

## Mitigating Circumstances - Taught Students

|                     |                                                                                                                                                               |                |            |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|------------|
| Document type:      | Policy                                                                                                                                                        |                |            |
| Document number:    | REG-193                                                                                                                                                       | Version:       | 09A        |
| Department:         | Registry                                                                                                                                                      |                |            |
| Approved by:        | Senate                                                                                                                                                        | Date approved: | 03/06/2026 |
| Effective from:     | 21/09/2026                                                                                                                                                    | Review date:   | 21/09/2029 |
| Publication:        | SOAS website                                                                                                                                                  |                |            |
| Related documents:  | Academic Appeals Procedure<br>Data Protection Policy<br>Permitted Extended Deadlines Procedure<br>Student Disciplinary Procedure<br>Taught Degree Regulations |                |            |
| Documents replaced: |                                                                                                                                                               |                |            |

*Note: All policies must be read in conjunction with all other SOAS policy, procedure and guidance documents. Printed copies of policies may not be the most up to date, therefore please refer to the policy pages on the SOAS external website or intranet for the latest version.*

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. At SOAS, we recognise that life can present unexpected challenges. Our aim is to foster a supportive academic environment that acknowledges the realities that students may face, while upholding high standards and integrity in our education.
- 1.2. This policy sets out how the university supports students whose ability to study or complete assessments is temporarily affected by unforeseen or acute circumstances. The aim is to ensure that students are treated with compassion, fairness, and respect, and that no student is disadvantaged by events beyond their control.
- 1.3. Our approach prioritises trust, minimising administrative burden, and enabling students to progress in their studies.
- 1.4. Students are encouraged to submit all summative assessments<sup>1</sup> by the original published deadline date(s). Academic staff design their assessments in line with the undergraduate or postgraduate curriculum framework. Assessments are designed to ensure that module learning outcomes can be demonstrated and that students can learn from and improve their assessment performance as they progress through the programme. Deadlines are set with this in mind but also enable the University to deliver timely feedback for assessments and ensures fairness to all students. To support student success deadlines are set, where possible, to avoid bunching and outside of University closure dates. Missing the original deadlines can sometimes lead to students having multiple deadlines in the same period.

---

<sup>1</sup> Summative assessments demonstrate a student's understanding of the learning, and the grades from these assessments are used to create the final module mark.

## 2. Scope – what is covered by this policy?

- 2.1. This policy applies to all students on taught programmes, including taught modules taken by PhD/MPhil students, intercollegiate, study abroad, and associate students. It applies to students studying on campus and online. It does not include non-credit bearing provision, for example, Executive Education and Short Courses.
- 2.2. Mitigating circumstances relate to short-term, time-limited events.
- 2.3. Through this policy students can decide which is best for them out of the following options:

| Option                                                   | When this option may be appropriate                                                                                                          | Evidence required | Typical outcome / duration                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Extension (without evidence) (self-certification)</b> | Short-term, unexpected circumstances where a small amount of additional time will enable completion of the assessment                        | No                | Up to seven calendar days for the affected assessment                                                |
| <b>Extension (with evidence)</b>                         | Circumstances where additional time beyond self-certification is required, or where self-certification is unavailable or has been exhausted  | Yes               | Seven or 14 calendar days (including any self-certified extension previously granted)                |
| <b>Deferral</b>                                          | Circumstances where an extension would be insufficient, or where the assessment takes place at a fixed date and time                         | Yes               | Assessment deferred to the next available opportunity, normally the late summer reassessment period  |
| <b>Unfit to Sit</b>                                      | Where a student has completed an assessment but was unwell or otherwise seriously affected at the time, or becomes ill during an examination | Yes               | Attempt set aside and treated as a deferral; the original mark is not used                           |
| <b>Leave of Absence</b>                                  | Where circumstances are serious, ongoing, or complex, and mitigation options within the assessment cycle are not sufficient                  | Yes               | Temporary suspension of studies with a planned return date, in line with the Leave of Absence policy |

- 2.4. Students who have a Study Inclusion Plan (SIP) may still experience mitigating circumstances if their condition unexpectedly worsens or if they encounter a separate issue. In such cases, the student may request an extension beyond what is already provided in their SIP through this policy. Students with SIPs are advised to read the SIP section of this policy.

