

**UNIVERSITY of  
STIRLING**



## **POLICY AND PROCEDURE ON MITIGATION**

### **VERSION CONTROL STATEMENT**

<b>Version No:</b>	<b>1.0</b>
<b>Author:</b>	<b>Dean for Learning Teaching and Student Experience</b>
<b>Approved by:</b>	<b>Education and Student Experience Committee (ESEC)</b>
<b>Approval date:</b>	<b>22 May 2024</b>

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## Purpose

1. The purpose of this policy and procedure is to set out the principles and processes that are in place to support students who may require to request that mitigation be considered by the University while undertaking assessments or in respect of their attendance or engagement with their studies.
2. The policy and procedure exists within the University's overall suite of policies and procedures relevant to learning, teaching, assessment and attendance and engagement including:
  - Assessment Strategy
  - Assessment and Marking Policy and Procedure
  - Academic Integrity Policy and Academic Misconduct Procedure
  - Examination and Degree Classification policy
  - Assessment Feedback Policy
  - Guidance on Artificial Intelligence use in Assessments
  - Learning Support Policy
  - Proof-reading Policy
  - Faith Observance in Learning & Teaching Policy
  - Student Attendance and Engagement Policy and Procedure
3. This suite of policy and procedure operates in conjunction with the [University's academic regulations](#) both broadly and specifically.

## Definitions

4. **Acceptable Grounds.** A potentially acceptable reason for a student to apply for mitigation under this policy and procedure.
5. **ARUAA.** An ARUAA is an Agreed Record of University Access Adjustments. Where a student is identified as requiring additional support, details of agreed reasonable adjustments are made in the student's ARUAA.
6. **Assessment.** Assessment is a fundamental aspect of the student learning experience that enables learning, both as part of the task and through review of performance. It is a vehicle for obtaining feedback and ultimately, it determines whether a student has achieved learning outcomes.
7. **Days.** References in the policy and procedure to days, such as the length of extensions, are to calendar days unless otherwise specified.
8. **Dissertation.** This can describe a traditional academic dissertation/independent study/project which, due to its credit weighting and nature may require different mitigations to be considered.
9. **Element of Assessment.** A module is assessed by one or more assessment activities (e.g. examination, coursework, or practical). These activities are referred to as elements of assessment and contribute to the overall assessment for the module.

10. **Inclusive.** Inclusive assessment design proactively minimises the likelihood of students being excluded or disadvantaged through the ways they are assessed. It provides all students with equal opportunities to demonstrate their learning and reduces the need for individual adjustments in assessment. Guidance and examples of ways to make assessment more inclusive can be found on the [Learning and Teaching SharePoint site](#).
11. **Reasonable adjustments.** These are practical changes which the University can make to remove or reduce disadvantage related to someone's disability or protected characteristics. Usually, they will be noted on a student's ARUAA and will be negotiated by Access & Inclusion.

## Scope

12. This policy and procedure apply to all the University's taught programmes, at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

## Policy and Procedure

### General

13. Every student must meet the learning outcomes of their chosen programme of study, while observing the appropriate academic standards.
14. The University must meet its responsibilities under the Equalities Act 2010 and aims to support all students fairly and consistently to empower them to meet their programme learning outcomes and successfully complete their studies.
15. In addition to support provided within each programme of study, the University offers a range of support services, including support for study skills through [Student Learning Services](#).
16. The University recognises that students come from a range of backgrounds, may have support needs, and may experience personal circumstances which may disrupt their study and assessment from time to time. It is normal for students to experience "ups and downs" during their studies and dealing with this helps build resilience and important skills. Therefore, the mitigations provided through this policy and procedure are for exceptional circumstances which are serious and/or "out of the ordinary" in nature.

## **Inclusive design**

17. By anticipating the needs of all students, through using inclusive assessment design from the outset, more students can undertake the standard assessment without further adjustment, which is positive for staff and students. The Assessment and Marking Policy and Procedure provides guidelines on commonly used assessment types which are inclusive and the [learning and teaching SharePoint site](#) offers general guidance on inclusive design for assessments.

