**SAS policy in response to the Covid -19 pandemic for the 2020-21 academic year (student version)**

**This Policy applies to taught courses and research that contributes to degrees of the University of London through the institutes and central departments of the School of Advanced Study including the former Heythrop College.**

**It does not apply to programmes run collaboratively with the University of London Worldwide (MA in Refugee Protection and MA Human Rights)**

This policy is valid for the period 01 April to 31 October 2021 in response to the widespread impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. It will be reviewed at the beginning of the academic year 21/22 to ensure continued relevance.

**INTRODUCTION**

1. The School recognises that the ongoing Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is resulting in a great deal of stress and disruption to all our lives. We are working to try to ensure that your academic progression and achievement is not disadvantaged by the current crisis.  Our priority at all times is to ensure that students are fully supported as much as possible.

2. We believe that it is unreasonable to base final award decisions for taught programmes on student performance as if there has been no disruption. The No Detriment part of this policy means that Exam boards in 20/21 will take the COVID-19 crisis as key evidence to the background in which students have had to complete work this year. It will apply to modules and assessment undertaken during periods of lockdown and closed or restricted access to libraries and other key services’ since the beginning of the academic year.

3. We are aware that for many students performance continues to be impacted negatively by serious personal or medical circumstances beyond your control. Students who have suffered significant personal or family illness, bereavement or serious personal, emotional or financial challenges as a result of COVID-19, or other unforeseen circumstances **unrelated** to COVID-19, may wish ALSO to submit a claim for Mitigating Circumstances for an extension or a deferral (see below).

**NO DETRIMENT POLICY – MASTERS STUDENTS**

4. This policy ensures that for all students undertaking an assessed piece of work whether this be a module assessment or your dissertation, the effects of Covid-19 on your ability to work will not be detrimental to your outcome.

**MODULE ASSESSMENT**

**REASSESSMENT WITHOUT PENALTY (VIA THE EXAM BOARD)**

5. If you fail the assessment you will be offered the opportunity to be reassessed without penalty. (Note that this cannot be the same piece re-worked. A new topic will be agreed with your tutor).

6. In the circumstances where you pass the assessment but your performance has been affected by the pandemic, in consultation with your tutor, you may be offered the choice of EITHER accepting the mark OR applying to the Exam Board to be reassessed at a later date without penalty. Reassessment without penalty means you will not be capped for your reassessment and it will not count towards your maximum number of attempts. (This is considered a ‘deferral’ in line with the Home office student visa regulations.)

7. Guidance on how and when to apply to the Exam Board for re-assessment will be issued in due course.

**Dissertation**

8. We were hopeful that all students would be able to undertake their dissertation as planned. However it is clear that there are still significant restrictions to research facilities and resources. Therefore, at the Higher Degrees Committee held on Monday 19 April we agreed to offer an extension to dissertation deadlines for this academic year as we did last year. Students are not obliged to accept the extension and there is no penalty for doing so. The revised deadline for submission of dissertations is **Monday 4th October 2021 4pm**. **Note that extensions agreed with course directors which are later than this date will result in students being unable to graduate in 20/21 academic year.**

**MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES POLICY ADJUSTMENTS**

9. SAS already has a policy on mitigating circumstances. The School has extended it in the following way in response to the COVID-19 outbreak:

1. Any student may submit a claim for mitigating circumstances which extends to any adverse factors caused by the COVID-19 virus.
2. Any student may submit a claim if these factors have impacted on his or her ability to submit the assessment or on his or her ability to perform well on the assessment.

10. Students are also encouraged to keep their tutors informed of any short term difficulties, as some can be solved by extension of deadlines or minor changes to assignments.

11. The usual requirements for evidence for requesting extensions will not apply to requests that result from the impact of COVID-19.

**SUBMISSION OF A CLAIM**

12. Students should complete the online form below to invoke consideration of mitigating circumstances. Students can submit a mitigating circumstances claim at any point in advance of an assessment and up to one month (28 days) after the assessment submission date. We will release the dates for out mitigating circumstances panel shortly. Note this year they will run earlier than in previous years.

