

PERSONAL EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES (PEC) POLICY & PROCEDURE 2021/22



This procedure applies to all Personal Extenuating Circumstances applications for additional adjustment consideration submitted during the 2021/22 academic year or later. Definitions used within the Policy outlined in Appendix A

The principles of this procedure apply to all taught students regardless of the location of study and they should be read in accordance with relevant programme regulations. On a case by case basis some staff roles may vary from those detailed below.

Policy & Scope of the Procedure

1. All students are expected to progress with their studies, and complete all assessed work, in line with their peers on modules and programmes. This ensures fairness, for example, all students are given the same time to complete assessments. However, during your studies you may encounter significant personal difficulties that are outside of your control which may impact on your ability to study and/or complete assessments. These difficulties may be experienced directly by you, or may be difficulties experienced by a dependent. (Noting, a dependent is defined, as a spouse; child; parent; or person who lives in the same household (but not a tenant, lodger or boarder).
2. In order to be considered as a Personal Extenuating Circumstance (PEC), such difficulties must meet all of the following criteria
 - They must be out of your control – be unavoidable, where you could not have prevented them.
 - They must have had an impact – the circumstance must have had a demonstrably negative impact on your ability to study or undertake an assessment.
 - The timing of the circumstance must be relevant to the claimed impact.
3. This procedure is to be used only in relation to personal extenuating circumstances *for additional adjustment consideration* submitted directly by you as a registered student. Challenges to the academic judgement of the examiners on an assessment outcome are not permitted under the PEC Procedure or any other procedure. You should make a PEC application should when the circumstances occur and before the Board of Examiners reaches its decision on your results. Retrospective requests for additional adjustment consideration may not be approved.
4. The PEC procedure applies only to students on taught programmes of study or the taught element of research degrees. Research students are advised to consult their supervisor or Graduate School in the first instance and consider the adjustments that can be made to research degree programmes on the [PGR Change of Circumstances webpage](#).

5. Where possible, if you are considering submitting a PEC application, you are advised to first consult your tutor or supervisor.
6. Given the existence of procedures for complaint and redress during the study period, alleged inadequacy of teaching or supervision shall not constitute grounds for a PEC application. Separate policies and relevant information are contained in the following documents:
 - [The Student Complaint & Resolution Procedure](#)
 - [The Academic Queries & Appeal Procedure](#)
 - [The Student Charter – Rights and Responsibilities](#)
 - [Guidelines for Research Students](#)
 - [Student Guide](#)
7. If you have concerns which are the subject of another procedure (e.g. formal complaint), it cannot be both the subject of a PEC application and another procedure at the same time. The Student Progress Service should be consulted, by staff or students, about potential duplication of procedure. In such instances the Head of the Student Progress Service shall determine whether a PEC application should proceed if an alternative procedure has also been invoked in connection with the same/similar matter as the PEC.
8. PEC applications are individual in nature and therefore requests from groups of students will not be considered by the PEC process.
9. Where you submit multiple PECs, particularly for similar concerns or adjustments, the academic unit may refer your circumstances to be considered under the [Support to Study procedure](#), which can provide additional support and adjustment without the need to submit additional PECs
10. After the Board of Examiners has confirmed its decision on your individual results, the Academic Queries & Appeal Procedure should be followed if you wish to be considered for a retrospective adjustment. See [The Academic Queries & Appeal Procedure](#)

Confidentiality

11. Your PEC application will be processed in confidence and disclosed only to parties if it is necessary to progress the application or consider adjustments for you under the [Support to Study procedure](#), where there is believed to be a clear and present danger (where colleagues in the Student Health & Wellbeing Service may be consulted). Where disclosure is required by law you will be notified in advance of the disclosure being made.
12. All information obtained within the process of consideration of the PEC application will be held in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the University's [Student Privacy Notice](#).

13. You need to be careful to avoid disclosing personal data of another person/s in your PEC application, unless you have been given permission by them to do so, and this is also submitted with your application.

