



## Consideration of mitigating circumstances by examiners

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### Summary

The Mitigating Circumstance Notice (MCE) process has been adjusted in order to directly take into consideration and acknowledge the impact COVID-19 has had on your teaching, learning, revision, coursework submissions and examinations, alongside any individual circumstances you (the student) believe may have impacted on your academic performance.

You will be given the opportunity to complete a [self-assessment mitigating circumstances form](#) which is split into three sections: the first section is details about yourself, the second section enables you to highlight any practical issues you encountered during your revision and examination period due to COVID-19, and the third section enables you to inform the examiners of any medical or personal issues (which go beyond what is captured in section 2) which you believe seriously affected your academic performance.

We strongly encourage you to complete section 1 and 2 of the self-assessment form to help Boards of Examiners assess the impact COVID-19 has had on you and your cohort. However please only complete section 3 if you have suffered a serious problem – either medical or personal, which goes beyond what is captured in section 2.

Examiners will consider all cases seriously and it is important to note that examiners are limited in the way they can take such circumstances into account, as ultimately they have to assess your performance on the work that has been produced.

The University accepts that you may not be able to obtain evidence to support your [self-assessment mitigating circumstances](#) submission, therefore, you will not be expected to submit this with the form; if you have evidence obtained prior to the pandemic this can be submitted. We are instead asking you to provide a statement which explicitly and concisely details the way(s) in which your circumstances affected your revision/examination/coursework submission. Exam Boards will consider all cases seriously, whether evidence is provided or not.

If you have a disability or long-term health condition, you should ensure that you apply for alternative examination arrangements if appropriate. If you think that your performance has still been affected by your disability or condition, despite the alternative arrangements and other support in place, or you suffer another serious problem such as an acute illness just before or during the exams, you can also submit a [self-assessment mitigating circumstances form](#).

Your form will be treated confidentially and only accessed by those who need to do so in order for it to be processed and considered.

### What do I need to do?

The first thing you need to do is to read this guidance in **full**. The guidance will give you information on how to complete the self-assessment form, what information is and isn't required and it also provides examples of completed answers. If you want to draft your answers to the questions before typing them into the form, you can find a full copy of the form here: <https://proctors.web.ox.ac.uk/files/self-assessmentmitigatingcircumstancesquestionspdf> and a drafting document here <https://proctors.web.ox.ac.uk/files/draftingformforself-assessmentformdocx>. This document should **not** be submitted as your submission or as supporting evidence; it is solely for you to use as an aid -- if you submit this version directly to the Proctors it will not be considered and will be deleted.

If you need additional help, your college/department can be contacted, as can the Proctors' Office ([examinations@proctors.ox.ac.uk](mailto:examinations@proctors.ox.ac.uk)). It is your decision as to whether to submit a form, and your responsibility to make sure that you submit the required information. You, or anyone acting on your behalf, must not communicate directly with the examiners. **You will only be able to submit this form once, therefore make sure you are happy with your answers before you submit your form.**

### **What happens if I have already submitted an MCE under the old process via my college?**

If you have submitted an MCE via your college/department prior to 4 May 2020 and have not yet received notification of the outcome of the MCE via Student Self-Service, it will not be considered by the Board and you will need to complete section three of the [Self-assessment Mitigating Circumstances form](#). The reason why your previous MCE will not be forwarded to the Board is due to the need for the Board to understand how COVID-19 has impacted upon your coursework submissions/examinations. Therefore, a submission of the [self-assessment Mitigating Circumstances form](#) will ensure everything is captured about your circumstances and considered by the Board holistically.

### **How do I access the form?**

The form can be accessed here: <https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=G96VzPWXk0-0uv5ouFLPkQqQyO0rhFNli6yXApDCK5FUQlkyMFhUMEI5SUIESFdSWFJMVzY4Tk8zTS4u>

You will need to log in using your Oxford username followed by @OX.AC.UK (capitals are essential) e.g. [abc123@OX.AC.UK](#), you will then be taken to the Webauth page where you will need to enter your Single Sign-On (abc123) and your Single Sign-On password. If you are already logged into a University operated Microsoft 365 product (Word, Outlook, etc.) the form will log you in automatically. It will **not** work if you enter your university email address e.g. [harry.potter@science.ox.ac.uk](#)

### **What should I put in my form?**

The self-assessment form is designed so that you can make the Board of Examiners aware of any problems that occurred before or during your exams, or in relation to your submitted coursework, that seriously affected your performance.

The form has three sections:

- the first section is for general information about you;
- the second section concerns any practical issues you experienced during your revision and examinations or coursework submissions linked to COVID-19; and
- the third section allows you to raise any other problems you may have experienced.

