

Guidance for Submission of Personal Extenuating Circumstances



If you believe that your study or ability to complete assessments is being adversely affected by unforeseen and unavoidable personal extenuating circumstances, you should advise your School by completing the on-line PEC form, available via the [Self Service Portal \(S3P\)](#), so that appropriate adjustments can be made. You are advised to carefully read the notes below before submitting a PEC application.

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.

Variations to the standard progression and assessment pattern are therefore only approved for good reasons. Good reasons are normally those associated with exceptional, unexpected and serious medical problems, personal problems or disabilities/long term illnesses (where these are not already covered by a Student Support Plan SSP arranged in conjunction with the Student Health & Wellbeing Service). Rules are not entirely prescriptive and each case is taken on its merits.

2. The details in the PEC form enables the School to consider your case and, if possible, make an appropriate adjustment. Possible adjustments will vary depending on the time of year, but could include:

- an extension to the hand-in date for a piece of work (see point 7 below);
- an exemption for a minor item of course work;
- a deferral of the assessment to the next normal occasion – generally a deferral to August;
- a deferral of the assessment to a later normal occasion;
- permission to set aside (ignore) attempts at assessments;
- permission to sit an extraordinary examination – i.e. setting an examination at an unusual time;
- permission to repeat tuition in residence;
- permission to proceed to the next Stage carrying fails;
- permission to repeat a period of tuition, setting aside previous attempts (e.g. re-doing a Stage or Semester as if for the first time)
- where there is a positive assessment of the impact of medical or other mitigating circumstances by the Personal Extenuating Circumstances Committee (PECC) and where the above adjustments have not been applied or are not appropriate, recommending support for discretion at the Board of Examiners (BoE) – e.g. potentially allowing you to pass the stage despite having failed a module; allowing you to pass a module by discretion; altering your degree classification.

NB - Where personal extenuating circumstances (PECs) are taken into account, they cannot result in existing marks being changed.

Adjusted University Personal Extenuating Circumstances Policy as a result of COVID-19 disruption during the 2020/21 Academic Year

Due to restrictions imposed by Covid-19 safe-guarding and social-distancing, the simplified PEC approval process agreed for 2019/20 has been retained for 202/21, until further notice. This means that;

- There is no requirement to submit documentary evidence for any health, bereavement or Covid-19 related PEC request for the 2020-21 academic year. However, you must explain the issues you have faced, the impact this has had on your studies and a rationale for the requested adjustment, which will be taken on trust for Covid-19 related issues to streamline the approval process.
- a submission of up to 30 minutes late for 24hr take-away papers should be allowed, without penalty or requiring a PEC application, due to the challenge of remote assessment/IT difficulties.
- A PEC can be considered for unexpected IT issues or software failure issues which impacts on your access to, or completion of, online learning and assessments.
- Submission of numerous could indicate that you are experiencing difficulties which may be better considered under the 'Support to Study' procedure. Where appropriate schools can follow the [Support to Study](#) procedure with additional tutorial support or implementation of an Action Plan.

3. The aim of a PEC adjustment is to allow you to continue on your programme of study, where appropriate. However, there are also other options such as transfers, suspension of studies, or repeat-tuition in failed modules which may be discussed further with a Personal Tutor or Degree Programme Director.
4. It is your responsibility to report any significant personal or extenuating circumstances that had a substantial impact on your performance in your studies or in your assessments/ examinations.