### 3. What is a mitigating circumstance

- 3.1. A mitigating circumstance is an unexpected, short-term event that significantly affects a student's ability to engage with learning or complete an assessment.

- 3.2. For mitigating circumstances to be considered, the situation must:

- Have had a direct impact on the student's ability to submit their summative assessment or perform to their usual standard;
- Be unexpected – something the student could not reasonably have anticipated;
- Be outside their control – meaning the student could not have avoided or prevented it; and
- Directly affect the timing of the summative assessment.

- 3.3. Examples include (but are not limited to):

- Illness, injury or sudden deterioration of a health condition
- Family emergencies or bereavement
- Serious personal, financial, or housing crises
- Affected by a new or emerging international conflict or humanitarian crisis
- Acute mental health episodes
- Compelled to be elsewhere (e.g. court, detained in custody, service in armed forces reserve)
- IT issues encountered through SOAS systems
- Being a victim of crime or harassment

- 3.4. Students are not required to disclose sensitive details beyond what is necessary to understand the impact on their studies.

- 3.5. Where a situation has impacted a number of students, or a whole cohort, SOAS might grant mass extensions, or other actions, which means that students will not need to submit individual applications.

- 3.6. Things that do not count as a mitigating circumstances include:

- Minor illnesses (e.g. coughs, colds etc) except in specific circumstances e.g. if the student is immunocompromised
- Circumstances that do not relate to the assessment period in question
- Minor computer problems including failure to save documents appropriately
- Poor time management
- Misreading the examination timetable or submitting the wrong assignment
- Assessments or examinations scheduled too close together

- Transport difficulties
- Holidays or domestic events
- Routine work commitments
- Sports activities other than recognised international competitions

- 3.7. By submitting an application, the student is confirming that their circumstances are serious and have affected their ability to complete their assessment. If a student provides false information or evidence, the matter may be considered under the *Student Disciplinary Procedure*.
- 3.8. Further guidance on sources and types of independent, third-party documentary evidence is provided on the *student intranet*.
- 3.9. Information on how to apply for mitigating circumstances is provided in this document while further guidance and examples are available on the *student intranet*.
- 3.10. Mitigating circumstances decisions are reported to the Assessment Boards for each module.

#### 4. What assessment types are eligible?

- 4.1. While this policy relates to all summative assessments, there are some assessment types where extensions are not possible. The table below lists the most common assessment types and indicates which sections of this policy apply.
- 4.2. Please note the following:
- it is not possible to request an extension or deferral for some assessments
  - this policy does not apply for formative assessments (i.e. those that do not count towards your final mark)
  - this policy is not applicable for procedural deadlines (i.e. module sign up and enrolment)
  - whatever the assessment type – if it is being done as group work, then the group work eligibility is used

| Name            | Code | Definition                                                                                 | Extension | Deferral | Unfit to Sit |
|-----------------|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------|--------------|
| Assignment      | AS   | Non-exam written assessment that does not fall within any other coursework assessment type | Y         | Y        | Y            |
| Aural           | AU   | Listening assessment                                                                       | N         | Y        | Y            |
| PG Dissertation | DS   | Postgraduate taught dissertation module assessment                                         | Y         | Y        | Y            |
| Exam            | EX   | Exam - falling within formal examination sessions                                          | N         | Y        | Y            |

|                       |    |                                                                                        |   |   |   |
|-----------------------|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Group Work            | GR | Non-exam assessment including group work                                               | N | Y | Y |
| Oral                  | OR | Speaking assessment                                                                    | N | Y | Y |
| PG Project            | PJ | Postgraduate taught project module assessment (dissertation alternative)               | Y | Y | Y |
| Portfolio             | PT | A collection of pieces of work that result in a single grade                           | Y | Y | Y |
| Practical             | PR | Tasks or demonstrations to assess applied skills and competencies                      | N | Y | Y |
| Presentation          | PS | Individual presentation (not group work)                                               | N | Y | Y |
| Seminar Participation | SP | Class attendance and participation<br><i>* note – registers are collated by tutors</i> | N | N | N |
| Test                  | TS | Multiple choice quiz, in-class or alternative test                                     | N | Y | Y |
| UG Project            | PN | Undergraduate project module assessment                                                | Y | Y | Y |