Please include as much detail as possible in the form to explain how your performance in your coursework submission and exams was affected. Examiners are only able to consider the information that you provide; they will not ask you for further evidence.

Your statement will need to be:

- *relevant* – relating to the time period of your exams or your period of preparation for exams and written submissions.
- *contemporary* – produced close in time to the period affected
- *specific* – if possible, it should explicitly relate to the impact your circumstances have had on you and your performance.

Your statement should include a full explanation of how the problem affected your exams and which papers you believe have been affected.

If you had alternative examination arrangements but are also submitting a [self-assessment mitigating circumstances form](#) in relation to the same condition(s) or disability, you need to explain why the alternative arrangements or other adjustments did not fully compensate for the impact of your disability or health condition.

Please see Annex A below for a step by step guide on how to complete the form.

### **Will I need supporting evidence?**

The University accepts that you may not be able to obtain evidence to support your [self-assessment mitigating circumstances](#) submission, therefore you will not be expected to submit evidence with the form. If you have evidence obtained prior to the pandemic this can be submitted. We are instead asking you to provide a statement which explicitly and concisely details the way(s) in which your circumstances affected your examination/coursework submission.

Exam Boards will consider all cases seriously, whether evidence is provided or not.

### **When do I need to submit my notice?**

You should make sure that your notice is submitted as soon as possible after you have sat your final examination or handed in your final assessment and within 5 working days of this date. **For example if your last assessment is on a Monday you will need to submit your form by the following Monday.** Forms should not routinely be submitted before an examination or deadline as you will need to include your assessment of how you believe your circumstances have affected your actual performance in your form.

### **What if I submit my notice late?**

If a notice is received after the 5 working day deadline, it will only be forwarded to the examiners for consideration if received within three months of the last examination/assessment submission date and if one of the following criteria is met:

- Your condition is such that it prevented you from making an earlier submission;
- Your condition was not known or diagnosed until after the final meeting of the examiners;
- There has been a procedural error (beyond your control) that prevented your information from being submitted.

### **How will my form be considered by the examiners?**

Your [self-assessment mitigating circumstances form](#) will be carefully considered by the Board of Examiners who will also carry out an assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on the cohort. The circumstances that may be considered include, but are not limited to:

- Change in assessment format compared to that expected by candidates (e.g. moving from an unseen written examination to a take-home paper or submitted coursework)

- Candidates needing to complete assessment in unsuitable locations (e.g. disruptive home environment)
- Changes in teaching, learning opportunities, practicals and revision due to the University's move to remote teaching (e.g. lectures moved to online, field trips cancelled, projects changed due to practicals not being carried out etc.)
- Confusion/anxiety due to change in assessment
- Anxiety/stress/uncertainty caused by restrictions on day-to-day activities that have impacted on exam preparation
- Issues caused by unavailability of resources (e.g. closure of libraries)

The Board will also consider the practical issues you experienced in section 2 and then finally look at the circumstances highlighted in section 3 (if you have completed it). You will be able to view the outcome of their consideration via the results screen on Student Self Service once the exam board has met, and your year outcome has been released.

It is important to be aware that most mitigating circumstances notices do not result in any change to results. Examiners have limited options when they receive a notice, particularly if all exam papers are affected. This is because the examiners' primary job is to mark what they see; they cannot accurately or fairly award marks for a level of performance that they do not see. However, they can take certain actions if the information given is very persuasive that you were severely affected.

Examples of actions which examiners might take include:

- If there is strong evidence that your performance on one particular paper has been affected and is clearly out of line with your performance in other papers, the examiners might decide to disregard the paper, and decide on your overall result based on all the other papers;
- If your performance is borderline between two classifications, the examiners will consider carefully whether the information given justifies your result being placed in the higher classification.

Please note that these are only examples, and that all notices are considered on a case-by-case basis. Just because the examiners have not been able to make any change to your results, it does not mean they haven't considered your notice carefully or that they don't consider your circumstances to have been serious.

If you have a concern about the way your mitigating circumstances notice has been considered, you may wish to consider making a complaint or academic appeal.

**Do I need to submit a self-assessment form if the Board has covered my circumstances with the cohort-wide COVID-19 consideration?**

No, you do not need to submit a form if you feel that your circumstances have been covered under the cohort-wide consideration list above.

**Can I just submit the self-assessment form for just section 1 and 2 without section 3?**

Yes, the form allows you to choose to submit just sections one and two if you feel that it covers your circumstances.

