



The PMDD
Practice

A division of **The PMDD Project**

A Guide for Universities

Clinical Review Statement

This resource has been developed by The PMDD Project and reviewed by our Clinical Advisory Board for clinical accuracy and alignment with current evidence and guidelines.

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Reviewed by:

The PMDD Project Clinical Advisory Board

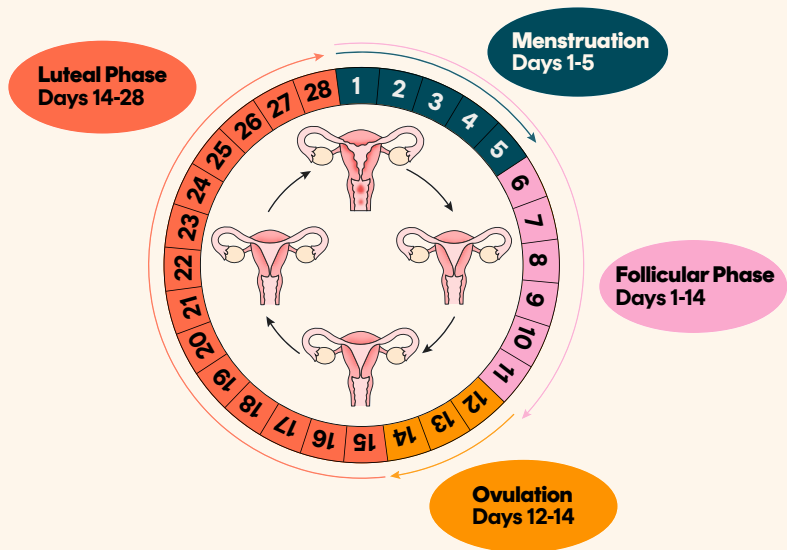
Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD) is a premenstrual condition affecting around 1 in 20 menstruating individuals. PMDD is not premenstrual syndrome (PMS).

It is much more severe and causes intense emotional and physical symptoms that can severely impact daily life, including academic performance and overall wellbeing. Universities in the UK have a responsibility under the Equality Act 2010 to offer reasonable adjustments to students with disabilities, and PMDD can be classified as such.

This guide outlines how universities can support students with PMDD by creating an inclusive and supportive environment, offering reasonable adjustments, and promoting mental health and wellbeing.

Understanding PMDD

PMDD causes severe symptoms during the luteal phase (1-2 weeks before menstruation), significantly affecting a student’s ability to concentrate, engage in social activities, and manage coursework.



Unlike PMS, which may cause mild discomfort, PMDD includes debilitating **emotional symptoms like anxiety, depression, mood swings, and irritability**, alongside **physical symptoms such as fatigue, pain, and sleep disturbances**.

Key symptoms:

Severe mood swings, irritability, or anger	Anxiety and tension
Difficulty concentrating or focusing	Extreme fatigue, muscle/joint pain, and headaches
Sleep disturbances	Changes in appetite or eating habits
Depressive thoughts, hopelessness, or sadness	

Reasonable adjustments for students with PMDD

Under the Equality Act 2010, PMDD may be considered a disability if it substantially affects daily activities. Universities must therefore consider reasonable adjustments to help affected students manage their studies and campus life.

These adjustments ensure that students are not at a disadvantage due to their condition.

Possible adjustments:

Flexible deadlines

Allow students to submit coursework or assignments with extended deadlines if their PMDD symptoms impact their ability to work during the luteal phase.

Modified attendance policies

Recognise that students with PMDD may need to miss classes when symptoms are severe.

Flexible attendance policies can help students manage their health without penalty.

Study breaks

Encourage students to take study breaks and use quiet spaces on campus during difficult times. Providing designated relaxation areas or mindfulness spaces can be beneficial.

Remote learning options

Provide the option to attend lectures or seminars online if attending in person is difficult during symptomatic periods. Offering recorded lectures or notes can also help students catch up when they are not feeling well.

Exam accommodations

Consider adjustments such as additional time, breaks during exams, or sitting exams in a private or quieter space to help reduce stress.

Supportive housing arrangements

If a student lives on campus, they may benefit from living in a quieter environment or close to medical services.

Consider flexible housing arrangements for students with PMDD.