## **Disability and Reasonable Adjustments**

18. Where a student declares to a member of staff that they have support need due to a disability and an ARUAA is not in place, the staff member should make a referral to Student Support via the [Important Referral Process](#) and encourage the student to register with [Accessibility and Inclusion](#) to obtain an ARUAA. Further details for staff on the process to be followed can be found on the [website](#).
19. Where a student is disabled and has support needs in terms of the Equalities Act 2010 which are not met through assessment design, then there is a duty on the University to anticipate their needs by make reasonable adjustments to assessment arrangements. Details of the reasonable adjustments required for individual students are recorded in the ARUAA, following an assessment of needs by Accessibility & Inclusion. Details of the ARUAA requirements are accessible to the relevant module co-ordinator and Faculty Professional Services via the portal.
20. The law acknowledges that reasonable adjustments may give some students marginally more favourable treatment to mitigate the disadvantage they experience as a disabled student, if equitable treatment is not possible. This must be weighed against the duty to assure learning, maintain quality standards and possible health and safety risks to others. The Accessibility & Inclusion team can help Faculty colleagues navigate these duties.
21. Professional body or programme learning outcomes may require students to meet a competency standard which appear at odds with the duty to make reasonable adjustments. Staff should consider if there are inclusive ways for students to demonstrate the competency, or alternative methods of assessment which would accommodate reasonable adjustments. Where clear conflict remains, the programme director should consulted the professional body. In the unlikely event that no resolution can be achieved, programme information available to prospective and current students should be explicit on the requirements of the programme of study so students can assess its suitability for their needs.
22. The Timetabling, Examination and Graduation team will arrange support and accommodation for students with ARUAA requirements for in-person examinations during the examination period. For class tests out with this period, it is the faculty's responsibility to make these arrangements.

## **Acceptable Grounds for Adjustments to Support Students**

23. The circumstances that the University considers may justify mitigations to support assessment under this policy and procedure are where the student is unable to attend/engage in the required way at the relevant time due to:

### **A. Absence from studies grounds:**

- i. Being in hospital.
- ii. Being in court/detention.
- iii. Participating in authorised national or international sporting competition or authorised national sports training camps.
- iv. Formally representing the University.
- v. Incapacity due to pregnancy (including attendance at antenatal appointments).
- vi. Helping a close person <sup>1</sup>who falls ill, gives birth, is injured or assaulted.
- vii. Arranging for care for a close person who is ill or injured.
- viii. Dealing with the unexpected disruption, termination or breakdown in care or schooling of a close person who is a dependant (for example, if a childminder fails to turn up, school is closed unexpectedly or a child is suspended from school).
- ix. Dealing with unexpected disruption to personal life (e.g. eviction/sudden homelessness or family break up; domestic abuse or being a victim of a significant incident or crime.)

### **B. Medical grounds:**

- i. Physical or mental symptoms/recovery from medical procedure.

### **C. Compassionate grounds:**

- i. Death of a close person.
- ii. Sudden acute or serious illness or injury (including serious mental illness) of a close person.
- iii. Loss of a pregnancy or supporting a close person through pregnancy loss.

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<sup>1</sup> The definition of a 'close person' is a family member (parent/guardian, spouse/partner, child (including an adopted child), miscarriage after the 24<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy or stillbirth), sibling, grandparent, grandchild) or someone living at the same address as the student.

**D. Disability grounds:**

- i. Inability to attend/engage at the relevant time due to disability, defined as a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
- ii. The reason for the mitigation is within a student's Academic Record of Access Adjustment (ARUAA).

**E. Parental Leave grounds:**

- i. Parental leave, including maternity leave, adoption leave, shared parental leave and paternity leave, according to current UK legislation, are Acceptable Grounds in respect of deferring examinations, exceptional dissertation extensions and taking leave of absence.

**F. Exceptional grounds:**

- i. Circumstances other than those set out in 23 A, B, C, D and E may also be exceptional and will be considered on their own merits, considering their cause, impact and the criteria for the type of mitigation sought by the student. Where this is the case, supporting documentation should be provided wherever possible. In respect of coursework and dissertation extensions, this may include unforeseen specific practical difficulties with completing the piece of work on time, which are beyond the student's control and could not have been reasonably anticipated and managed (e.g. extreme weather delayed the fieldwork or external client delayed consultancy project).