## Annex A

### Completing the Self-assessment Mitigating Circumstances Form

The [self-assessment mitigating circumstances form](#) is designed so that you can make the Board of Examiners aware of any problems that occurred before or during your exams, or in relation to your submitted coursework, that seriously affected your performance.

The form has three sections:

- the first section is for general information about you;
- the second section concerns any practical issues you experienced during your revision and examinations or coursework submissions; and
- the third section allows you to raise any other problems you may have experienced.

The guidance below will walk you through the form section by section.

The form can be accessed here: <https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=G96VzPWXk0-0uv5ouFLPkQqQyO0rhFNli6yXApDCk5FUQlkyMFhUMEI5SUIESFdSWFJMVzY4Tk8zTS4u>

#### Providing evidence

You are **not required** to provide any evidence to support your submission. However, you can ask your college (or department for non-matriculated students) to help you with the structure or wording of your answers and if you have evidence obtained prior to the pandemic this can be submitted with the form.

### SECTION ONE – ABOUT YOU

*This section is for general information about you and it is important that you complete this section in **full**.*

#### 1. College Information

Select your college from the drop-down menu, if you do not belong to a college select 'no college'

#### 2. Select your type of course

Select from the drop down menu either; Undergraduate, Post Graduate Course or Post Graduate Course via Continuing Education (includes MSt, MSc, PGCert, and PGDip)

#### 3. Select your course from the drop down menu

Scroll down the list until you find your course and select it

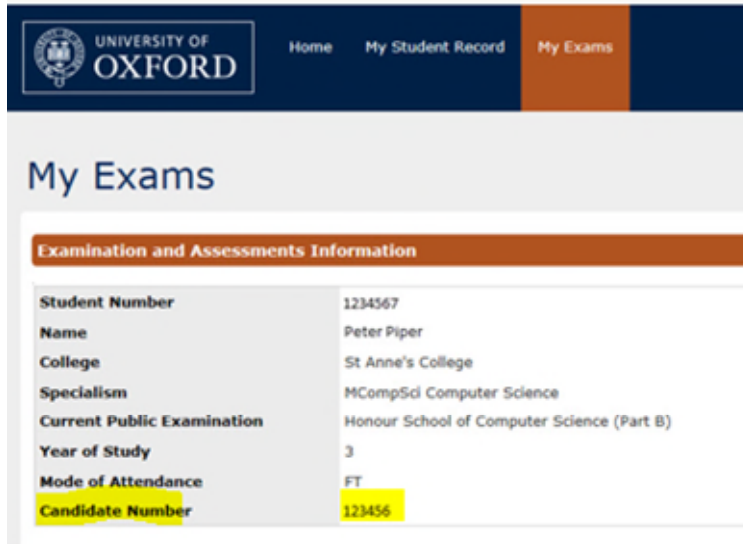
#### 4. Enter your student number

Your student number can be found to the right of your photo on your University Card or via the [Student Self Service page](#) under your Identity and Fee Information main screen.

The screenshot shows a user interface for 'Identity and fee information main screen'. It includes a warning about name changes, a 'Contact us' button, and a data protection policy notice. Below this, there are fields for personal details: Title (Mrs), First name(s) (Lilly), and Middle name(s) (Mia). To the right, there are fields for Student Number (552972) and Student Support Number (SFDU11650432Y).

## 5. Enter your candidate number

You can locate your candidate number on the Examination and Assessment Information page or your individual timetable via the [Student Self Service page](#).



The screenshot shows the 'My Exams' section of the University of Oxford website. It features a navigation bar with 'Home', 'My Student Record', and 'My Exams'. Below the navigation bar, the 'My Exams' title is displayed. A section titled 'Examination and Assessments Information' contains a table with the following details:

Student Number	1234567
Name	Peter Piper
College	St Anne's College
Specialism	MCompSci Computer Science
Current Public Examination	Honour School of Computer Science (Part B)
Year of Study	3
Mode of Attendance	FT
Candidate Number	123456

**Question: Should I provide my student number and candidate number, as I have been told previously that I should not do this?**

*Yes, both numbers are required in order to record your submission. The only number that will be passed onto the Board of Examiners will be your candidate number to ensure your anonymity is preserved.*

## 6. How should I list my alternative arrangements or major adjustments?

### *Alternative arrangements*

If you have alternative arrangements approved you should list them within the box provided, this includes:

- Extra time for students with Specific Learning Differences (SpLDs) or physical disabilities/illnesses that make writing difficult.
- Scheduling of exams at a specific time of day or only one exam scheduled per day due to fatigue effects caused by some disabilities, or for religious observances.
- Temporary exam adjustments for:
  - Infections
  - Injuries and surgery
  - Changeable conditions such as anxiety, RSI, tendonitis, etc.

