

Personal Extenuating Circumstances Procedure

Effective 1 September 2026

Purpose

1. While the University expects students to normally complete all assessed work as scheduled, we recognise that sometimes students may experience significant, unforeseen, unavoidable and difficult personal circumstances that impact their completion of, or performance in, assessment.
2. The Personal Extenuating Circumstances Procedure ('PEC procedure') allows students to let their Academic Unit know of any circumstances which may be impacting their ability to study and complete assessment and so request adjustments.
3. [Support and guidance](#) is available for students facing difficult personal circumstances.
4. More guidance is available for students on [submitting PECs](#) to help them when they are thinking about submitting a PEC request in addition to this Procedure. A student's Academic Adviser or Supervisor can also provide guidance on the PEC process.

Scope

5. The PEC Procedure applies to:
 - All students on taught programmes of study, including taught elements of research degrees and Research Masters (such as MRes, MMus, MLitt, LLM), regardless of location of study.
6. The PEC Procedure does not apply to:
 - Issues relating to alleged inadequacy of teaching or supervision. Instead, students should use the [Student Complaints and Resolution Procedure](#).
 - Research students who are experiencing difficult personal circumstances are advised to contact the relevant Faculty Graduate School in the first instance and to consult information on [PGR Change of Circumstances](#)
 - Groups of students - PEC requests are individual in nature and should not be used by groups of students wishing to obtain adjustments to assessments. These should be raised through the [Student Complaints and Resolution Procedure](#).
 - Students wishing to raise a concern about the outcome of an assessment should use the [Academic Queries and Appeals Procedure](#).

- A submission of up to 30 minutes late is permitted without penalty or the requirement to submit a PEC for remote timed assessment, for example, a 24/48 hour take-away paper. See the [Assessment, Feedback and Marking Policy](#).

Definition of personal extenuating circumstances (PEC)

7. Not all difficult or distressing events will be eligible for adjustment under the PEC Procedure. For an adjustment to be needed there must have been a **clear negative impact of the circumstances on the student's studies and assessment**. For example:
 - They were not able to submit assessed coursework by the original deadline
 - They were not able to attend an exam or practical activity
 - Circumstances impacted the level of performance in assessment through impact on preparation or on the day performance.
8. PEC requests are normally only approved where the circumstances meet **all** of the following criteria:
 - **Significant:** The circumstances must have had a more than trivial impact on their ability to study for or complete assessments.
 - **Unforeseen or unexpected:** They must be something unexpected that could not have been predicted and adjusted for.
 - **Unavoidable:** The circumstances must be outside of their control and there must have been no reasonable steps they could have taken to prevent them from occurring, for example, better time management.
 - **Relevant:** the impact of the circumstances must be related to the assessments for which they are seeking an adjustment. For example, they must have occurred at the same time as the assessments, or students must be able to demonstrate that they are still having a significant negative effect on them.

Types of adjustment

9. Possible adjustments are listed within the University Regulations, and are:
 - a) Extensions to coursework deadlines - normally up to 2 weeks, but in exceptional circumstances they can be longer.
 - b) Deferral of a formal examination or assessment attempt to the next normal occasion (normally the August assessment period).
 - c) Deferral of a formal examination or assessment attempt to a later normal occasion.
 - d) Exemptions from minor elements of assessed work - normally a maximum of 20% of the assessment for a module.
 - e) Extraordinary examinations outside of the regular assessment periods.

- f) Permission to repeat a Stage or specific modules with attendance.
 - g) Setting aside previous attempt(s) at a module, Stage or Semester and allowing repeat study with attendance if needed.
 - h) Allowing a student to proceed to the next Stage of a programme carrying fails
 - i) Request for support from the PEC Committee for 'Board of Examiners consideration'. Support will depend on the timing and severity of the circumstances affecting a student, and whether or not they have already been addressed by any of the above adjustments. This means that the Board of Examiners may allow a student to pass a Stage despite having failed a module, pass a module by discretion, or, if they are in Final Stage/end of Programme and their final average mark is within 3 marks of the borderline, consider whether to award a higher degree classification. **Board of Examiners' discretion cannot change individual marks.**
10. Due to the professional requirements of some programmes, not all the above adjustments will be available to the relevant PEC Committee. Any programme exemptions to the PEC Procedure will be clear to the programme cohort in the programme handbook or equivalent.

