**Mitigating Circumstances: Guidance for Research Students**

**1. In what circumstances should I claim Mitigating Circumstances?**

It is to be expected that in the normal course of life you will experience occasional illness and other problems or events that coincide with activities relating to your research. It is essential to recognise these as part of the everyday frustrations of life, which have to be managed while continuing with work or study. Such circumstances do not in themselves excuse failure or a poor performance and do not automatically provide grounds for a claim.

You are expected to take responsibility for your own personal organisation, including managing your research in a way which anticipates that events will not always run smoothly.

However, if you experience genuinely exceptional, serious or acute medical, family, personal, or other problems or events beyond your control which you feel have adversely affected your progress, the presentation of your work to date, or your ability to meet submission deadlines for the 6- and 12-month progression review reports, you may ask for your circumstances to be taken into account by your Schools’ Research Progression Board by using the University’s Mitigating Circumstances Claim form, appended to this document.

It is important that you keep your Supervisor and Research Administrator fully informed of any such difficulties at the time at which they occur, because with early warning of a problem it may be possible for your School to provide support which will make such a claim unnecessary.

 **2. What constitutes an eligible Mitigating Circumstances claim?**

It is not possible to list all circumstances which constitute an eligible claim. However, this section provides some guidance on the types of claims that will be considered.

1. Claims referring to a recently diagnosed *serious* or *significant* medical condition or illness (including both physical and mental health problems).
2. Claims referring to *exceptional* personal circumstances (e.g. serious illness or death of an immediate family member or close friend, including participation in funeral and associated rites; being a victim of a crime).
3. Claims referring to exceptional travel circumstances *beyond your control* which prevent you from attending events or meetings which are critical to the progression of your research.
4. Employment commitments of an exceptional, additional nature if evidenced may be considered for part time students and unfunded students during the extension period.

You MUST provide independent supporting evidence in order to substantiate your claim, such as:

* a medical certificate;
* a letter from the Counselling and Disability Service;
* a copy of a death certificate;
* a police crime reference number; or
* a letter of confirmation from your Supervisor, Wellbeing Adviser, Hall Warden or other appropriate third party.

Important things to note about mitigating circumstances evidence:

* Evidence should confirm the nature of the circumstances affecting you and exactly how and when you have been affected.
* Medical practitioners are not obliged to issue medical certificates, particularly retrospectively and may charge you for these.
* Supporting evidence should therefore always be sought as soon as possible after the circumstances affecting you have occurred rather than retrospectively.
* Only supporting evidence written in English can be considered; if the original evidence is in another language it is your responsibility to obtain and submit a verified translation, together with the original evidence. (If the cost of obtaining translations is prohibitive for you, you should seek advice from LSU Advice and/or the Student Support Centre).

**3. How will my Mitigating Circumstances claim be considered and what are the potential outcomes?**

Your claim will be dealt with by the University in confidence, taking into account the need for appropriate staff to consider the circumstances described. Your School Progression Board has responsibility for considering Mitigating Circumstances claims and deciding the appropriate course of action.

The Progression Board will decide initially whether the claim is eligible for consideration. If not, no action will be taken and your progression will be considered on the merit of the reports submitted in preparation for the Board.

Where your claim is considered to be eligible, the Progression Board will consider the content of your claim and any supporting evidence and decide the most appropriate course of action. Outcomes may include the following decisions:

* Progression should be granted because there is sufficient evidence of the required standard of work to suggest that progress will be satisfactory by the time of the next review point.
* Progression should be delayed and a plan put in place to support you to achieve the necessary progression requirements. This is likely to involve a resubmission of your report at the next Progression Board.

All decisions taken regarding Mitigating Circumstances claims will be recorded in the School’s Progression Board paperwork, which will be signed off in the meeting. The record will show:

1. whether your claim was eligible for consideration;
2. whether there is evidence that your performance was impaired; and
3. the course of action to be taken.

If you are unsuccessful when you resubmit to the next Progression Board consideration will be paid on whether your study period needs to be extended. Depending on the nature of the Mitigating Circumstances this may have fee implications.