**Excluded grounds:**

24. The following will *not* be considered Acceptable Grounds:

- i. going on holiday;
- ii. returning home early;
- iii. attending weddings, civil partnership ceremonies or other family occasions other than funerals;
- iv. misreading the assessment instructions; submission details; examination timetable or attending at the wrong time;
- v. failing to check changes between the provisional and final examination timetables;
- vi. failure to get up in time;
- vii. transport difficulty, where the student cannot evidence exceptional circumstances beyond their control;
- viii. death or illness of pets.

### **Evidence of Acceptable Grounds**

25. Medical evidence is considered but does not guarantee approval of a mitigation under this policy and procedure.
26. No further evidence will be required for students where the reason for the application is within their ARUAA, in which case students should specify the reason as “ARUAA”.
27. Where the application is on disability grounds but no ARUAA is in place, the application must be supported by a statement from an appropriate professional (including a statement from an A&I Advisor; doctor’s note/letter; record of hospital admission; letter from a consultant or other specialist; letter from a counsellor; letter of confirmation from Student Support or independent third party; letter confirming receipt of Adult Disability Payment/Personal Independence Payment (PIP)/or equivalent).
28. For illness of less than seven days, and for the first seven days of any period of illness, self-certification must be provided by the student through the portal. For illness of more than seven days a medical certificate should normally be provided (where possible) indicating the nature of the symptoms that prevented the student from attending/engaging with the assessment (but not necessarily the nature of the illness or injury), and clearly state that the student is unfit/unable to attend/engage with the assessment on the dates in question.
29. It is the student’s responsibility to provide appropriate certificated evidence of illness or other supporting documentation for the time period in question e.g. certificated evidence of illness from an appropriately registered medical practitioner (including a doctor’s note/letter; record of hospital admission; letter from a consultant or other specialist; letter from a counsellor), birth certificate/proof of adoption of child, police incident number notification, copy of court citation, letter of confirmation from Student Support or independent third party; confirmation from an employer provided on their headed notepaper; confirmation from the Head of Performance Sport in respect of international competitions or training camps. These should be in English or be accompanied by a certified translation. In the case of medical documentation this should give the symptoms, but not necessarily the nature of the illness or injury. The student should authorise the doctor to do so. It should be noted that photographic evidence of injury, death or other circumstances is not required and should not be submitted.

### **Disclosure of Wellbeing, Safety or Support Issues**

30. Where a student discloses significant wellbeing, safety or support issues in applications for mitigations under this policy and procedure, staff should process the application and refer the student to Student Support Services via the [Important Referral Process](#). Where staff have an urgent concern for the wellbeing of a student (e.g. a student is talking about suicide or staff consider that they or others are at risk of harm) staff should complete an urgent referral via the [Urgent Student Referral Process](#).



## **Extensions for Coursework and Dissertations**

31. Students are responsible for their own workload planning and endeavouring to complete coursework/dissertations within deadlines. Extensions are only available in exceptional circumstances based on Acceptable Grounds under this policy and procedure. Extensions are only available in very limited circumstances.
32. Extensions must be requested in advance of submission deadlines.
33. No extensions are available for examinations or alternatives to examinations (paragraph 50).
34. All students, including those with an ARUAA, must apply via Canvas each time they require an extension.
35. Extensions based on Acceptable Grounds are considered at the discretion of academic staff who will take the circumstances, the need to maintain academic standard, equity for the rest of the cohort and the nature of the assessment into account. Requests will be considered by the module co-ordinator or other designated person(s) within the Faculty.
36. Extensions for group work should only be considered where the student is submitting an individual piece of work as the output from the group interaction. If one piece of work is being submitted by the group then no extension should be given, except in exceptional circumstances. Students should be advised that this will be the case, well in advance, so the groups can work accordingly.
37. Coursework and dissertations must be marked, and quality processed before the relevant Module/Award board. Therefore, Faculty Chief Examiners will set a date each semester beyond which no further submissions can be accepted, to allow these processes to take place. They will notify Faculty staff accordingly so that submission dates and extension dates reflect this timeline.
38. A record of extension requests processed through Canvas is maintained centrally.

