

Mitigating Circumstances Procedure

Version No	Date of Approval	Approving Authority	Description of Amendment
V1	19/09/2026	University Committee for Quality & Standards	First draft

Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to outline a structured, transparent, and equitable process through which students' mitigating circumstances can be considered in relation to their academic performance.

The procedure is governed by Heriot-Watt University's *Mitigating Circumstances Policy* and is the practical delivery of that policy. If there are differences identified between the policy and the procedure, the policy must overrule the procedure.

The procedure ensures that:

- Students are supported when unexpected, short-term events significantly impact their ability to engage with assessments or academic activities.
- Applications are reviewed consistently and fairly across all disciplines and schools.
- Appropriate academic mitigations are applied where justified, without compromising academic standards.
- Final decisions on progression and awards take into account the impact of accepted mitigating circumstances.

Responsibilities

- Mitigating Circumstances Triage Team (MC Triage Team): a group of professional services staff within the Global Registry and Academic Support directorate (RAS) who carry out the initial review (Stage 1) of MC applications.
- Mitigating Circumstances Board (MC Board): a group of senior academics tasked with deciding what academic mitigations – if any – should be applied.
- Mitigating Circumstances Board Chair (MC Chair): the chair of the MC Board

Refer to *Regulation A5* for more details on the composition of the Mitigating Circumstances Board.

Stage 1: Initial Review by MC Triage Team:

(see page five for process flowchart)

1.1 Evidence check

- ☐ Reviews the application and checks whether evidence or a self-certification form has been provided in support of the application.
- ☐ If there is neither sufficient supporting evidence nor self-certification, the team will request that the student provide this. The student then has ten working days to provide the requested documentation else the application will expire and be marked as Closed.
- ☐ If the student provides a self-certification form, the team checks that the MC period is for no more than seven days and that the student has provided a reason why evidence could not be provided, else further evidence is requested.

1.2 Application Review

- ☐ Within ten working days from receipt of a mitigating circumstances application and supporting documentation, a member of the MC review team reviews the application against the list published in the *Mitigating Circumstances Guide for Students* and determines the course of action:
 - **Accepted for Academic Decision** (Stage 2.2), if the circumstances clearly match those listed as “Accept” in the guide.
 - **Not Accepted (Reject)**, if:
 - The grounds described in the application are not listed as acceptable grounds for mitigating circumstances in the MC Guide for Students.
 - The student has not provided any/sufficient evidence to support their application.
 - The application was submitted late (after the applicable MC deadline) and sufficient evidence to demonstrate extenuating circumstances causing late submission has not been provided.
 - The student has already submitted an application describing the same grounds, timeframe and affected courses.
 - **Refer to the MC Chair** (Stage 2.1) if it is not clear whether the circumstances match those listed in the guide. MC Chair then reviews the application and determines the course of action:
 - **Accepted for Academic Decision**,
 - **Not Accepted (Reject)**.
 - **Refer to Mitigating Circumstances Board** for further discussion

1.3 Referral of at-risk students

- ☐ Any students which meet the criteria below will be directly referred to Student Wellbeing Services.
- ☐ The criteria for referral are listed below:
 - Student indicates that there is a possible risk to their personal safety.
 - Student indicates they are, or could be, a risk to themselves or others.
 - Any other indication that the student needs immediate intervention or support from Student Wellbeing, e.g. disclosure of newly emerging severe mental health symptoms.
- ☐ If there is a perceived imminent risk to the student’s life, a referral to Safeguarding may be considered.

1.4 Communication

- ☐ Students will be advised of the outcome of Stage 1 within ten working days from receipt of their application and supporting evidence.

1.5 Submission of applications by staff members on behalf of students

- ☐ In exceptional circumstances, if a student is unable to submit their own application, staff members should make the Mitigating Circumstances Administrator aware of the student's situation.
- ☐ The Mitigating Circumstances Administrator will ensure that the student's circumstances are considered by the relevant MC Board.
- ☐ In all cases, the student must be legitimately unable to submit an application due to extenuating circumstances (e.g. incapacitated by severe physical or mental health problems, cannot access application due to war, conflict or crisis).
- ☐ In all cases, evidence must be provided to demonstrate the student's circumstances.

