Guidance on the operation of Mitigation Committees 2020

New conventions for the application of mitigation were approved for the 2019-20 academic year, such that the previously employed grading framework was removed. This was intended to allow the application of any suitable adjustment required to mitigate the impact of extenuating circumstances on a student’s academic performance and mark profile. This change also reflects current guidance and recent decisions by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA), as well as their recent consultation paper (https://www.oiahe.org.uk/media/2388/discussion-paper-requests-for-special-consideration.pdf).

The OIA documentation indicates that at present many HE providers require an unreasonable level of evidence, or an unsuitable source of evidence, in establishing a claim for mitigation, and that providers can fail to appreciate the impact of circumstances on a particular student and their academic performance, for example by considering that bereavement has a different impact depending on whether a family member or friend is involved. The OIA does not consider this approach as representative of good practice.

The impact of Covid-19 has further restricted the ability of students to gather evidence in support of their claim, and has also made the circulation of evidence to Mitigation Committee members more problematic in some cases.

In the light of the above points the following steps should be undertaken when operating Mitigation Committees for 2020.

1. The Student Support Officer or relevant alternative school officer should examine the application for mitigation and assess whether the claim is relevant to the timing of the teaching or assessment. This is the case both for applications relating to modules assessed or completed before 14th March 2020 and to those submitted under the Covid-19 no detriment policy (for non-completed coursework or exams). The Officer should then identify the date(s) or date range(s) affected, and the assessments undertaken within that period and circulate this information to members of the Mitigation Committee.

2. The members of the Mitigation Committee should consider the mark profile of the student and whether marks for assessments falling in the affected periods demonstrate that the performance of the student has been affected. Mitigating actions should then be applied in accordance with the principles and conventions laid out in Annex 9 of the Credit Framework (Page 14 of the Guidance for Examiners 2019-20: https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/guidance/index.html).

3. Any further interventions required under the Covid-19 no detriment policy should then be applied (e.g. condonement as allowed by the programme specification, deferral opportunities), as should be done for all students.

4. The Secretary of the Mitigation Committee should record all actions recommended and ensure that marks are adjusted before application of the No Detriment stage average calculation.