## **Duration of Extensions**

39. Extensions for coursework and dissertations based on Acceptable Grounds may be granted for **up to 7 days** at the discretion of academic staff. For the avoidance of doubt this limit also applies to applications based on ARUAA grounds.
40. Where an extension is sought or has been granted on the grounds of an ARUAA, but the student's situation has been further exacerbated by another Acceptable Ground (e.g. ARUAA *and* death of a family member), then the extensions may be extended for a cumulative period of **up to 14 days**.

### Exceptional Dissertation Extensions

41. On very limited occasions, the maximum 7/14-day extension duration (paragraph 39-40) may be insufficient to support a student facing exceptional difficulties, while undertaking their dissertation.
42. The student should discuss their situation with their dissertation supervisor. The dissertation supervisor will advise the student on the possible options including an exceptional extension or leave of absence and the impact of an extension on graduating in the normal timescale.
43. If they support the application, the dissertation supervisor and dissertation module coordinator will identify a new proposed submission date (subject to the faculty deadline, see paragraph 33), considering the needs of the student balanced against the need to maintain academic standards and equity with the rest of the cohort.
44. The student will then make an application as follows:
  - a. **For extension of up to 21 days (cumulative):** submit an extension request via Canvas following the process set out in paragraph 33. The dissertation Module Co-ordinator or Programme Director may approve this request.
  - b. **For extensions of 21 days to 3 months (cumulative) based on Acceptable Grounds:** complete an Extenuating Circumstances Request Form, and submit this for consideration, along with supporting evidence, and a statement from the dissertation module coordinator confirming support and the new proposed submission date to the Faculty Extenuating Circumstances Sub-Boards for consideration;
  - c. **For all extensions of over 3 months (cumulative):** complete the Extenuating Circumstances form and provide evidence, as in paragraph 42b, to [studentprogrammes@stir.ac.uk](mailto:studentprogrammes@stir.ac.uk), for consideration by Academic Panel.
45. The student will be advised directly of the outcome of their request and where approved, the submission date will be extended by the length of the extension agreed. The student record will be updated accordingly.

### Deferred Examinations

46. Deferred examinations are a concession intended to allow students, who are unable to attend or engage with examinations, or who are compelled by illness to leave before the completion of an examination, to take examinations at the next [resit/deferred diet](#).
47. Deferred examinations are only granted to students whose absence or withdrawal is on Acceptable Grounds, which occur on or around the date of the relevant examinations (paragraph 20) and with appropriate evidence being provided (paragraph 21).

48. If a student is unable to complete an examination due to becoming unwell during the course of the examination, they may seek to defer the examination to the next diet as long as they advised the invigilator (or, the faculty in respect of an online remote examination) of the issue before leaving the examination and left the examination before the last quarter of the examination period. In these circumstances the student is only expected to see a doctor if medical assistance is required.
49. Where the requirements of paragraphs 41 or 42 are not met, the student may be able to apply for a resit. The module mark for resits is capped at the minimum pass mark (40 UG/50 PGT/pass).
50. Deferred examinations are only available to replace the first centrally timetabled examination diet for each module and take place in next relevant resit diet for the module. Students looking to defer class tests should contact their Faculty direct.
51. Where a student chooses to defer an examination, they will relinquish their right to take a resit of the examination.
52. For marking purposes the deferred examination is treated as if it was undertaken as first diet and marks are uncapped for a module where assessment has been by deferred examinations.
53. Students should apply to defer an examination *after* the final [examination timetable](#) has been published and *before* the deadline of three days after the end of the relevant [examination diet](#). Applications for deferred examinations should be made via the Deferred Examination Application Procedure which is set out here.
54. Students are expected to apply for deferral of all examinations or all remaining examinations in the examination diet. However, students may sit their remaining examinations at the main diet only if the grounds cited no longer prevent them from taking the remaining examinations.

### **Alternatives to Examination**

55. Alternatives to examinations are available to students who hold an ARUAA with this recommendation. Alternative assessments are only used when a student will be disadvantaged by the nature of the standard examination and when all other examination adjustment options have been exhausted, e.g. where the student's medical condition fluctuates, and extra time does not sufficiently mitigate for this.
56. Faculties may obtain a report from the Portal to identify ARUAA students who require alternatives to examination and they should make arrangements well in advance of the relevant examination.
57. Alternatives to examinations are designed on a needs basis, so all factors are taken into consideration in their design. They take an appropriate form to test the same learning outcomes as the examination or class test it replaces, but in a way which is accessible to the student. They usually take the form of take-home examinations. Accessibility & Inclusion can advise, if requested, on suitable forms of assessment.