## 5. Extensions

- 5.1. Extensions are available to support students who have faced unexpected difficulties and need a small amount of extra time to complete their assessment.
- 5.2. There are two types of extensions:
  - Extension applications without evidence
  - Extension applications with evidence
- 5.3. All requests for extensions should be submitted through *MySOAS Portal* no later than 12:59 on the day on which the summative assessment was due to be submitted. Applications received after the original due date will not be considered and late penalties will apply. These penalties are outlined in the Taught Degree Regulations.
- 5.4. Students are advised to consider the impact of extensions on other upcoming deadlines so that one extension does not lead to challenges with other work.
- 5.5. When an extension is granted (with or without evidence), the 48-hour late submission grace period is not applicable, therefore any submissions made post the extended submission deadline date will be capped at the pass mark for a period of ten days (40% for Foundation and Undergraduate and 50% for Postgraduate). Further information is available on the guidance pages.

## 6. Extensions without evidence (self-certification)

- 6.1. Students have four opportunities per academic year to request an extension by self-certification. Each extension request refers to one assessment only (which includes multiple assessments with the same deadline), meaning that students can request four extensions

per academic year. If an extension is required for more than one assessment due on the same day, a request will need to be submitted per assessment.

- 6.2. Self-certification means that no evidence is required. Each of these opportunities will allow an extension of seven calendar days to submit the work without penalty. Please note that this might mean that the new deadline falls on a closure day or outside of teaching and support available might be limited. For example – for an assessment that was originally due at 12:59 on 1 March, the new deadline would be 12:59 on 8 March.
- 6.3. If a student needs an extension and they have used all four of their self-certification requests, then they can apply for an extension, but evidence will be required.

## 7. Extensions with evidence

- 7.1. A student will need to provide evidence to request an extension in the following situations:
  - To request a further seven calendar days after a seven calendar day self-certification extension (i.e. to increase the extension to 14 calendar days)
  - To request an extension if they have used all four self-certification requests on previous assessments
  - To request an extension if they do not want to use one of their four self-certification requests
- 7.2. Further guidance on sources and types of documentary evidence is provided on the *student intranet*.
- 7.3. Students may request an extension of seven or 14 calendar days with supporting evidence, depending on the nature and severity of the circumstances and the evidence provided. In some cases, only seven calendar days may be approved even where 14 days are requested.
- 7.4. Where an extension follows a self certification request, only a further seven calendar days may be approved.

## 8. When extension requests are not approved

- 8.1. If a student's request for an extension is not approved, they can submit further evidence and ask for the decision to be reviewed. They must request this review within seven calendar days of being notified of the outcome.
- 8.2. If a request is not approved appropriate late penalties will be applied.

## 9. Deferrals

- 9.1. A deferral application is a request to delay the assessment, which will then be carried out at the next possible opportunity.
- 9.2. Sometimes it might be more appropriate for a student to apply for a deferral of an assessment. This would be relevant in the following circumstances:

- If the circumstances affecting the student are such that an extension would be insufficient
  - Where the assessment is on a specified date and time (see table above for assessments in scope)
- 9.3. Evidence must be provided for all deferral requests. Where it is not possible to submit evidence at the point of request, then it should be provided within 21 calendar days of the request. If evidence is not provided after 21 calendar days, the request will be rejected.
- 9.4. Students should consider the impact of these requests as it could affect a student's eligibility to progress to the next stage of their programme, or may delay their completion (including graduation). Students are encouraged to seek advice from their College Hub about the impact of their request before submission. Further guidance can be found on the student intranet. Students should submit their deferral request by the deadline and may continue to seek advice after submission if needed.
- 9.5. A request for deferral should be submitted before the date of the assessment, or where this is not possible, must be submitted no later than seven calendar days after the assessment date/submission deadline. Only in exceptional cases will claims be accepted later. In no circumstances will deferral applications be considered after the Board of Examiners has met.

