

### CPA FUNDAMENTALS PROGRAMME: MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES POLICY AND GUIDELINES

This set of guidelines provides participants and staff on the CPA Fundamentals Programme with examples of acceptable and unacceptable Mitigating Circumstances for withdrawing from the Programme at short notice or failing to complete Programme assessments.

The policy also contains guidelines on how to submit a Mitigating Circumstances claim and outlines the process that the CPA Secretariat will follow to ensure that requests are dealt with fairly and transparently.

#### 1. GENERAL

1.1 Given the high costs associated with the delivery of the Programme, it is essential that Members nominated for the Programme are able to commit to the completion of all components of the course. As such, any last-minute withdrawal from the Programme by a participant will result in the participant's Branch being held accountable to reimburse costs associated with tuition, airfare and hotel accommodation. In addition, the Branch will not be permitted to nominate any other Members for the next delivery of the course if they are unable to produce a justifiable reason for the last-minute withdrawal of a participant.

1.2 There will be a Mitigating Circumstances Coordinator (MCC), who will make decisions about Mitigating Circumstances. That person is the CPA Secretary-General.

#### 2. WHAT ARE MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES?

2.1 Mitigating Circumstances are serious circumstances beyond a participant's control, which significantly disrupt the participant's ability to fully participate in the Programme. For example, the participant may be unable to attend the residential and/or online components of the Programme, or may be unable to prepare for, take or submit assessments.

2.2 Mitigating Circumstances must relate to non-academic problems. Any challenges with the organisation or the running of the Programme should be addressed to academic staff at McGill University and Wits University.

2.3 Mitigating Circumstances must occur at the time of the residential and online component of the Programme, or in the period immediately leading up to either of the compulsory components. For example, if a participant is unwell for one week at the beginning of the Programme, this would not normally be considered to be a Mitigating Circumstance that would impact on assessment later in the Programme, unless the participant can demonstrate valid reasons to support this.

2.4 Mitigating Circumstances come under the remit of this policy when they:

- a) Prevent a participant from attending the residential component of the Programme (**Non-attendance**)
- b) Prevent a participant from sitting an examination or submitting coursework (**Non-attempt**)
- c) Prevent a participant from submitting coursework on time (**Late submission**)
- d) Seriously impact on a participant's performance in an assessment or ability to prepare for an assessment in the period immediately leading up to the assessment (**Performance affected**)

### 3. ACCEPTABLE AND UNACCEPTABLE MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES

3.1 Mitigating Circumstances refer **only** to the following situations where a participant:

- (a) Experiences unforeseen/unexpected visa issues (participants are responsible for ensuring that they comply with relevant visa requirements and that those visa requirements are in place before they take up their place on the Programme – evidence will be required);
- (b) Suffers significant illness, accident or injury;
- (c) Experiences the death or serious illness of an immediate family member;
- (d) Is required to perform jury service (and deferral has been denied by the Court);
- (e) Is the victim of a serious crime.

3.2 Unacceptable Mitigating Circumstances can include the following situations where a participant:

- (a) Has the wrong visa or does not have the correct visa arrangements in place;
- (b) Suffers a minor illness such as a cough or cold, even if supported by medical evidence;
- (c) Experiences minor computer problems, is prevented from completing or submitting course work because of inadequate planning, or fails to save documents;
- (d) Misreads the examination timetable;
- (e) Has assessments scheduled close together;
- (f) Makes holiday or travel arrangements;
- (g) Has routine work commitments;
- (h) Is involved in sports activities.

Please note that the 3.2 is not an exhaustive list.

### 4. LONG-TERM HEALTH CONDITIONS AND/OR DISABILITIES

4.1 Participants with long-term medical conditions and/or disabilities are encouraged to make early contact with the faculty/pastoral support staff at McGill University and Wits University, who can discuss support and reasonable adjustments for specific learning requirements and examinations.

4.2 Participants with long term health conditions and/or disabilities should submit a Mitigating Circumstances claim if they experience an unpredictable or unforeseen effect of their illness and/or disability, which adversely affects their performance on the Programme.

### 5. SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

5.1 It is the personal responsibility of each participant to report Mitigating Circumstances promptly and in accordance with this policy.

5.2 Mitigating Circumstances claims must be made using the Mitigating Circumstances Form (MCF) and submitted to the MCC (or other such designated person in the CPA Secretariat).

5.3 The MCF must be accompanied by appropriate documentary evidence as outlined in this policy and must confirm the Mitigating Circumstances being relied upon and their effect on the participant.

5.4 Submissions which contain sensitive or highly confidential personal information may be submitted in a sealed envelope marked 'private and confidential' for the attention of the MCC.

5.5 The CPA Secretariat will confirm receipt of an MCF and documentary evidence.

5.6 Submission of a Mitigating Circumstances claim does not mean that the claim will automatically be accepted by the MCC. In coming to a decision on whether to accept the claim, the MCC will consider a range of factors, including the proximity of the Mitigating Circumstances to the timing of the relevant assessment(s) and the likely impact of those events on the assessment(s).

## 6. DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

6.1. All Mitigating Circumstances claims must be accompanied by original, independent third-party documentary evidence confirming the existence of the Mitigating Circumstances and disclosing how those circumstances have impacted the participant.

6.2 Participants have personal responsibility for providing acceptable and sufficient documentary evidence. The CPA Secretariat is not responsible for obtaining evidence on behalf of a participant.