PEC Forms must be submitted to the School, via the S3P on-line system as close as possible to the time that the problem arose and wherever possible in advance of an assessment deadline or any imposed school deadline.
5. The PEC form must be fully completed and supported by documentary evidence, except in specific self-certification situations (see Point 15). The form should always include clear details of study/assessment affected, including dates of impact. If the form is not fully complete the PEC application may be rejected.
 - The PEC form must provide clear details of the unforeseen and unavoidable personal circumstances that significantly affected the student's performance in the assessment.
 - You are required to be precise about how your work was affected – e.g. lack of time to complete the project for the module, missed X hours in the laboratory, unable to revise, etc.
 - The PEC form must indicate how long the problems lasted.
 - All modules/assessments that have been adversely affected must be clearly indicated – e.g. 2nd essay, exam for module X, lab report for module X.
 - Additional statements/documents/independent evidence/SSPs may be submitted with the PEC form. However, all information provided should be relevant and all important points detailed.
 - All additional documents attached to the application, should be clearly marked with the student's name and student number.
6. Where you have an agreed Student Support Plan (SSP), following consultation with the Student Health and Wellbeing Service and the SSP identifies the circumstances where an extension would be appropriate, the SSP can be used as evidence to support your extension request. You are still required to submit the PEC form to indicate to the school that you wish to submit your work up to the extended deadline, but the SSP will be the evidence and no further information needs to be obtained and supplied. This provides notification to the school with a record that the extension has been accessed and does not require further independent evidence.
7. On up to two occasions in any academic year, you can submit a PEC to request a short extension to an assignment deadline, without evidence of your minor illness/circumstances. These are deemed self-certificates and will be accepted on trust without medical evidence but cannot result in any adjustment other than an extension of up to 7 days for an assignment submission.
8. The University expects students to cope with **normal/minor life events** without requiring adjustments. Please note 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.
 - (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 student is already receiving reasonable adjustments via a Student Support Plan (SSP).
 - (iv) Transport problems, excepting those where it can be shown that adequate time had been allowed.
 - (v) Unspecified anxiety or examination stress.
 - (vi) Minor infection such as coughs, colds, headaches or hay fever, unless supported by specific medical evidence.
 - (vii) Distress relating to family pet.
 - (viii) Holidays, house moves, sporting or other social commitments. (*Noting, if an elite athlete or student representing the country or the University at a high level submits a PEC application, letters of support should 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).

- (x) Problems with personal computers, printers or other technology.
- (xi) Where the circumstances could have been avoided, for example by more effective time management.
9. Apart from self-certification, as outlined in point 5, it is very rare for an adjustment to be approved without some form of independent evidence. It is therefore important to submit documentary evidence which provides independent corroboration of the circumstances to support your request.
10. If you have a **disability or long term illness** that requires adjustments, you should have approached the Student Health and Wellbeing Service. Adjustments may have been made throughout the your studies – e.g. provision of scribes, extra time in examinations etc. The University would not therefore expect to receive a PEC in respect of your disability/long term illness unless there has been some particular change in your condition or additional problems have arisen for you – it is for you to demonstrate that and to provide the appropriate information.
11. If you have a **temporary disability**, that requires a short-term adjustment for the examination period, you should complete the online [Temporary Examination Arrangements Form \(TEAF\)](#) to request appropriate adjustment from the examination office. The adjustments, e.g. provision of scribes, extra time in examinations etc. will be reported to your school. The University would not therefore expect to receive a PEC in respect of the temporary disability unless a claim is made that it has affected revision/studying, which would require additional evidence to be submitted.
12. If the School receives multiple numbers of PEC applications from you this could be an indicator that you are experiencing difficulties which should be addressed under the [Support to Study Procedure](#). The School may therefore instigate this process if it feels it necessary.
13. In the PEC Form you are asked to suggest what adjustment you feel is appropriate to your circumstances; however the PEC Committee will make the final decision. This means, for example, that you may be given a different adjustment to the one you requested and find you are given a one week extension, despite asking for three weeks.
14. The University expects all students to plan their time effectively. It is expected that you will take data back-ups, that you will printout your assessments in good time etc. As a consequence, problems with computers, printers etc. are not generally acceptable as grounds for a PEC.
15. **Independent Evidence should be provided with your form, attached electronically as part of the on-line submission.** It is your responsibility to provide evidence to back up your request. Evidence should highlight the problems you have faced and the period of impact – e.g. doctor's notes, SSP, a statement of support from a tutor, letter from an employer etc. It is recognised that this can be difficult, but a request is more likely to be approved if independent evidence is available – particularly evidence of the impact on the specific module/assessment and at the time of the assessment. Where evidence is delayed, the form should still be completed and submitted, with the evidence attached when available. Where the application has already been rejected, due to lack of evidence, you will need to submit a new PEC form together with the newly received evidence.

Please avoid disclosing personal data of another person/s in your submission unless you have been given permission by them to do so, and the consent of that person is also submitted with your PEC request.