## 10. Deferral acceptances

- 10.1. Where a deferral is accepted, the student will be permitted to complete the assessment, without penalty, at the next available opportunity:
- **For on campus students:** If the deferral applies to the main attempt of assessment, the next opportunity will be in the late-summer reassessment period. (Semester 1 reassessments will not take place in the May assessment period and will be held in late-summer).
  - **For online students:** the next opportunity date will be provided dependent on the assessment, the module and the starting point of the student.
- 10.2. A student cannot defer assessments that take place during the late summer reassessment period. At this point in the cycle, they will receive a final outcome for the module—pass, fail, or not completed—based on the work they have submitted.
- 10.3. If a student submits mitigating circumstances for an assessment in the late-summer assessment period, and those circumstances are approved, the Board of Examiners will consider their case in line with the Taught Degree Regulations. Where the student has not passed the module, the Board of Examiners may permit them to be reassessed or to repeat the module in the following academic year, where this is allowed under the progression regulations.

- 10.4. Where an on campus postgraduate student is unable to submit their dissertation due to mitigating circumstances, they may request to move their submission deadline to the last Thursday of October in the same year. If the student is experiencing more serious or ongoing difficulties and this deadline would not provide sufficient time, they may request a period of leave of absence. If this is approved, a new submission date will be set that reflects the student's circumstances and ensures they have enough time to complete their work safely and confidently. Students are advised to consider the impact of deferrals beyond the end of October date and how this may affect them, especially for students on a student visa.

## 11. When deferral requests are not approved

- 11.1. If a student's request for a deferral is not approved, they can submit further evidence and ask for the decision to be reviewed. They must request this review within seven calendar days of being notified of the outcome.
- 11.2. Where a request for deferral is not approved, any affected assessments will be subject to applicable capping or late penalties, as appropriate.

## 12. Unfit to sit

- 12.1. Where a student has completed an assessment, but believes their performance was affected by serious mitigating circumstances, or where a student is taken ill during an examination, the student should apply under the 'unfit to sit' process within seven calendar days of the assessment date.
- 12.2. Independent supporting evidence should be provided to support the claim and where a student is taken ill during an examination, the invigilator's report will be considered. This evidence must specifically state that the student was unfit to sit on the day on the assessment. Evidence should be provided as soon as possible, and no later than 21 calendar days of the original due date of the assessment.
- 12.3. Where an 'unfit to sit' request is approved, the assessment attempt will be set aside and the assessment will be treated as a deferral (see the section above for deferral acceptance outcomes).
- 12.4. Once an 'unfit to sit' request has been approved, it cannot be withdrawn. Students should therefore think carefully before applying and ensure they are comfortable proceeding on this basis. Submitting an 'unfit to sit' request means choosing to be reassessed at a later opportunity rather than retaining the outcome of the original attempt.
- 12.5. Final year students, in particular, should consider the potential impact of this option on progression, completion, and graduation timelines before submitting a request.

## 13. Students with Study Inclusion Plans (SIPs)

- 13.1. Most students with a Study Inclusion Plan (SIP) are automatically entitled to an additional seven calendar days for coursework submission under the University's *Permitted Extended*

*Deadlines Policy.* This extension is applied automatically, and students do not need to submit an extension request, with or without evidence.

- 13.2. The only exception is for resubmission deadlines during the late summer reassessment period. In this assessment period, the SIP extension does not apply automatically, and students must submit a mitigation request in line with this policy if an extension is required.
- 13.3. Further information about SIPs and PEDs can be found in the applicable policies on the SOAS *Degree regulations, policies and procedures page*.
- 13.4. Students with SIPs may still submit a mitigating circumstance claim if they experience further unexpected or acute circumstances beyond those already addressed in their SIP. In these cases, students should apply based on their permitted extended deadline, not the original deadline. Students must clearly state this in their application.
- 13.5. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that any mitigating circumstances application is submitted by the correct deadline, taking their SIP entitlement into account. The University will continue to take a supportive and compassionate approach in helping students understand their options.
- 13.6. Students who think they should have a SIP are encouraged to contact the *Student Advice and Wellbeing team*.

