

MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES GUIDANCE

Definition

1. Richmond treats all students without bias and acknowledges that there are inevitable circumstances occurring to students, which may adversely affect student's attendance, ability to sit assessments, and engagement with university life. The definition of mitigating circumstances is regarded as highly disruptive or unexpected events beyond the student's control.

Events Typically Accepted as Mitigating Circumstances

2. The following list is not exhaustive, but the examples listed below are normally accepted as evidence to use as a Mitigating Circumstance:
 - a. Sudden deterioration of a chronic mental and/or physical health condition;
 - b. Short-term serious or significant illness that leads to the need of medical intervention;
 - c. Severe emergency family/personal issue;
 - d. Bereavement;
 - e. Court Attendance;
 - f. Victim of a crime;

PLEASE NOTE - If the submitted evidence is not in English and you cannot obtain a translation you should contact Registry Services. The University is proud to employ colleagues with a range of languages, and Registry Services can, at times, facilitate a translation, maintaining confidentiality and sensitivity.

3. For this guidance, a chronic condition encompasses a wide range of symptoms and illnesses. If a student is suffering from a sudden deterioration of a chronic condition that is preventing them from engaging in and attending classes and/or assessments, the University expects them to seek medical professional help. In addition, the student must contact their academic advisor immediately if they are struggling to attend and engage in their studies.
4. Students with declared Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SENDs) are given reasonable adjustments based on academic suitability for the programme of study. These adjustments are agreed in advance and are not covered by mitigating circumstances.

Events Not Accepted as Mitigating Circumstances

5. Students are expected to manage circumstances in their lives in conjunction with their responsibilities as a student. The following list is not exhaustive but provides examples of common queries from students that would not normally be considered as appropriate claims for Mitigating Circumstances:
 - a. Common illnesses such as colds, flus, stomach bugs, planned medical appointments, even when supported by evidence, are not considered for Attendance Failures.
 - b. A medical condition supported by 'retrospective'/'post-dated' medical evidence or medical circumstances that occurred outside the relevant assessment period;
 - c. Employment;
 - d. Financial difficulties;
 - e. Travel delays and transport difficulties;
 - f. Personal travel and delays due to personal travel;
 - g. Poor time management;
 - h. Long-term SENDs for which the student is already receiving adjustments;
 - i. Ongoing caring responsibilities of family members/dependents;
 - j. Religious holidays/family events;
 - k. Personal computer/printer problems (including with university computer/server/printing facilities);
 - l. Poor archive practice e.g. no back up of electronic documents;
 - m. Criminal conviction;
 - n. Being unaware of the dates or times of submission deadlines or examination(s);
 - o. Not being aware of relevant policies and/or the Mitigating Circumstance Guidance;
 - p. UK Visa problems/change in immigration status; and
 - q. Any foreseeable/preventable circumstances.

Submitting Evidence of a Mitigating Circumstance

6. The submission of evidence must be in line with the submission dates of any relevant petition or appeal. If the appeal is submitted without the necessary evidence, it will not be heard. The relevant committee, however, may decide to accept the application out of discretion, if the student could prove genuine grounds by supporting evidence to explain the reasons for late submission.
7. The Student Privacy Policy is in place with the evidence students provide, and all the requests are regarded as strictly confidential. If appropriate, the OIA will be the only governing body as a matter of appeal procedure. The information supplied is used to review the case.

Evidence Requirements

8. Students are responsible for submitting the evidence with the appeal. It is not the burden of the University to collate evidence on the student's behalf. If the student fails to provide evidence required to support their appeal, their appeal will be rejected.

Specific Evidence examples:

- a. Medical evidence of certification or letter by a registered medical practitioner:
 - i. confirming the nature and extent of the illness;
 - ii. confirming the dates clearly correspond with the timeframe of the claim;
 - iii. provided by a locally registered medical practitioner confirming the claim has impacted attendance and/or assessments;
 - b. Funeral notice or death certificate:
 - i. The University appreciates that it is difficult to obtain the original death certificate, particularly if the occurrence of death is outside the UK; therefore a copy or alternative evidence, such as funeral arrangements, death notice and/or written evidence from a professional such as a funeral director could suffice.
 - ii. A letter from a family member, text messages or an email to a friend about a death does not count as legitimate evidence;
 - c. Report from a police officer or investigative authority (a crime reference number is needed if necessary);
 - d. Letter from solicitor, summons to attend court.
9. The University, under the freedom of information act, reserves the right to liaise with the relevant person, regarding seeking clarification of the authenticity of submitted evidence at the time of the decision stage. If students are found to supply fraudulent documentation, a disciplinary action will be taken.

Version Management

Responsible Department: RAQA (Department of Registry, Admissions and Quality Assurance)			
Approving body: Academic Board			
Version no.	Key Changes	Date of approval	Date of effect
1		24 July 2018	28 August 2018
2	Shortened and simplified wording	August 2020	August 2020
3	Removed header and updated responsible department to RAQA	17 October 2022	17 October 2022
4	Added definition Added translation Updated examples of accepted mitigating circumstances. Shortened and simplified other wording	August 2024	01 Sept 2024
		Restricted access? <i>Tick as appropriate</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	