The following important points about evidence should be noted:

- You can self-certify a **short illness, however this can only be accepted for an extension request of up to 7 calendar days and can only be used on two separate occasions within one academic year.** It cannot be used for the deferral of an examination, a reinstatement of an attempt or other significant adjustment (see point 6).
- In the event of a bereavement of an immediate family member, the University accepts that it can be difficult to articulate and assess impact on studies. It will help if you are specific by providing information such as your relationship to the deceased, the timing of the death (e.g. just before examinations), how much study time you lost (e.g. travelling to join family and/or attend the

funeral), the location of the funeral etc. In addition, you are advised to obtain independent evidence, such as one of the following, which all have equal weighting as supporting evidence;

- a supporting statement from a tutor or other member of staff
- a letter of support from a relative
- a copy of a death certificate or other notice of bereavement, if available, (*noting that this type of evidence is not compulsory*).

- You are advised **NOT to seek to create evidence after the event**. For example asking for a Doctor's Note retrospectively which states, '*the student informs me that.....*' will not normally be accepted as strong evidence

16. If you want to apply for an **extension**, you MUST submit a PEC form as soon as possible and **BEFORE** the advertised submission date. Please note this is subject to the [University's Policy on Assessment and Feedback](#).

It is your responsibility to ensure that work is submitted on time. You are advised to ensure that work is submitted (or at least ready to be submitted) **BEFORE** the deadline. Last minute problems e.g. with IT, printers or transport – are not valid grounds for seeking an extension.

- Normally, the School can only grant extensions in line with University policy. This means that most extensions will be for short periods. Extensions are normally for up to 7 days by self-certification or a maximum of 2 weeks with independent documentary evidence.
- It is only via strong evidence from a healthcare professional that retrospective evidence can be accepted.
- For dissertations, exceptional extensions of more than a week or two may require students to pay a fee to continue to use University facilities beyond the normal period of registration.
- **There is a penalty if work is submitted late for the original deadline or the approved extension deadline.** If the work is up to 7 calendar days late the maximum mark that will be awarded is a pass mark (normally 40 for undergraduate and 50 for postgraduate students). If the work is more than 7 calendar days late it will be awarded a mark of zero. For further information please see the [University Assessment and Feedback Policy](#).

17. You are encouraged to discuss significant personal circumstances with your Personal Tutor or other member of staff. Tutors may be able to advise how to phrase the application or whether alternate sources of help may apply. Also, tutors may be able to provide a statement of support, which will be taken in to account when a case is considered.

NB - In particularly sensitive cases you may submit an online PEC application indicating that your case is highly confidential. Then separately, you would need to submit an outline of the confidential circumstances together with the relevant evidence in a sealed envelope to the school office, marked '*Strictly confidential – PEC evidence for the attention of the PEC Committee only*'.

18. The School which manages your programme of study will receive and log all PEC applications and the outcome for you.

19. No detailed **feedback** on any PEC application is given. However, Schools will inform students promptly of any adjustment that has been approved or forwarded for PEC Committee consideration, or any application that is unsuccessful. Until such a confirmation is received, you must continue to attend classes and submit work as required.

However, no individual feedback is provided in relation to the recommendation for support that the PEC Committee forwards to the Board of Examiners after consideration, due to the limited time between these two committees taking place.

20. The Board of Examiners and its PEC Committee may only operate within **University Regulations**. Key documents are:

- [University Regulations, particularly examination conventions](#)
- [University's Policy on Assessment and Feedback](#)
- [The Personal Extenuating Circumstances \(PEC\) Policy & Procedures](#)
- Programme specific guidance on PEC submission (for medicine and dentistry students - *link*)

21. The on-line PEC form and independent evidence is stored securely in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and University procedures. Only the appointed PEC Committee (or a designated member of that Committee) will consider the form and evidence. This is a small sub-group of the Board of Examiners. No personal details – only summary recommendations and information on adjustments approved will be disclosed to the wider Board of Examiners. Summary and adjustment information may also be made available to the Board of Examiners or other staff supporting the Board of Examiners process.
21. It is possible to appeal against a PEC decision. To do so, you must follow the [Academic Queries & Appeals Procedure](#), initially as a level 1 query, **within 14 calendar days** of the PEC decision.

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