### *Major adjustments*

If you have an approved major adjustment you should list them within the box provided.

## **SECTION TWO – PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR EXAMINATIONS AND COURSEWORK SUBMISSION LINKED TO COVID-19**

*Please use this section to highlight any practical arrangement issues you experienced during your studies and/or examinations.*

### 1. Revision issues

The University understands that changing your working environment from the University setting to your home environment may not have been fully conducive for examination revision or preparation for coursework.

Therefore, you should select yes to this question if you felt you encountered difficulties during your revision or preparation period. **You should refrain from using more than 150 words for each section.**

**Example of revision issues:**

- Having to fly home during your revision period
- Self-isolating
- Not having all the necessary materials needed to revise or complete a piece of coursework

**Revision example of answer**

**Explanation**

*My online examinations took place the week commencing 20<sup>th</sup> April. Due to the lockdown I had to travel home to New York, USA, but I found it difficult to obtain a flight. I was given a flight on 4<sup>th</sup> April and then had to go into self-isolation for 7 days. I had to apply for an extension for one last submission which delayed me in preparing for my revision. My revision was also greatly impacted upon by the anxiety of waiting for a flight home, the self-isolation away from my family and the general stress of the whole situation.*

**Assessments affected**

*All of my examinations commencing 20<sup>th</sup> April onwards were affected by these circumstances*

**2. Technical issues**

If you experienced technical issues during your examinations and/or coursework submissions, you should complete this section of the form. **You should refrain from using more than 150 words for each section.**

**Examples** of technical issues are:

- No access to laptop or device in order to complete the online examinations
- Poor internet connection that stopped you from completing the online examinations
- Not being able to access the online examination due to system error

**Technical example of answer**

**Explanation**

*I had to move back to my flat in London and my broadband service has always been unreliable. During my online exam on 24<sup>th</sup> April my internet went down, which meant that I lost 1 hour trying to make the connection work. I managed to get it working but I was unable to complete the exam paper in full.*

**Assessments affected**

*A12235 Corporate Business – was the exam affected*

**3. Environment issues**

Everyone will have had to adapt to working from their homes over the past several weeks and this would have been easier for some than for others. Therefore, if you feel that your home environment did not provide you with a quiet place to study or sit your examinations you should complete this section. **You should refrain from using more than 150 words for each section.**

**Examples of environmental issues:**

- If you have young children living in your home and you were unable to create a quiet environment for your online examinations
- If you were the sole carer for someone at home

- If your living conditions are unsuitable for studying, e.g. no place to study without others or interruptions

### Environment example of answer

#### **Explanation**

*At the beginning of the lockdown my set-up for completing my assessments and online examinations was suitable and I felt that I could comfortably complete my course to the best of my ability. I managed to submit two assessments within the blanket extension and felt confident about my exams. Unfortunately, a week before my exams my mother fell ill and had to self-isolate. This meant that as the eldest, I had to help look after my younger sisters (4, 8). I did not have a quiet space to complete my revision or exams and had to take breaks during my exam to help my sisters. This had a severe impact on my last exams and my performance was below my normal standard.*