13. You can make a mitigating circumstances claim if your personal circumstances have affected your ability to submit your assessment, or they have affected your ability to submit your assessment on time, or if they may have impacted negatively on your performance. The School has already widened the circumstances around which you can submit a mitigating circumstances claim. These are outlined below for your reference.

**COVID-19 ACCEPTABLE GROUNDS**

14. The Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Guidance ([Form](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=uoBSGAB66kKUCBnq_RNVLlxhhS46nMdHiDvTCgAzCHlUMTJHS1ZZUzZLSTlWWDZPSDRHVFFGQ0U0Uy4u) & [Guidance](https://www.sas.ac.uk/sites/default/files/files/Policies/Mitigating%20Circumstances%20Guidance.pdf)) remains applicable but with the following amendments in relation to COVID-19 that are applicable during this period.

1. No documentary evidence is required for any claims relating to the COVID 19 situation. All you need to do is to complete the form and send it as an attachment to Registry.
2. The following additional examples of circumstances beyond the reasonable control of the student are acceptable grounds for claims. This is not an exhaustive list and students are encouraged to submit claims if they have been affected adversely in other ways.
* Bereavement due to COVID-19.
* Hospitalised due to contracting COVID-19.
* Ill at home due to having COVID-19-like symptoms.
* Unexpected relocation to another country or having to move home as a result of the COVID 19 Outbreak.
* Taking on extra work in employment to cover staff absences/ extra shifts as a key worker.
* Deterioration of existing mental ill health conditions or development of such conditions

**CONSIDERATION OF CLAIMS**

15. SAS will consider your claim through the mitigating circumstances panel. You will be notified of the outcome of your claim at the earliest opportunity after an exam board has made a decision. Please be assured you will be offered the maximum flexibility given the unprecedented international situation.

**Research Degrees**

16. Assessment of research degrees (ie progression, upgrade and examination) continues through the crisis.

17. For those continuing to struggle to access resources, having to change research methodology as a result of cessation of face to face interviews, unable to travel to archives and sites of research etc, the School will continue to accept requests for extensions to periods of registration at the point they are needed. Students should request extensions through the relevant Research Degree committee using this [form](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=uoBSGAB66kKUCBnq_RNVLpHH9lmjxg5Lldo7V42_m8VUQlFLNTJWSVhPQzE4M0gyVEhFV0MyMkNZVC4u) citing the Covid-19 pandemic. We have extended all writing up periods by six months.

18. The School continues to offer the ability to interrupt study for Covid related reasons. If you are unable to access the required resources and following consultation with your supervisor you think it is better to interrupt, this in effect ‘stops the clock’ without detriment. The relevant form for requesting an interruption can be found here: <https://www.sas.ac.uk/current-students/student-services/student-forms-policies-and-documents>

**Interruption**

19. Interruption is still a possibility. We will charge you at the point of re-registration and that date is a matter for discussion between you and your supervisor but note that the maximum period of covid-related interruption is one calendar year. You will be liable for the fee levels operating at the time. Note that fees increase at around 2% a year in general although the School agreed a no increase in fees for PGR students. Students will not receive any supervision during the period of interruption but as an exception, the School has agreed to allow research students who interrupt to continue to have access to SAS libraries resources.

20. Covid – related interruptions will **NOT** count towards maximum periods of interruption allowed.

21. Students who are externally funded should check with their funder in the first instance before submitting a request for an interruption.

22. No fees are payable from the point of interruption until the point of re-registration.

23. Students who are studying with us on a student visa will need to think carefully about the implications of interrupting study. The University will assist with applications for extensions.

**FINANCIAL HARDSHIP**

24. We are aware that some students are facing financial difficulty at this time. Applications to the School, and where applicable Institute, hardship funds in these circumstances will be treated sympathetically. The guidance and application forms can be found here: <https://www.sas.ac.uk/current-students/student-services/student-forms-policies-and-documents>

**CONFUSED? FURTHER INFORMATION REQUIRED?**

25. If you would like further information on the implications for you of this policy, please contact us at sas.registry@sas.ac.uk

**EMW**

**April 2021**