Grounds and Evidence

14. There are two main types of circumstances that may affect your performance in the assessment of your programme;
 - Long-term conditions/disabilities for which adjustment can be put in place to support study or assessment. These should be referred to the Student Health and Wellbeing Service (SHWS) to seek support via a Student Support Plan (SSP) report, which will be submitted to the Academic Unit/School. This usually minimises the need for PECs to be submitted by the student.
 - Short term significant circumstances such as an acute illness or specific episode/'flare-up' of an existing condition which requires consideration at the time the circumstances arise which may have a negative effect on your assessment. **It is for these circumstances that the PECs are primarily intended.**
15. PEC applications can only be made on the following grounds:
 - (i) Personal extenuating circumstances affecting studies, where the timing of them impact on your ability to carry out assessment
 - (ii) Personal extenuating circumstances directly affecting your assessment, including an examination.
16. Your PEC application should be supported, where appropriate, by independent documentary evidence (except when submitting a self-certificate as outlined in point 17) and should, wherever possible, be made in advance of an assessment deadline, examination event or by the Academic Unit/ School published deadline for consideration by a PEC Committee (PECC) or Board of Examiners (BoE). A Student Support Plan (SSP) provided by the Student Health & Wellbeing Service can be used for specific adjustments outlined in the SSP. A note from a Tutor, SHWS Advisor or Next of Kin would be accepted where medical evidence is not available. Where it is suspected that fraudulent evidence has been submitted, this may be investigated by checking the documentation and investigating by following the [Student Disciplinary Procedure](#)
17. You may submit a self-certification PEC on up to two occasions per Semester (1 & 2), totalling four in an academic year to request a short extension (up to 7 days) to an assessment deadline submission for minor illnesses or distress, for which you would not routinely seek medical intervention and therefore not be in possession of evidence. Noting, a self-certification PEC cannot be used for examinations, repeat attempts, deferrals or extraordinary assessments.

18. Where your examinations have been arranged as a remote timed assessment (e.g. 24/48 hour take away paper), a submission of up to 30 minutes late is allowed, **without penalty or requiring a PEC application**, due to the challenge of remote assessment/IT difficulties
19. Requests for adjustments that relate to the following, are not normally accepted as the basis of a PEC application:
- (i) Instances where an appropriate adjustment has already been made for the same circumstance.
 - (ii) Retrospective report of illness or other extenuating circumstances, without good reason.
 - (iii) Ongoing medical conditions/disabilities including learning disabilities, or mental health conditions for which the adjustment requested is already named as a reasonable adjustment within a Student's Student Support Plan (SSP).
 - (iv) Transport problems, excepting those emergencies where it can be shown that adequate time had been allowed.
 - (v) Unspecified anxiety or examination stress unless part of an SSP or self-certificated submission
 - (vi) Minor infection such as coughs, colds, headaches or hay fever, unless supported by specific medical evidence or as part of a self-certificated PEC (see point 15) .
 - (vii) Distress relating to family pet unless as part of a self-certificated PEC (see point 15).
 - (viii) Holidays, house moves, sporting or other social commitments. *(Noting, if you are an athlete or student representing your country or the University at a high level, letters of support for a PEC application would only be accepted if they are from the Director of Sport or the Performance Manager.)*
 - (ix) Known employment or financial responsibilities (particularly when in full-time study) unless part of an SSP or self-certificated submission.
 - (xi) Where the circumstances could have been avoided, for example by more effective time management.

How to apply

20. You are advised to consult your tutor about submitting a PEC application in the first instance. Other sources of impartial advice on submitting a PEC application may be sought from advisors in the Student Health & Wellbeing Service (<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/wellbeing/>) or the appropriate Officers of the Students' Union or from the Student Advice Centre (<http://www.nusu.co.uk/support/sac/>). Procedural advice may be sought from Student Progress Service, King's Gate Building (casework@ncl.ac.uk).

21. You are required to inform your school of your Personal Extenuating Circumstances by completing the PEC on-line Form, available via the [Self Service Portal \(S3P\)](#), so that appropriate adjustments can be made to your assessment. All PEC Applications must be submitted to the academic unit in accordance with the published on-line arrangements and by deadlines published by the academic unit. See [PEC Submission Guidance](#)
22. A late PEC application shall only be accepted at the discretion of the PECC or nominated member of staff if circumstances exist which make it reasonable for the student not to have applied within the normal timescales. Evidence of reasons for a late PEC application must be supplied by you with your PEC request.