1.6 Review of rejected applications

- ☐ A review of all rejected applications will be carried out by RAS each semester before the relevant MC Board meets to ensure consistency of decision making.
- ☐ The Mitigating Circumstances Administrator will review all rejected MC applications which have been triaged by other members of the MC Triage Team.
- ☐ Another senior member of staff in RAS will review all rejected applications triaged by the Mitigating Circumstances Administrator.

Stage 2: Academic Review by MC Board:

2.1. Referred Applications Review

- ☐ Consider all MC applications referred to the Mitigating Circumstances Board by MC Chair at Stage 1 and determine the course of action:
 - **Accepted for Academic Decision,**
 - **Not Accepted (Reject).**
- ☐ Provide a reason for those which are Not Accepted.

2.2. Academic Decision (Initial Recommendation)

- ☐ Review all applications that have been Accepted at Stage 1 or Stage 2.1.
- ☐ The Board identifies whether the circumstances described significantly impacted the student's academic performance or progression; and provides a recommendation on which mitigation, if any, to apply. A table of possible mitigations can be found below.

Mitigation	Description
Remove late penalty	Remove the 30% late penalty applied to coursework.
Resit as same opportunity	Null the student's current attempt at the affected course and offer a resit at the next possible opportunity.
Submit dissertation at next opportunity	Offer the student the opportunity to submit their dissertation at the next opportunity.
Disregard component	Disregard an affected component (e.g. piece of coursework, exam) and recalculate the student's grade from the remaining components if course learning outcomes have been met through other assessments.
Map grade	Where a student's mark is close to the threshold for the next higher grade, their mark may be mapped to that grade (e.g. 39E mapped to 39D). In all cases, the student must have met the standards as set out by the guidelines within Regulation A6, 2.2.4.
Present to progression/award board	This mitigation should be applied only in exceptional cases where there are no other clear mitigations to apply but the student may be in, or close to, the discussion zone for award classification. It should not be applied in cases where there is insufficient information available at the time of the MC Board meeting (e.g. marks have not yet been finalised). In these cases, mitigations should be determined by chair's action before the relevant Progression of Award Board meets.
No mitigation required	Apply no mitigation if the student's performance has not been significantly affected by their circumstances or if there is no other applicable mitigation to apply.
Other	Used in exceptional circumstances when suggested mitigation is a combination of the approved mitigations above. In these cases, the MC Board must provide a clear explanation of the mitigations to be applied.

- ☐ The MC Board for each discipline provides a recommended mitigation for every student with an MC application marked as Accepted for Academic Decision.
- ☐ If a student takes a course outside their home discipline, the MC Board for the school running that course makes the initial mitigation recommendation.
 - RAS facilitates the communication of these initial recommendations from the course team to the MC Board of the student's home discipline.
 - The MC Board for the student's home discipline has the authority to amend or overturn the initial recommendation provided by the course MC Board, where appropriate.
- ☐ The MC Board has the authority to approve the removal of late penalties without the approval of a Progression or Award Board.

Stage 3a: Academic Decision (Final) by Course Assessment Boards:

3.1. Cohort MC Decisions

- ☐ Make decisions on what actions to take when mitigating circumstances affect whole cohorts of students.

Stage 3b: Academic Decision (Final) by Progression and Award Boards:

