of exceptional hardship).
- Holidays, house moves, family celebrations or other events where the student either has control over the date or may choose not to participate.
- Computer problems including corrupt data, loss of electronic storage data (e.g. memory stick), disk or printer failure or similar.
- Problems with postal delivery of work (unless recorded delivery or registered mail).
- Pregnancy (unless specific complications).
- Time management problems (e.g. competing deadlines).
- Appointments (legal, medical, etc.) which could be rearranged.
- Territorial Army commitments or similar (unless unavoidable).
- Sporting or recreational commitments (unless the student is representing the University in national competition or representing his/her country in international competition).
- Suspension from University due to disciplinary action.
- Withdrawal from programme and subsequent change of mind.

Examples of circumstances that might be considered valid

- Hospitalisation, including operations.
- Long-standing health problems.
- Personal or psychological problems for which the student is undergoing counselling or has been referred to a counsellor or other qualified practitioner.
- Chronic illness.
- Childbirth (including a partner in labour).
- Bereavement involving a partner, close relative or close friend.
- Major accident or injury, acute ailments or conditions which coincide with an assessment deadline or an examination or test, or are sufficiently long-lasting to impact on a significant part of the academic year.
- Separation / divorce of student or parent providing this can be corroborated in writing and linked to specific academic deadlines.
- Clinical depression or other mental health problem.
- Recent burglary / theft / serious car accident.
- Jury Service, court summons or legal action which requires meeting with solicitors / barristers that cannot be deferred.
- Representing the University at national level or his/her country at international level in a sporting event.
- For part-time students in full-time employment, exceptional pressure of work or permanent change of employment circumstances.
- Exceptional and unforeseen bad weather preventing return to University after a weekend away.
- Serious accommodation problems.