



**UNIVERSITY OF
PLYMOUTH**
International College

UPIC Mitigating Circumstances Guidelines and Procedures

COVID-19 Addendum

**In conjunction with CPR M3, Section 11 of CPR QS09, and the Overarching
Mitigating Circumstances Guidelines and Procedures**

**Effective for students commencing study on
modules/stages of programmes in September
2020 and January 2021**

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1. Introduction

This document has been produced in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic as UPIC are aware that students may be applying for Mitigating Circumstances for issues that would not normally be considered valid.

Similar procedures are in place as the overarching policy however some leniency in the need to prove a mitigating circumstances form and evidence of the issues can be applied on a student by student basis.

UPIC are following University of Plymouth Guidance on the need for evidence for students affected by COVID-19 and as such we will not be requesting students supply us with any. We will, where practicable, be requesting students complete a mitigating circumstances form and return it to the Student Services Team.

2. Specific areas where Mitigating Circumstances can be applied due to COVID-19

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic UPIC has had to look at the areas in which Mitigating Circumstances can be allowed and expand these where ~~appropriate~~ appropriate. If students have been affected by COVID-19 or are otherwise unwell then the provisions set out in the overarching document will apply, with the exception that Self Certification will be extended to seven days. This brings UPIC inline with the guidance supplied by the University of Plymouth. Students should be aware that the 'fit to sit' policy still applies. Please see which sets out the student FAQs for more advice on these areas of concern.

2.1 Expansion of Valid Areas for Claims

2.1.1 Technology and Internet Connectivity

Traditionally access to technology was not considered to be a valid reason to apply Mitigating Circumstances. However the College is aware that, with the closure of the University of Plymouth open access IT suites, a small number of students are finding it difficult to produce final pieces of coursework and sit online final examinations as they only have access to a tablet or smart phone. Equally a few students have returned to their countries of origin and are finding internet connectivity to be an issue. In this case the students are expected to contact the Student Services team to explain their issues in advance, and if possible complete and return a Mitigating Circumstances form. The policy on retroactive claims (**Section 3.1** of the Overarching policy) is unaffected by this apart from now applying to exams as well as coursework and students will still have 10 days after the deadline to submit a claim. However, some evidence that backs up any explanation may be required at this point.

2.1.2. Travelling to a country of origin

Whilst students travelling home for family illness/bereavement or Visa issues is generally covered in the overarching document the College feel that it is prudent to widen the scope of this area to be able to capture students travelling and any issues they may face. Whilst we are aware that many of our students have remained in Plymouth there is a small cohort that have been asked to return home by their families as a direct consequence of COVID-19. If this is the case, and the students have informed us that they are travelling then we will extend the mitigating circumstances coverage to include ~~this~~ them. This is especially important for students who are put into a quarantine situation when they reach their home country, or students who have very little option in the timing of flights home that they are booked onto. We will ask students to complete a mitigating circumstances form but are aware that there may be issues with internet connectivity, as set out in **Section 2.1.1** so we

will be happy, where appropriate, to accept the original email as evidence. Student Services will, however, maintain contact with these students to see if the Mitigating Circumstances still apply. Mitigating Circumstances will also apply if students are studying in a time zone that makes it difficult for them to attend lectures or timed exams. Again, we expect students to contact the College to explain the situation.

3. Procedures for applying for Mitigating Circumstances

The procedure for applying for Mitigating Circumstances is generally as set out in the overarching Mitigating Circumstances document. However, UPIC realises that there may be scope for leniency in certain situations.

3.1. Self-Certification

In general students are allowed to self-certificate any illness, without evidence, for five days. For the period of the COVID-19 pandemic this has been extended to seven days. Whilst students are advised to fill out a Mitigating Circumstances form not receiving one will not constitute a barrier against their application. The College will accept the initial email communication as the application if provision of the form is problematic

3.2. Other areas of concern

If a student is travelling during over a coursework deadline or the examination period or has internet connectivity/technology issues and have contacted the College to inform them of these issues, then we will ask for a form to be completed. However, as set out in **Section 3.1** UPIC will also accept the original communication as a valid application should submission of the form prove problematic.

3.3. Students Missing Coursework Deadlines or Examinations who have not contacted the College

If a student does miss any assessment points or lectures and has not contacted the College, then they will initially be processed through the standard Assessment Regulations (CPR QS09) for non-submission or attendance. However, the student services team will make every effort to contact the student or the student's representatives to check on their welfare. Students will still be able to apply for retroactive Mitigating Circumstances as set out in **Section 3.1** of the overarching policy. These will be assessed on a student by student basis and will potentially require a more detailed explanation for Mitigating Circumstances to apply.

4. Outcomes of Mitigating Circumstances related to COVID-19

It has been decided by the College that any students applying for Mitigating Circumstances who miss coursework or examinations should not be disadvantaged or prevented from completing their modules and unable to progress. In general, the College would not be looking to ask student's to repeat modules if they go over the referred credit limit as this is not seen as being a fair response. Currently we have agreed to increase the referral limit to eighty credits. However, this will be assessed on a student by student basis.