58. Students undertaking an alternative to examination will receive double the amount of time normally required to complete the assessment. The maximum period is 7 days. As an alternative to examination this is not coursework and therefore the deadline provided for completion will be final and no extension will be granted.

### **Faith Observance Mitigations**

59. Students are expected to plan their studies and time carefully to accommodate their academic commitments alongside any other commitments they may have, including any faith commitments. The University has measures in place that seek to mitigate the impact of assessment timelines overlapping with key faith days or festivals. For more details see the [Faith Observance Policy](#).

### **Extenuating Circumstances**

60. Extenuating circumstances have a single, unexpected, short period of negative impact on a student's ability to study or undertake an assessment. Extenuating circumstances applications are a last resort when other forms of mitigation are unsuitable. Applications for extenuating circumstances are based on relevant Acceptable Grounds (see paragraph 20).
61. In addition to the excluded grounds in paragraph 20, extenuating circumstances applications will not be considered when:
- a. coursework extension, deferral of examination, leave of absence are the appropriate mitigation or where special arrangements under an ARUAA have been made.
  - b. Multiple applications are made in the same semester for the same circumstance.
62. Claims must be made by the published deadline, unless there are exceptional reasons which can be validated, they must be accompanied by satisfactory supporting evidence (paragraph 21) and they must state how the student's performance in assessments has been affected by the circumstances.
63. The available outcomes of extenuating circumstances applications are:
- a. An extension longer than the standard extension, or as provided under an ARUAA.
  - b. Removal or reduction of late penalties incurred as a result of an extenuating circumstance where there was good reason that appropriate extension requests were not made.
  - c. Where a student has not yet met all the learning outcomes nor completed all the assessment elements the sub-board may recommend an alternative assessment, to enable the student to do so, in agreement with the module-coordinator.
  - d. To allow the student to take a resit, with an uncapped grade, where the original assessment was impacted by an extenuating circumstance.

- e. Removal of a grade cap incurred as a result of an extenuating circumstance.
  - f. In exceptional circumstances, the student may be allowed to have a further assessment opportunity, where the current assessment opportunity was impacted by an extenuating circumstance and they have exhausted their assessment opportunities under the Assessment and Marking Policy and Procedure. The additional assessment must be taken and grade uploaded before the upload deadline immediately prior to the next progression date. For example, for a spring resit, the additional assessment must be taken and grade uploaded before the July upload deadline.
  - g. The reduction of the relative weighting of an assessment that was impacted by an extenuating circumstance, taking into account the need for the student to ensure that they have met the learning outcomes of the module.
  - h. In exceptional circumstances which affect a cohort of students, but which are outwith their control, other outcomes as are reasonable and appropriate in the circumstances.
  - i. If a number of assessments are affected by the extenuating circumstances then different outcomes may be appropriate for each, depending on the nature of the assessment.
  - j. Referral to relevant support services.
64. The [procedure and further guidance on extenuating circumstances](#) is available on the website.
65. Further details of how extenuating circumstances are considered and the outcomes available are set out in the [Boards of Examiners Policy and Procedure](#).

### **Leave of Absence**

66. The leave of absence procedure allows students to take an authorised break from their studies for medical or personal reasons.
67. During the leave of absence, the student is not in attendance at the university, no studies are undertaken and no supervision is provided. Nevertheless, they may arrange to undertake outstanding resits from the previous semester.
68. Students on leave of absence may still access facilities on the campus including the library and Student Support Hub but they will be required to vacate University accommodation.

69. The [undergraduate regulations](#) permit students to take a maximum of 24 months cumulative leave of absence during their programme of study. The [postgraduate taught regulations](#) permit students to take a maximum of 12 months cumulative leave of absence (24 months for part-time students) during their programme of study. The [Postgraduate research regulations](#) permit students to take a maximum of 24 months cumulative leave of absence. Further information can be found in the Code of Practice.
70. Maternity leave is exempt from the maximum cumulative leave of absence period across undergraduate and postgraduate study. Students on maternity leave can request an additional leave of absence period of up to 12 months.