Creating a PMDD-friendly campus environment

Universities can cultivate a more supportive atmosphere for students with PMDD by raising awareness, reducing stigma, and promoting mental health and wellbeing.

Awareness campaigns and education:

PMDD awareness events

Host workshops or seminars to educate students, staff, and faculty about PMDD.

These can be organised in collaboration with medical professionals or PMDD organisations like The PMDD Project.

Staff training

Ensure that University staff, including tutors, advisors, and support services, are aware of PMDD and how it can impact students.

They should know how to respond compassionately and offer the appropriate support.

Peer support networks

Create or promote peer support groups where students with PMDD can share their experiences, provide mutual support, and access university mental health services.

Mental health and wellbeing support:

Access to counselling services

Ensure that students with PMDD can easily access university mental health services, including counselling and therapy. Encourage students to speak to trained counsellors about managing stress, anxiety, and mood changes related to their condition.

Physical and emotional wellbeing resources

Offer resources such as mindfulness workshops, yoga sessions, or relaxation techniques that students can use to reduce stress and improve overall wellbeing.

Encouraging open communication

Encouraging students to communicate their needs with lecturers, tutors, or student support services is crucial for managing PMDD at University.

Establishing supportive relationships:

Open conversations

Encourage students to speak openly with their academic advisors or disability support officers about how PMDD affects their studies.

This allows them to collaborate in finding tailored solutions.

Regular check-ins

Create systems where students can have regular check-ins with a designated support person to assess how their condition is affecting their academic progress.

Disability services and confidentiality:

Registering with disability services

Encourage students to register with the University's disability services to access reasonable adjustments and accommodations.

Reassure students that this process is confidential and will not affect their academic standing.

Confidentiality

Ensure that students know their health information will be kept confidential, and only shared with relevant personnel as needed to implement adjustments.

Academic and mental health support

Providing robust support services will help students manage their academic and emotional impacts of PMDD.

Personal tutors and academic advisors:

Tailored academic support	Guidance on managing workloads
Encourage personal tutors or academic advisors to understand each student’s specific needs or adjust coursework expectations where necessary. Students should feel supported in balancing their studies with their health.	Offer resources or workshops on time management and managing academic stress. Helping students break down their work into manageable tasks can reduce the overwhelm that PMDD can bring.

Mental health services:

Referral to counselling or medical professionals
Some students may need to be referred to external medical professionals, such as a psychologist, psychiatrist, or gynaecologist, for further support with PMDD. Ensuring a strong connection between University health services and external specialists can enhance student care.

Building a path to success

Supporting students with PMDD goes beyond offering adjustments.

By cultivating a compassionate, understanding environment, universities can empower students to succeed despite their condition.

Empathy and understanding PMDD is a challenging condition, and students may feel frustrated or overwhelmed at times. A supportive, empathetic environment where students feel heard and valued will help them navigate the difficulties of university life with confidence.	Empowerment through education Provide students with the resources they need to better understand their condition and how to manage it. This may include access to information about PMDD, self-care strategies, and external support networks.
Continued engagement Engage with students with PMDD regularly to ensure that the support offered is working and that they feel able to thrive in their academic environment. Open dialogue and ongoing evaluation of their needs will be key to their success.	

Universities have a responsibility to create inclusive, accessible environments for all students, including those with PMDD.

By offering reasonable adjustments, promoting mental health, and encouraging open communication, Universities can ensure that students with PMDD have the opportunity to succeed academically while managing their health.

With proper support, students with PMDD can thrive and achieve their full potential at University.

Need urgent support?

We know that managing PMDD can be incredibly difficult, and at times, the emotional weight can feel overwhelming. If you are experiencing severe distress, suicidal thoughts, or feel you are in crisis, please know that you are not alone and that support is available. You deserve to be heard and kept safe.

If you are in immediate danger:

Please call 999 or go to your nearest Accident and Emergency (A&E) department immediately.

Samaritans: Call 116 123 for free, 24/7 confidential support, or visit www.samaritans.org.

Shout: Text 'SHOUT' to 85258 for free, confidential, 24/7 text support.

Please note: This resource is intended for information and peer support; it is not a substitute for professional mental health care or crisis intervention. Please reach out to your GP, local mental health services, or the resources above if you need urgent help.



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