#### 14. [How to apply and decision-making](#)

- 14.1. Students should submit requests through the MySOAS Portal.
- 14.2. Discussing circumstances with a member of staff does not constitute making an application.
- 14.3. Claims received by the deadline will be considered.
- 14.4. Self-certification applications submitted within a student's permitted allocation of four will be automatically approved, provided they are made by the relevant deadline and meet the basic criteria set out in this policy.
- 14.5. Students are encouraged to submit their requests for extensions and deferrals at the earliest opportunity but no later than the published deadline for the affected assessment. While applicable non-evidence extensions can be processed automatically, all evidenced based applications require human decision making which will take some time. Students should work to the original deadline dates until they receive a decision making use of the 48-hour grace period if helpful/relevant.
- 14.6. The University recognises that repeated mitigating circumstances requests may be a sign that a student is experiencing ongoing difficulties. Where a student submits a high number of applications, we may contact them to check that they are safe and supported, and to offer guidance on additional sources of help or longer-term adjustments where appropriate. This contact is supportive in nature and will not affect the outcome of their existing request(s).

## 15. Evidence

- 15.1. SOAS aims to make the extensions process as supportive, compassionate, and low-stress as possible. As such, students may submit up to four self-certifications per academic year with no evidence requirement.
- 15.2. For all other mitigating circumstances claims (extensions, deferrals and unfit to sit) students should provide independent third-party evidence issued at the time of the circumstances, confirming what happened and how it affected their ability to study or be assessed. Evidence must be recently dated and relate to the assessment deadline. Doing so helps us make fair and consistent decisions and ensure students receive the right support.
- 15.3. Where possible, evidence should be provided in English. If it is not, we will try to translate it using secure online tools. If translation is not possible, we may ask the student to provide a certified translation.
- 15.4. If the evidence provided is insufficient, the request will not be approved and students can request a review of the decision, and provide additional evidence, within seven calendar days as outlined above. We recognise that obtaining evidence can sometimes be challenging as well as distressing for students. Because of this, we will take a flexible and understanding approach.
- 15.5. Any costs associated with acquiring evidence remain the responsibility of the student.
- 15.6. Students who believe their evidence includes sensitive or highly personal information may bring it directly to the Paul Webley Wing Student Hub. Staff will review the evidence with care and respect, and it will either be returned to the student after the decision or disposed of confidentially, depending on the student's preference.
- 15.7. Students may provide authenticated copies rather than originals (for example, documents with a date, signature, or official letterhead).

## 16. Decisions

- 16.1. After reviewing a student's evidence-based application, the Mitigating Circumstances assessors may recommend one of the following outcomes:
  - Provide additional time for the student to complete the assessment;
  - Approve a deferral allowing the student to take a re-sit of the assessment at the next opportunity; or
  - Take no action and not approve the application if the request does not meet the criteria for mitigating circumstances.
- 16.2. The student will normally receive the outcome of the application within 3 working days of submitting the form. Until a decision is provided to the student, they should work to their original submission deadline.
- 16.3. If the application is not approved a student can request a review of the decision within seven calendar days of receiving the outcome. Once this deadline has passed and/or the review is declined the student can submit an appeal in relation to the outcome.

## 17. Appeals

- 17.1. If a student remains dissatisfied with the outcome and believes their circumstances meet the available appeal grounds then they may submit an Academic Appeal within 15 working days of receiving the outcome of their application. Information on how to do this is included in the *Academic Appeals Procedure*.

## 18. Confidentiality and Data Protection

- 18.1. All information provided is treated sensitively and shared only with staff who need it to make or implement a decision. The University manages personal data in line with its *Data Protection Policy* and legal obligations.
- 18.2. Reports on the number of Mitigating Circumstances are received by the Boards of Examiners and the Student Experience and Outcomes Committee. All reports are anonymised with no personal details provided.

## 19. Sources of support

- 19.1. Students can access a range of support if they are thinking about submitting a mitigating circumstances application. *Student Hub Advisors* and the *Students' Union* are available to offer guidance and help the student understand the process. *Student Advice and Wellbeing* also provide a wide range of wellbeing support, which can help students manage personal circumstances that may be affecting their studies.
- 19.2. The University recognises that seeking help can be difficult and will always treat students with understanding and respect.