

Assignment Extensions and Mitigating Circumstances Policy

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Last amended by: Tim Johnson

1 Introduction

- 1.1 ThinkSpace Education (TSE) provides two mechanisms to support students who are experiencing difficulty meeting assessment deadlines: assignment extensions and formal mitigating circumstances claims. These are distinct processes designed for different situations, and students should consider which is appropriate to their circumstances.
- 1.2 Assignment extensions are a lighter-touch, discretionary mechanism available to any student who needs a little more time to complete an assignment. There are no strict eligibility criteria. Extensions of up to two weeks are approved by the Student Support Manager.
- 1.3 Formal mitigating circumstances are for students who have experienced serious, exceptional, and unforeseeable events beyond their control — such as serious illness, bereavement, or significant personal crisis — that have substantially affected their ability to complete assessed work. This is a more formal process and requires supporting evidence.
- 1.4 Where a student is unsure which process applies to their situation, they should contact the Student Support Manager (edmund@thinkspace.ac.uk) in the first instance.
- 1.5 This policy is aligned with the AUB Mitigation Policy, available at <https://aub.ac.uk/regulations>. Where this policy is silent on a matter, the AUB Mitigation Policy applies.
- 1.6 This policy is owned by the Head of Postgraduate Education (HPE) and is reviewed annually.

2 Principles

- 2.1 Both processes are designed to be:
 - (a) Clear — the process and requirements should be straightforward and accessible to all students and staff.
 - (b) Timely — requests should be submitted and considered promptly at the relevant assessment point.
 - (c) Fair — decisions are made consistently, with reference to this policy and the AUB Mitigation Policy.
 - (d) Confidential — information about a request is shared only with those who need to be involved in considering it.

3 Assignment Extensions

- 3.1 The Student Support Manager may approve an extension of up to two calendar weeks at their discretion. The Student Support Manager may consult the relevant Team Leader and HPE before making a decision.
- 3.2 Students should submit their request using the extension request form on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Requests must be submitted at least 72 hours before the original assignment deadline.
- 3.3 No more than one extension may be granted per unit.

- 3.4 Where a deadline falls in the final week of a study phase, an extension will be applied with the new deadline falling in the first week of the following period.
- 3.5 The Student Support Manager should notify the HPE of all extensions granted, so that decisions can be reviewed for consistency and parity across courses.
- 3.6 Students who require more than two weeks, or whose circumstances are serious and exceptional, should use the formal mitigating circumstances process described in Sections 4 to 8 of this policy.

4 Formal Mitigating Circumstances

- 4.1 The formal mitigating circumstances process is for students who have experienced serious, exceptional, and unforeseeable events that are beyond their control and have substantially affected their ability to complete or submit assessed work.
- 4.2 This process involves a formal claim, supported by evidence, which is considered by the HPE. It is appropriate where an extension of more than two weeks is needed, or where the nature of the circumstances warrants a more formal response regardless of the time required.
- 4.3 Mitigation is not a substitute for ongoing support. Students with a long-term health condition, disability, or ongoing personal difficulty should speak with the Student Support Manager (edmund@thinkspace.ac.uk) about a Learning Support Plan or other arrangements.

5 What Mitigation Can and Cannot Do

- 5.1 If a formal mitigating circumstances claim is agreed, TSE cannot make an academic judgement about the extent to which the circumstances affected a student's performance. For this reason, agreed mitigation will not change any assessment mark that has already been awarded.
- 5.2 The most common outcome of agreed mitigation is an extension to a submission deadline. In some cases, other actions may be appropriate — see Section 8.

6 What Can and Cannot Be Claimed

6.1 Grounds for a Claim

- 6.2 Mitigating circumstances must be serious, exceptional, and beyond the student's control. Examples of circumstances that may be considered include:
 - (a) serious illness or medical emergency affecting the student, including a sudden and significant change in a previously managed condition;
 - (b) the serious illness, hospitalisation, or bereavement of a close family member or dependant;
 - (c) a serious personal crisis or traumatic event that could not reasonably have been anticipated; or
 - (d) a significant, unexpected technical failure, provided the student can demonstrate they had taken appropriate steps to protect and back up their work.

6.3 Grounds That Are Not Normally Accepted

- 6.4 The following are not normally accepted as grounds for formal mitigation:
 - (a) minor illness, including short-term illness that would not normally prevent everyday activities;
 - (b) circumstances that existed before the student enrolled on their programme, unless there is a sudden and significant change in those circumstances;
 - (c) commitments — whether professional, financial, or personal — that the student knew about, or could reasonably have anticipated, before the assessment deadline. Students are responsible for

managing their workload and should not commit to a level of external activity that they cannot sustain alongside their studies;

(d) computer failure where the student cannot demonstrate appropriate backup measures were in place; or

(e) poor time management or failure to plan ahead.

6.5 Students are responsible for managing their study commitments effectively. Anticipated workload pressures — whether professional or personal — are not in themselves grounds for mitigation.

7 Evidence

7.1 All formal claims must be supported by appropriate evidence. Claims without evidence will not normally be accepted.

7.2 Medical evidence must confirm a current condition or event. A note confirming that a student was seen after an illness occurred, without a diagnosis or confirmation of the impact on study, will not normally be accepted.

7.3 Where the circumstances relate to a close family member or dependant, evidence should explain how those circumstances have affected the student's ability to study. Where evidence includes personal details of a third party, the student must have obtained that person's consent and should confirm this when submitting the claim.