4.1. Coursework Submissions

In the first instance students can be granted an ~~appropriate~~ [appropriate](#) extension so that they can hand work in to be graded and considered at the academic boards. However, this will be limited to allow the College time to mark and moderate, and where ~~appropriate~~ [appropriate](#) externally examine the work. If any given extension means the new deadline does not give the College time to complete this process students will be advised to not submit the work and a referral, if necessary, will be conferred at the Academic Boards. The referral will be at the same attempt and in line with the guidelines set out above and in CPR QS09.

4.2. Final Examinations

Students who have contacted the College regarding Mitigating Circumstances for exams will not be expected to sit the examinations and will be awarded a referred alternative piece of coursework or a Zoom based *Viva Voce* (if the subject is maths or physics) at the same attempt. Students will be given an ~~appropriate~~ [appropriate](#) timeframe to complete the referrals based on the guidance set out in CPR QS09. Students who have submitted mitigating circumstances for illness but attend the exam are declaring themselves fit to sit and this may override any previously approved mitigation. Students who have advised UPIC on technical or internet issues who sit the exam also declare themselves fit to sit but are advised to contact the College should such issues impair their ability to complete the exam. The College will then judge these students on a case by case basis.

4.3. Tier 4 Students Attendance

Although the College has now moved to 100% online teaching, we still have an obligation to monitor the attendance of Tier 4 students. Any student not attending sessions will be marked as absent and, although the guidance has been somewhat relaxed, a continued and persistent absence could still cause students to be required to attend a student support meeting and put Tier 4 students in breach of their Visa conditions. This is as set out in CPR M3 Right to Study, Attendance and Monitoring.

Students who have contacted the College and requested Mitigating Circumstances will be assessed under the guidance set out in CPR M3 and will have any non-attendance approved. Student Support will reach out to the affected students to ensure that Mitigating Circumstances are still required. In general, a completed form will be required from the student, but the College will accept the initial communication if completion of the form proves problematic.

Appendix: Frequently Asked Questions

Below is a copy of the Frequently Asked Questions sent to all UPIC students before the final examinations:

5.1 I have examinations due for some of my modules what should I do?

We are setting up online submission for the exams and the question papers are being hosted on Moodle. The exams are being set to the current UPIC exam timetable so please make sure you know what exam is on which day. We are allowing extra time for submission into Moodle

5.2. I have been allowed extra time by Disability Assist what should I do?

If you have been given extra time in exams due to a disability and Student Support has the evidence of this, then we would advise you don't sit the exam. You will be eligible for Mitigating Circumstances and we will allow a first attempt referral in May as an alternative piece of coursework

5.3 I have connection issues in my country and am finding it difficult to upload work, what should I do?

Contact student support on student.support@upic.plymouth.ac.uk and explain your issues (with evidence if possible) and we will consider allowing mitigating circumstances which would allow a first attempt referral in May

5.4. The time zone I am in means that I will be sitting the exam in the middle of the night. Is this fair?

No, as in the question above please contact student support to explain your issue and we will allow a claim of Mitigating Circumstances.

5.5. I am not well and fear that this will affect my performance, should I sit the exam?

No, please contact Dr Dave Jones or the student support team and let us know. You can self-certificate for seven days and this would give you valid mitigating circumstances (MCs). If you are ill and sit the exam you are declaring yourself 'Fit to Sit' and this would override any previously approved MCs and you could be awarded a low grade and fail. This is true of any semester, not just this one.

5.6. The issues I face mean that I may not be able to complete any Coursework or exams for any of my modules. The academic regulations say that if I fail more than three modules, I will be asked to repeat them all. In the current situation and as it is not my fault what will happen?

We are talking to the University about this issue as we also don't think it is fair and we have proposed that we can refer you in more than 60 credits (3 modules) if it is necessary. Currently our plan is that if you have contacted us and have valid MCs, then you will be asked to complete an alternative piece of Coursework in May as a first attempt. Please be aware though that we will follow University guidelines on this, and these are yet to be communicated to us.

5.7. I am taking a maths and physics exam, but I am not sure how this is going to happen?

Don't worry, we are talking to your Maths and Physics tutors to make sure that a final exam is available to you all and that submission is easy to do. We will update you all soon as we do need to get a final approval from the University of Plymouth and Navitas on this.

5.8. I only have access to a tablet or a phone. Without a laptop or PC it is going to be very difficult for me to complete the exams. What should I do?

Please contact student support to explain your issue and depending on the evidence you supply we may allow a claim of Mitigating Circumstances.

5.9. When are the results released?

We plan on releasing the results at 5.00pm UK time on May 7th, 2020. As usual we encourage you to contact us if there are any queries. May 8th is a Public holiday in the UK, but Dave will still be responding to your emails should you need him too.