

Individual mitigating circumstances (IMCs) and assessment — Briefing note no. 2



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This is the second of a planned series of briefing notes. It is available at www.bath.ac.uk/registry/imc/imc-staff-briefings.htm alongside the other new guidance material on IMCs and assessment. This note addresses decision-making at meetings of IMCs Panels. Others will include when/whether an IMC claim should be submitted, and decision-making at a meeting of a Board of Examiners for Programmes (BEP).

The pivotal role of the IMCs Panel

Some departments/schools have deployed such panels for a while, providing a baseline of experience for the further guidance given in the IMCA document (<http://www.bath.ac.uk/registry/imc/documents/imca.pdf>, paras 32 and 33). Under the new policy and procedural provisions, each department/school must now:

set up a small panel of its staff (an IMCs Panel) to give detailed consideration to IMC claims and to adjudicate upon which should be accepted, to notify the students concerned of the acceptance (or rejection, with reasons) of their IMC claims in a timely manner, to give appropriate consideration to the extent and effects of their impacts on assessments in advance of the meeting of the relevant Board(s) of Examiners for Programmes, and to ensure that consistency of treatment is achieved not only between contemporary claims but also over time through the maintaining of appropriate records. (<http://www.bath.ac.uk/registry/imc/documents/imca.pdf>, IMCA, para. 32.b)

The five duties are listed in this description of the Panel's role are carefully specified.

... to give detailed consideration to IMC claims ... The greater clarity of the new guidance (especially in *What are Individual Mitigating Circumstances?* (<http://www.bath.ac.uk/registry/imc/documents/what-are-imcs.pdf>)) means that fewer inappropriate claims should be received; however, it is important that all claims which are received are given detailed individual consideration because there is “no *tariff* whereby, for example, injury in a car accident counts as being worse than being ill with influenza: either might have affected one or many assessments for an individual student, so some element of discretion and judgement must be applied” (IMCA, para. 14).

... to adjudicate upon which should be accepted ... This will be done in line with the new guidance (in *What are Individual Mitigating Circumstances* (<http://www.bath.ac.uk/registry/imc/documents/what-are-imcs.pdf>)), which is explicitly “intended to guide by example, rather than to present a closely-prescribed list of that which will, or will not, be admissible. However, all users should note the shortness of the list of examples of events that would be likely to be considered as valid IMCs, if the timing were such as to have an impact on the student's assessment(s)” (IMCA, para. 2).

... to notify the students concerned of the acceptance (or rejection, with reasons) of their IMC claims in a timely manner ... This is to be done in order that the process should be transparent, giving a chance to learn accordingly. The frequency of Panel meetings is addressed in IMCA, para. 32.b. It may also be helpful to notify the schedule of meetings and expected feedback dates to students.

... to give appropriate consideration to the extent and effects of their impacts on assessments in advance of the meeting of the relevant Board(s) of Examiners for Programmes ... This will ensure that there is proper description of the impacts (“extent and effects”) but is not intended to pre-empt the decision-making of the BEP. The Panel can help to describe the impact on the particular assessments of the student in question in the light of other cases in the same year or in previous years, recommending that the Examiners consider their decision-making in that light. This is especially helpful where some measure of confidentiality needs to be preserved (see IMCA, para. 33). The Panel will also be well placed to understand that, if IMCs are inappropriately claimed as having affected too many assessments, the BEP's scope for action might be unduly limited. *This provision leaves unaffected the normal preparatory work that a Director of Studies might undertake (or commission) to work out, in advance of a BEP, the routes that detailed assessment decisions might take in the light of the evidence of achievement.*

... to ensure that consistency of treatment is achieved not only between contemporary claims but also over time through the maintaining of appropriate records ... Having this small, reasonably consistent panel of experts will allow the proper inculcation of new members over time, help to ensure awareness of the range of events and conditions that arise from time to time, promote the seeking of further evidence and/or consultation with other departments'/schools' panels if in doubt, and contribute to balancing concern for individual students with equitable treatment for all.