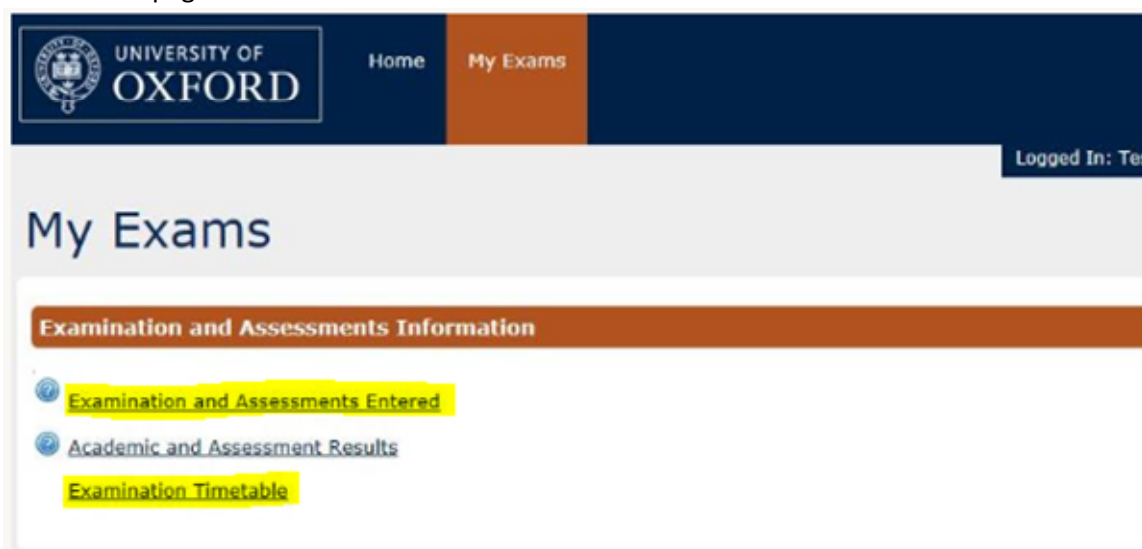
#### **Assessments affected**

A123455 – Poets 1500-1700

A124677 – Literature through history

#### **4. Assessment titles and codes**

If you answered yes to any of these questions you will need to provide the full assessment title and code for each assessment/examination that was affected. If they were all affected, you can simply put 'all'. To find your assessment title and code you will need to open your [Student Self-Service page](#) and go the Examination and Assessment page.



## **SECTION THREE - ANY OTHER MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES**

This section allows you to submit information about any other individual circumstances that you believe have impacted on your academic performance for the Board of Examiners to consider. This information will be outside the issues covered by the Board of Examiners' cohort-wide consideration and separate to the issues raised in section two.

**Examples** may include (but limited to):

- The death of a relative or close friend
- Hospitalisation



- Serious illness
- Severely delayed in being able to travel home

If you feel that you have covered your circumstances in section two then you can select 'no', and you will be able to submit the form.

**1. Tell the Board what your MCE is related to: COVID-19, Illness not related to COVID-19 or other**

If it is related to both select other and write 'both COVID-19 & other circumstances'.

**2. Explain the circumstances and impact**

In this section you should explain in clear and concise language what the circumstances were that affected your performance during your assessment(s). You should detail what happened and why it has impacted you. You can follow this rule when considering your answer: **When – What – How**. If your assessments were affected by different circumstances you can split your answer see the below example. **You should refrain from using more than 500 words for explanation.**

**Example of an answer to question 26: How your circumstances affected your performance**

**Explanation**

*Due to the lockdown I had to move out of my house, because my landlord needed their house back and I lost a week in moving out. I had to move in with my grandparents who are both over 70. My Grandmother suffers from heart problems and my Grandfather is very frail, so I had to help them with their day to day needs and go shopping for them. At first it was working OK and I was able to find time to work on the assessments. My Grandfather started to develop COVID-19 symptoms and was submitted to hospital. It all happened so quickly that I was unable to process the situation and that made completing my assessments and revision impossible. I was the main contact for the hospital for updates and I also had to provide support and comfort to my Grandmother. I managed to submit my two assessments and complete two of the three online exams. I did download my third exam, but did not get very far into the questions as I received a call from the hospital regarding my Grandfather's discharge and it involved making arrangements for him to return home and by the time I had finished I had already lost 2 hours of the examination time.*

**3. What examinations and/or assessments were affected**

You should detail each examinations/assessment that was affected and include assessment code and assessment title e.g. A12344 Thesis.

**Example of an answer for question 27: Affected examinations/coursework**

**Assessments affected**

*The following coursework submissions were affected by my move to my Grandparents' house:*

*A12235 – Theology design*

*A12467 – Thinking religion*

*The following coursework submissions and examinations were affected by my Grandfather's illness:*

*A42355 – Special option*

*A12356 - Thesis*

*A22456 – Theology exam 1*

*A35362 – Theology exam 2*

*A23456 – Theology exam 3 – this exam was not complete as stated above*

**4. Submitting supporting evidence**

If you have supporting evidence that was collected prior to the COVID-19 pandemic then you can attach this to the form if you wish. You are not required to submit evidence. Any attachments should be combined into a

single PDF where possible and labelled with your candidate number and a short description e.g. 123456 – MCE Supporting Evidence. If you are submitting more than one attachment, each document should be labelled to identify what it is e.g. 123456 – Medical certificate. There is a limit of 3 documents that can be attached. **Any documents submitted without a candidate number will not be considered by the examiners.**

**Before you press the submit button you can opt to have a copy of your form sent to you via email. Just tick the box next to**  **Send me an email receipt of my responses**

### **What happens once I have submitted the form?**

Once you press the submit button on the form you will receive a confirmation page to say your form has been submitted; if you have ticked the box above you will receive a copy of your form. Once your form has been processed you and your college will receive an email to inform you that it has been passed onto the Board of Examiners. This notification will be sent to you within 5 working days. **Please refrain from contacting the Proctors via email to chase your application if 5 working days has not passed; the office will be dealing with a high volume of cases and will endeavour to process your case as soon as they can.**