Using the Student Portal to submit a PEC or self-certification extension request

11. For most students requests are submitted through an online form, available via the [Student Portal](#) (for some programmes there are different [submission portals](#)).
12. The request will be logged, and the student will be sent an automated acknowledgement. The request will then either be actioned (for self-certification extension requests) or be sent to your Academic Unit (for PEC requests), where it will be reviewed and an appropriate outcome determined.
13. The student will be notified of the outcome of a PEC request via the Student Portal. This will confirm whether the PEC has been approved and, if so, details of the adjustment agreed.

Self-certification extension requests

14. Students can request an extension of up to 7 days through the self-certification extension request process. This process is intended to support students experiencing minor illnesses or short-term personal extenuating circumstances. Students do not need to provide a reason for their request or any supporting information. Self-certification extension requests can only be submitted **before the coursework deadline**.
15. Students are entitled to submit a self-certification extension request on **up to two occasions per academic year**. Each submitted self-certification extension request is for an individual assessment, which means that one request may not be used to cover multiple deadlines. If extensions for multiple items are needed students should follow the normal PEC request process.

16. Self-certification extension requests cannot be used to request adjustments to examinations, repeat attempts, deferrals or extraordinary assessments. They also cannot be used for final projects, dissertations or other equivalent assessments.
17. If a student requires further adjustments after the initial 7-day extension, or if they have already submitted two self-certification requests that academic year, they will need to submit a normal PEC request with supporting information.

PEC requests

18. All PECs that are not self-certification extension requests are considered through the formal PEC process. PEC decisions are made within each Academic Unit by a PEC Committee (or delegate) who will consider the request and any accompanying evidence to determine if an adjustment to assessment(s) is appropriate.
19. Where there are existing adjustments in place, for example, a previous extension to the deadline, or agreed adjustments made through a Student Support Plan a further PEC will normally not be accepted.

Timing of submitting a PEC

20. All PEC requests must be made as close as possible to the time the problems arose.
21. Requests for **extensions or exam deferrals** (adjustment types (a), (b) and (c) above) must be received **prior to the deadline/date of the exam** and will be rejected after this date.
22. Other adjustment types can be requested after the deadline or exam date but students must explain why the request for adjustment could not have been made earlier and they may be rejected if there is not a **credible and compelling reason for the delay**.
23. If a student has experienced significant personal circumstances that they have not been able to disclose, they will have a final opportunity at the end of Semester 2 (UG) or 3 (PGT) to submit a PEC request before the end of Stage or final results are considered by the Board of Examiners so that they can take it into account when considering the overall marks profile for the year/programme (type (i) 'Board of Examiner's consideration'). Academic units will communicate this final deadline.
24. Requests for Board of Examiner's consideration are unlikely to be supported by the PEC Committee unless there is a credible and compelling reason for the delay in requesting adjustments or where adjustments already received are demonstrated to have failed to fully mitigate the negative impact of the circumstances.
25. Once the final PEC deadline for an academic year has passed, the mechanism to allow personal extenuating circumstances to be considered is the [Academic Query and Academic Appeal Procedure](#).

Supporting information

26. All students are expected to explain what their personal extenuating circumstances are

and how they have impacted their studies and the specific assessment(s) for which adjustment(s) are requested. Students are also expected to provide independent supporting information in support of their PEC request where this is reasonably available.

27. Independent supporting information may include medical notes or supporting statements from the student's academic adviser or student wellbeing contact. Where the student has a Student Support Plan, and this is relevant to the request, this should be referenced but does not need to be provided. All supporting information must be relevant to the PEC request and should support the reasons for the request.
28. Supporting information should be provided in English. Where original documents are not written in English, it is the student's responsibility to provide an official translation of those documents. Translation by family members is not acceptable. Hardcopy documents can be supplied as image or PDFs but the original document must be available on request.
29. Where independent supporting information is not available, for example, in relation to a bereavement, students can submit a more detailed personal statement if needed in addition to information captured through the Student Portal form. Students should refer to [guidance on submitting a PEC](#).

Possible outcomes

30. If a PEC request is approved, an appropriate adjustment may be made to any assessment(s) which have been affected. The adjustment agreed by the PEC Committee may differ from that which was specifically requested, if the PEC Committee believes it is more appropriate to the circumstances.
31. On consideration of all the available information, the PEC Committee may decide not to support any adjustment or recommendation for Board of Examiners' discretion.
32. Adjustments made as a result of PEC applications, including support for consideration by the Board of Examiners, cannot result in a change of marks.

Appeals

33. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your PEC request, you have the right to submit a Level 1 Academic Query to your School within 14 calendar days of notification of the decision of the PEC Committee, in line with the [Academic Queries and Appeals Procedure](#). You can appeal a decision not to support any adjustment or where the adjustment offered is not the one requested.