6.3 Guidance on sources and types of documentary evidence is given in Appendix A. Examples of acceptable third-party evidence may include:

- (a) Doctor/Consultant or Hospital certificate or letter, including dates of the period affected
- (b) Letter from a solicitor or counsellor
- (c) Police case reference number (e.g. in relation to an assault or a stolen laptop)
- (d) Death certificate

6.4 Evidence must be legible and in clear English.

6.5 The MCC will use their discretion to decide whether the documentary evidence is acceptable.

## 7. DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSION OF MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES

7.1 Deadlines for the submission of Mitigating Circumstances will be publicised by the CPA Secretariat. The Secretariat will also publicise central deadlines by email to participants' email accounts. All participants are responsible for making themselves aware of published deadlines.

7.2 The CPA Secretariat will specify deadlines for notification of Mitigating Circumstances in relation to in-year assessments such as class tests, presentations, or performances during the Programme.

7.3 Submissions which are not made in accordance with published deadlines and requirements will not be considered by the MCC.

## 8. COURSEWORK

8.1 *Assessments submitted late due to Mitigating Circumstances:*

(a) Participants who do not submit a piece of coursework on time due to Mitigating Circumstances must submit a MCF and appropriate documentary evidence to the MCC via the CPA Secretariat no later than five working days after the day of the missed submission deadline. No submission will be accepted after the Programme deadline.

(b) The evidence will be considered by the MCC. If it is accepted then the non-submission will not use up a right of coursework submission.

8.2 *Assessments affected by Mitigating Circumstances:*

(a) Participants who submit a piece of coursework which they feel has been affected by Mitigating Circumstances must submit a MCF and appropriate documentary evidence to the MCC via the CPA Secretariat no later than five working days after the day when the circumstances occurred and at the latest, before the published deadline for the submission of Mitigating Circumstances.

(b) The evidence will be considered by the MCC. If it is accepted for failure in the coursework, then that failure will not use up a right of coursework submission.

(c) Participants are not permitted to re-submit coursework in which they have already attained a pass mark. Marks attained in coursework are not amended in the light of a claim for Mitigating Circumstances.

*8.3 Assessments not submitted on time without good cause.*

(a) Participants may fall into this category where: (i) Mitigating Circumstances are rejected by the MCC; or (ii) they fail to submit an MCF and/or appropriate documentary evidence by the deadline.

(b) Coursework submitted after the deadline without accepted Mitigating Circumstances will be subject to a penalty of a deduction of 2 percentage points per day late.

(c) If coursework is not submitted at all, then the overall course result will be 'Not complete' because of failure to undertake all assessment elements and uses up one right of coursework submission for the relevant course.

**9. DECISION OF THE CPA SECRETARIAT**

9.1 The decision of the CPA Secretariat on the submission of mitigating circumstances will be communicated in writing to the participant(s) within 1 month of the Mitigating Circumstances Claim being received by the CPA Secretariat. The decision will be communicated to both the participant(s) and the respective CPA Branch.

9.2 The decision of the CPA Secretariat is final.

## **APPENDIX A - Sources and types of documentary evidence**

### **A1 Visa issues**

- (1) Participants will be responsible for ensuring that they comply with the visa requirements of the respective country of study and that the requirements are in place before they take up their place on the Programme.
- (2) If participants are refused entry into the country where the residential component of the Programme is taking place (Canada or South Africa), documentary evidence will be required to prove that the participant had the requisite visa arrangements in place before travel.

### **A1 Counselling**

- (1) Counsellors, mental health advisors, psychiatrists may provide a confidential statement.
- (2) Counsellors and mental health advisors will provide statements for Mitigating Circumstances claims **only if** a participant has received support over a period relevant to the claim in question. Letters obtained on a first meeting will not be considered acceptable evidence.

### **A2 Illness and injury**

- (1) Medical conditions which prevent attendance must be supported by written evidence from a medical practitioner, consultant, or relevant member of hospital staff.
- (2) Circumstances relating to illness or injury must be independently verified by the person, practice or institution that diagnosed or assessed the illness/injury at the time it occurred. Statements that a participant reported that they were ill, or which do not include a clear diagnosis, will not be accepted.
- (3) Participants with long-term medical conditions and/or disabilities, including those with mental health difficulties, need only to show that their condition is fluctuating and that they have had an extended period of ill health.

### **A3 Bereavement**

- (1) Where the Mitigating Circumstances relate to the death of someone related to the participant, a death certificate or an officially certified copy of a death certificate should be provided.
- (2) Bereavement will normally be considered a mitigating circumstance when it affects assessments within the term when the death occurred, or shortly afterwards. Participants who feel that they have been affected by a death outside of this timeframe will need to provide additional evidence to indicate how the death has affected them e.g. a doctor's certificate, a report from a counsellor.

### **A5 Computer and information technology problems**

- (1) Failures of equipment, including IT systems and computer viruses, will not be considered acceptable Mitigating Circumstances unless verified by the university IT helpdesk, i.e. the problem is a campus-wide problem.

### **A6 Employment**

- (1) Full-time participants will not normally be eligible to claim for Mitigating Circumstances if the circumstance is in relation to employment.
- (2) Participants who are prevented by their employer's action from attending the residential component or completing the assessments by the published deadline must provide documentary evidence from their employer.

**A7 Victim of crime**

(1) Participants who consider that they have been adversely affected by being a victim of crime must provide relevant details, including a Police reference number. Examples may include theft of a laptop, being assaulted, or being burgled.

(2) Where the crime committed is of a very personal nature and it may be difficult to obtain a police report, documentary evidence can be provided from a medical professional, counsellor or other professional body (e.g. rape support service).

**A8 Jury service**

(1) It is normally possible to apply for deferral of jury service if it clashes with an examination. If deferral is not granted, documentary evidence from the relevant Court official must be produced to show that the clash cannot be avoided.