3.2. Final decisions on mitigations

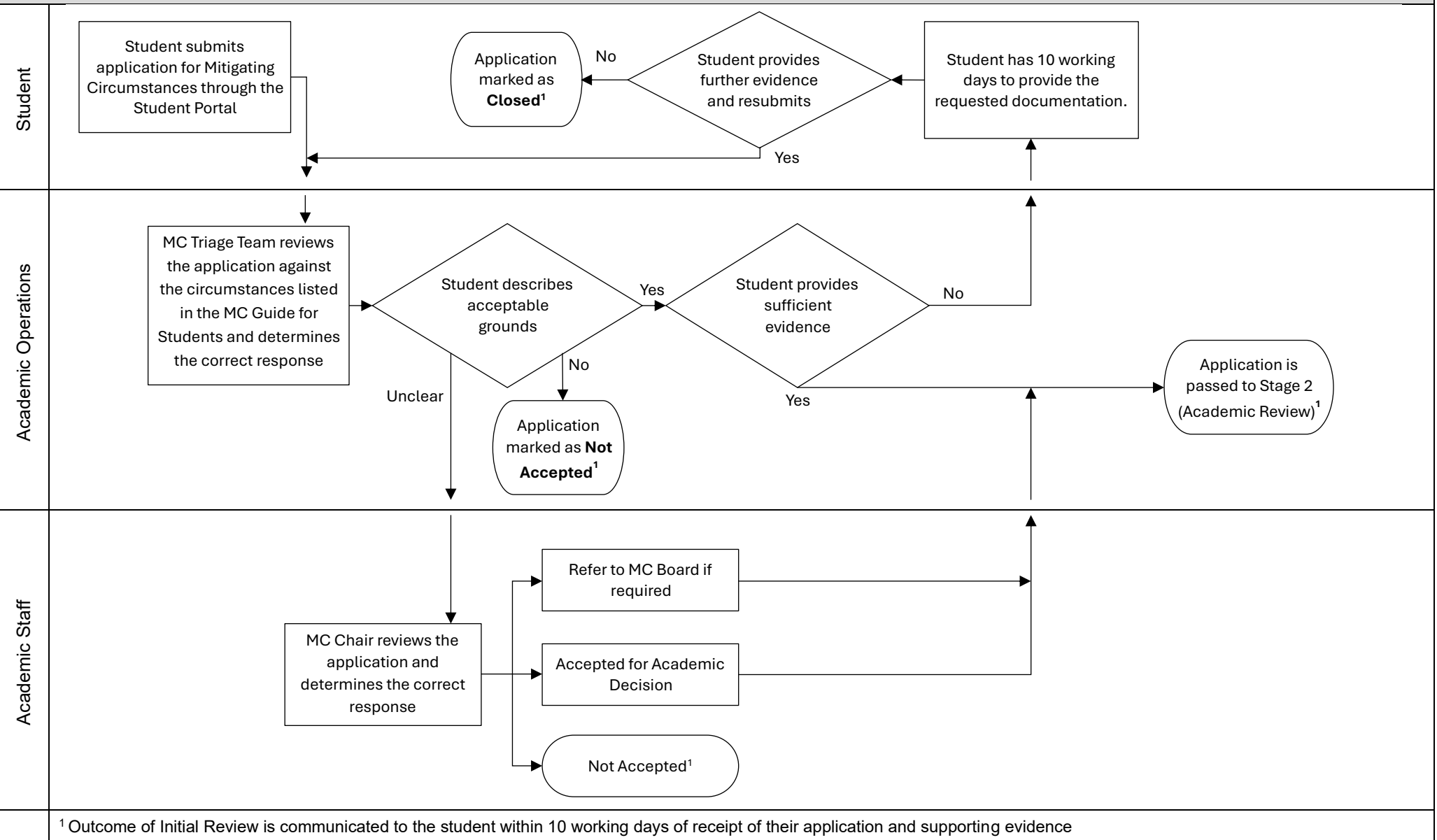
- ☐ Consider the recommendations from the Mitigating Circumstances Board.
- ☐ Make final decisions on what mitigations, if any, to apply in terms of progression or award decisions for individual students.

3.3. Communication

- ☐ Students have the right to request what mitigation, if any, was applied to their record after the deadline for publication of assessment results.

Mitigating Circumstances Procedure (Stage 1: Initial Review)

Purpose: How applications for mitigating circumstances are triggered.



Mitigating Circumstances Guidance (Stage 2: Academic Review)

Purpose: How mitigation recommendations are decided and passed to the Progression/Award Board for approval.



Mitigating Circumstances Procedure (Stage 3: Academic Decision)

Purpose: How mitigation recommendations are reviewed and approved by Board of Examiners