Procedure

23. The PEC application will be logged with date and time on the Student System, providing an automated acknowledgement for you and you will be able to see this via your S3P student portal.
24. The application shall be submitted directly to the Academic Unit and where possible in advance of the requested adjustment/ Board of Examiners. If required, the PECC or nominated member of staff may seek additional information from you or from any relevant support staff. The PECC or nominated member of staff will review the case and determine an appropriate outcome.
25. The academic unit will notify you of the outcome of your PEC application to provide information on the approval of the request and the details of the adjustment agreed, which may differ from that which was specifically requested if the PEC Committee believe it to be more appropriate for your circumstances. However, applications received as seeking support for Board of Examiners discretion will not generally receive individual feedback on the support given to Boards of Examiners due to the short interval between PECC and BoE.

Outcome

26. The PEC Committee or nominated member of staff is authorised to approve an appropriate adjustment, from the following list available within the University regulations. These are:
 - a) *Extensions within and beyond those permitted as part of the Submission of Work policy;*
 - b) *Exemptions from minor elements of assessed work (normally a maximum of 20% of the module in question);*

- c) *Deferral of a formal examination or assessment attempt to the next normal occasion (generally August);*
 - d) Deferral of a formal examination or assessment attempt to a later normal occasion;
 - e) *Extraordinary examinations outside of the regular assessment periods*
 - f) *Permission to repeat tuition in residence*
 - g) *Setting aside previous attempt(s) of a module, Stage or Semester and allowing repeat tuition if required.*
 - h) *Allowing a student to proceed to the next Stage of a programme carrying fails.*
 - i) To provide Boards of Examiners with a recommendation of support/no-support depending on the timing and severity of the mitigating circumstances affecting a student, which have not been addressed by a-h above or where alternative adjustments would unreasonably add to the circumstances (i.e. to recommend the use of discretion where appropriate). NB: Some of a - e above are not allowed on some professionally accredited programmes such as Medicine and Dentistry.
27. Other outcomes may also be considered. This includes referral to the Support to Study procedure, specialist services within the University or, on occasion, consultation with the relevant Dean. The PEC Committee may also decide not to support any adjustment or recommendation for Board of Examiners discretion.
28. Adjustments for Personal Extenuating Circumstances, **including support for discretion by the Board of Examiners**, will not result in a change of marks.

Appeals against PEC Committee Decisions

29. If the Board of Examiners has not yet reached a final decision on your progression or award for the academic year, you can either:
- (i) Submit additional evidence to the academic unit
 - (ii) Seek a review of the original PEC application by submitting a Level 1 Academic Query, including a full copy of the PEC application and outcome correspondence.
30. Where the Board of Examiners has reached a decision on your case or a decision has been made by the Academic Unit on the PEC submission, you should follow the [Academic Queries & Appeal procedure](#) to seek a revised outcome. Initially for Level 1 academic queries, this should be within 14 calendar days of the original publication of the Board of Examiners results or within **14 calendar days** of notification of any other relevant decision. If you remain unhappy with the outcome and believe you have

relevant grounds for pursuing your case, this can be followed by submitting the formal Academic Appeal Application form with 21 days of the outcome of the Level 1 Academic Query sent to you by the Academic Unit

Appendix A - Definitions used within the Personal Extenuating Circumstances Policy

Academic Appeal: A written application to the University to review a formal academic decision made by the Board of Examiners or PEC Committee of a taught programme, a recommendation of the examiners of research degrees, or a Degree Programme Director for Unsatisfactory Progress cases.

Academic Judgement: Defined by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator as **judgment** that is made about a matter where the opinion of an **academic** expert is essential'

Academic Unit: The student's programme generally belongs to an Academic Unit within a School, but on occasion it can belong to a Faculty, Institute or other organisational unit.

Examiners: The Board of Examiners (or other authority within the Academic Unit) for an undergraduate or postgraduate taught programme. Other authorised roles within the Academic Unit, against which appeals may be considered are Personal Extenuating Circumstances Committees and Degree Programme Directors for Unsatisfactory Progress cases.

PEC Application: An application, written and submitted by students, which is directed to the relevant Academic Unit to advise of personal extenuating circumstances that affect studies or assessment. The PEC Application is considered by the Academic Unit and must be submitted at the time that problems occur, in advance of the deadline for assessment or by the published deadline in advance of the Board of Examiners in order to enable suitable adjustments to be implemented or to allow Board of Examiners discretion to be considered.

PEC Committee: A named group appointed by the Board of Studies. PEC Committees will consider the impact in terms of severity and scope of PEC circumstances, decide on suitable immediate adjustments and report to the full Board of Examiners on their actions and support for further discretion if appropriate.