### **Application Process**

71. Applications for leave of absence are administered on behalf of ESEC by Student Administration or in faculty for some professional programmes such as Nursing and Paramedic Science.
72. Details of the process are available on the [website](#).
73. Subject to paragraph 61 above, the approach to applications for leave of absence will depend on when they are made:
- a. applications made in advance of the relevant semester will normally be granted automatically;
  - b. applications made prior to the end of mid-semester break in the relevant semester will normally be granted automatically;
  - c. applications made after the end of the mid-semester break in that semester will be considered if they are based on the Acceptable Grounds and appropriate evidence is provided under paragraphs 20 and 21 of this policy and procedure;
  - d. applications made after the end of teaching for the relevant semester will be rejected;
  - e. retrospective leave of absence will not be granted.
74. Applications by postgraduate research students will require approval from the principal supervisor and may require approval from their funder before the application can be approved. It is good practice to contact the funder in advance of making an application for guidance.
75. Applications for leave of absence during a dissertation module will require support of the dissertation module co-ordinator.
76. The student will be advised directly of the outcome of their request and where approved, the student record will be updated accordingly.

### **Impact**

77. Taking a leave of absence will extend the student's studies and result in a new end date. Their student record will be updated, and their new end date confirmed, once their leave of absence has been granted.

78. The academic record of students taking a leave of absence will reflect when the application was made:
- a. for applications for leave of absence made within 2 weeks of the start of semester (module registration deadline), module choices will be removed from the student record;
  - b. for application made after the module registration deadline but before the end of teaching in the relevant semester, the student record will show that the module was not completed (“NC”);
  - c. for avoidance of doubt, when an application for leave of absence is rejected or submitted beyond the time limit, the student record will show the module and the appropriate grade will be uploaded by the faculty as usual.
79. Taking a leave of absence may have an impact on the student’s fees and funding. The University will advise the public funded sponsor, if relevant, of the change of status.
80. If the student is in the UK with immigration permission, it may have implications for the student’s visa. The University will advise the immigration service, if relevant, of the change of status.
81. Where outstanding assessments from a previous semester, such as a resit or deferred exam, or a coursework resubmission, the student may choose to undertake this reassessment during their leave of absence. If they do not attempt the reassessment, their faculty will upload either a fail grade, such as a marginal fail (FM) or clear fail (FC), or a ‘module requirements not met’ grade (X).

### **Returning to Study**

82. The programme of study to be undertaken on the student’s return must be agreed with the student’s Advisor of Studies or Programme Director as part of the application process.
83. A leave of absence taken during a spanning module which runs over more than one semester will have to be restarted on return from leave of absence.
84. When a leave of absence is taken while undertaking a dissertation, the student may be required to restart the entire module, with a new dissertation topic on return from leave of absence.
85. During the application process the student will be asked to confirm arrangements for return to study. For example, whether they will undertake standard semesters, as per their degree programme table; additional modules; a variant programme (undertake modules in a different order to the degree programme table); temporarily change their mode of attendance (full-time to part-time) on their return to studies or undertake a period of repeat study.

86. Arrangements for return to study in respect of any dissertation module affected by the leave of absence will be agreed:
- a. if the student returns to *their original topic*, the new submission date is calculated by the following formula: original submission date + length of leave of absence= new submission date. On the student's return to studies the dissertation supervisor will resume normal supervisory duties;
  - b. If the student returns to a *new topic*, the student will repeat the module at the next available opportunity, and the submission date will be in line with the rest of the cohort. On return to studies the dissertation supervisor will advise the student on the process for the allocation of a new topic.
87. Taking an additional module or repeating study will incur additional university fees, not covered by standard tuition fee funding.
88. Changing the mode of attendance from full-time to part-time will impact on eligibility for tuition fee funding and student loans.

### **Support for Return to Study**

89. Faculties will support students returning to study from a leave of absence by contacting them in advance and offering guidance on return arrangements and updates on changes relevant to the student which may have taken place while the student was on leave of absence. They will signpost support available through Student Learning Services and Student Support Services.
90. The faculty will follow up with students on their return to offer further support as required.

### **Academic Appeals**

91. The University's Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure can be accessed [here](#).