Confidentiality

34. Information you provide within a PEC request and supporting information will be treated as confidential. Information will only be disclosed to parties if it is necessary to do so to process your request and in line with the [Student Privacy Notice](#).

35. If a student needs to report particularly sensitive circumstances, they can submit supporting information and/or their personal statement directly to the PEC Committee. A PEC request will still need to be submitted via the Student Portal noted as 'Strictly confidential – information submitted separately'. They can then submit their personal statement along with any relevant supporting information to the School office in a sealed envelope marked '*Strictly confidential – PEC evidence for the attention of the PEC Committee only.*'
36. Students should normally only include information in their request that is their own personal data. If they need to provide another person's personal data, for example, information about a parent's medical condition, they should include documentation of that person's consent as part of their supporting information.
37. In some circumstances, it may be necessary for the University to use personal data submitted under the PEC procedure in order to consider whether it is appropriate to begin other University procedures, such as the [Support to Study Procedure](#).
38. If the circumstances where information within a PEC request indicates that there is a clear and present danger to the student or someone else, colleagues in the Student Health and Wellbeing Service will be consulted and appropriate safeguarding measures may be taken.
39. Where disclosure of circumstances is required by law, the student will be notified of this disclosure in advance, wherever possible.

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Appendix 1: Glossary

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 a research degree; or a recommendation made by a Degree Programme Director for Unsatisfactory Progress cases.
Academic judgement	Judgement that is made about a matter, where the opinion of an academic expert is essential. Issues of academic judgement may not be formally challenged.
Adjustment	Appropriate adjustments may be approved by the PEC Committee to mitigate against any adverse effects of personal extenuating circumstances. Adjustments to assessments include extensions, deferrals, exemptions and Board of Examiners' discretion.
Board of Examiners' discretion	If no other adjustments are deemed appropriate, your circumstances may be considered for <u>discretion by the Board of Examiners</u> at the end of the year. This means that the Board of Examiners may allow you to pass a Stage despite having failed a module; allow you to pass a module by discretion; or, if you are in your Final Stage and your final mark is within 3 marks of the borderline, consider whether to award you a higher degree classification. Please note that Board of Examiners' Discretion will not result in your marks changing.
Deferral of assessment attempt:	A student may be allowed to defer a formal examination or assessment attempt to the next normal occasion of assessment (usually August). In rare circumstances, the student may be allowed to defer a formal assessment attempt to a later normal occasion. Unless the student is deferring a first attempt, the deferred assessment will be classed as a resit and their mark will be capped at the passing mark
Dependent/s	PECs can be submitted when you or your dependent/s experience any significant personal difficulties which may impact on your ability to study or complete your assessments. 'Dependent' in this case refers to a child or someone you provide care for.
Extension	On up to two occasions per year, students can self-certify a short illness or other minor life event and receive an extension of up to 7 days to the deadline of an assessment through the self-cert extension process. Requests for extensions of longer than 7 days should be accompanied by relevant independent documentation (for example, a medical certificate) through the main PEC request process.

PEC Committee	A named group appointed by the Board of Studies (or an individual with delegated responsibility) whose role is to consider the impact of the circumstances reported via the PEC system and decide on suitable immediate adjustments (where appropriate) or for considering whether to report their support to the Board of Examiners.
Repeat stage/Repeat semester as first attempt	A student may be allowed to repeat a stage or semester as if for the first time (subject to the payment of the appropriate tuition fees). Previous assessment attempts for the repeated stage or semester will be disregarded. Please note: International students will need to seek advice via the Visa Team as to whether they have the relevant immigration permission for repeat study. Please email visa@ncl.ac.uk.
Repeat modules/programme with attendance	A student may be allowed to retake a module, semester or stage with tuition (subject to the payment of the appropriate fees). The attempt will be classed as a resit and the mark will be capped at the passing mark. Please note: International students will need to seek advice via the Visa Team as to whether they have the relevant immigration permission for repeat study. Please email visa@ncl.ac.uk.
Self-certification/ Self-cert	On up to two occasions per academic year, you can submit a request for an extension to an assignment deadline without having to provide documentary evidence relating to your minor illness or circumstances. This is known as a 'self-cert extension' and will be accepted on trust without the need to submit any additional evidence. Self-cert extensions cannot result in any adjustment other than an extension of up to 7 days for assignment submission and cannot cover multiple assessments. If you need any adjustment other than a short extension to a deadline, you will need to submit a full PEC request and provide documentary evidence or a supporting statement.