7.4 Evidence should be submitted in Word, PDF, or JPEG format.

7.5 Where evidence is not available at the time of submission — for example, where a student is awaiting a medical report — the student should contact the HPE promptly, explain the situation, and provide whatever supporting information is available at that point.

8 Submitting and Considering a Formal Claim

8.1 How to Submit

8.2 Formal claims must be submitted before the unit assessment deadline wherever possible. Retrospective claims — submitted after the deadline has passed — are only considered in exceptional circumstances (see Section 10).

8.3 To submit a formal claim, the student should complete the mitigating circumstances form on the VLE and attach appropriate supporting evidence.

8.4 Students should allow at least five working days for a decision to be made. Claims submitted close to a deadline may not be decided before the original deadline passes.

8.5 How Claims Are Considered

8.6 Formal claims are considered by the HPE. The HPE will assess:

(a) the nature and severity of the circumstances alleged;

(b) the timing of those circumstances in relation to the assessment;

(c) the appropriateness and adequacy of the evidence provided; and

(d) the extent to which the circumstances are likely to have affected the student's ability to complete the assessment.

8.7 Decisions are made in accordance with this policy and the AUB Mitigation Policy, and with reference to consistency of treatment across the student body.

8.8 The HPE may seek further information or clarification from the student or the relevant Team Leader before reaching a decision.

8.9 Communication of the Decision

- 8.10 The student will be notified of the outcome by email, with a copy to the relevant Team Leader. The notification will confirm the decision and, where an extension is granted, the new deadline.

9 Actions Other Than an Extension

- 9.1 In most cases, agreed mitigation will result in an extension to the submission deadline. However, in some circumstances a different form of action may be more appropriate. The HPE may consider the following alternatives:
- (a) Deferral — deferring the assessment to the next available assessment point;
 - (b) Alternative assessment — agreeing an alternative form of assessment where the standard format is not possible, provided appropriate learning outcomes can still be met; or
 - (c) Intermission — where circumstances are severe or prolonged, recommending that the student takes a break from their studies and returns in a subsequent study phase.
- 9.2 In the most extreme cases, the AUB Progression and Awards Board may consider an aegrotat award — see the AUB Mitigation Policy for details.
- 9.3 Any action other than a straightforward extension will be discussed with the student before a final decision is made.

10 Extensions Beyond the Next Examination Board

- 10.1 Where an agreed extension would take a student beyond the deadline for the next Examination Board, the case must be referred to AUB in accordance with the Partnership Agreement between TSE and AUB.
- 10.2 The HPE will manage this referral and will keep the student informed of the process and timescales.
- 10.3 Students should be aware that extensions of this length may affect their ability to progress to the next phase of their programme or to graduate at their expected time. The HPE will discuss the implications with the student before any referral to AUB.

11 Retrospective Claims

- 11.1 A retrospective claim is one submitted after the assessment deadline has already passed, including claims submitted after unit marks have been published.
- 11.2 Retrospective claims are not normally accepted. They will only be considered where the student can demonstrate good reason for not submitting a claim before the deadline — for example, where the circumstances were so severe that the student was unable to engage with the process at the time.
- 11.3 Retrospective claims should be submitted to the HPE with a full explanation of why the claim was not made before the deadline, along with the supporting evidence for the underlying circumstances.
- 11.4 The HPE will determine whether there are good grounds for considering the retrospective claim. If so, it will be considered through the standard formal process described in Section 8.

12 Contesting a Decision

- 12.1 If a student is not satisfied with the outcome of a formal mitigation claim, they may request a review by writing to the HPE within ten working days of being notified of the decision.
- 12.2 The review will be referred to AUB in accordance with the AUB Mitigation Policy. The HPE will provide AUB with the original claim, the supporting evidence, and the decision reached.

- 12.3 The review will consider whether the claim was assessed fairly and consistently in accordance with this policy. It is not an opportunity to submit new evidence that was available at the time of the original claim.
- 12.4 Where new evidence has emerged after the original decision, the student should explain why the evidence was not available earlier. If accepted, the claim will be reconsidered in full.
- 12.5 Students should note that a dispute about a mitigation decision is distinct from an academic appeal. If a student wishes to appeal an assessment outcome on the grounds of mitigating circumstances that could not be brought forward before assessment, they should refer to the TSE Academic Appeals Policy.

13 Confidentiality and Data Protection

- 13.1 All mitigating circumstances claims and the evidence submitted in support of them are treated as confidential. Information will only be shared with those directly involved in considering the claim.
- 13.2 Records of claims and decisions will be retained for six years following the conclusion of the claim, after which they will be securely destroyed.
- 13.3 Personal data will be processed in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and TSE's Privacy Notice.
- 13.4 The HPE will review patterns of claims annually to ensure consistency and parity of treatment, including analysis by protected characteristics where data permits. This review uses summary information only and does not identify individual students.

14 Related Documents

- 14.1 The following documents should be read alongside this policy:
- (a) AUB Mitigation Policy 2024 — <https://aub.ac.uk/regulations>
 - (b) TSE Academic Appeals Policy
 - (c) TSE Assessment Regulations
 - (d) TSE Disability, Mental Health and Reasonable Adjustments Policy
 - (e) TSE Student Contract
 - (f) TSE Fitness to Study Policy