PERSONAL EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES (PEC) PROCEDURE FOR STUDENTS

This procedure applies to all Personal Extenuating Circumstances applications submitted after the beginning of the 2011/12 academic year.

Definitions

**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 Unit:** The unit that manages the student’s programme. Normally this is a School, but occasionally a Faculty, Institute or other organisational unit applies.

**Examiners:** The Board of Examiners (or other authority within the Academic Unit) for an undergraduate or postgraduate taught programme, or appointed internal and external examiners for research degrees. 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:** A written application, generally completed by students, to the School to advise of personal extenuating circumstances that affect studies or assessment. The PEC Application is submitted BEFORE the Board of Examiners in order to enable adjustments at the time that problems occur or to allow Board of Examiners discretion.

**PEC Committee:** A small group appointed by the Board of Examiners. Prior to the full Board of Examiners PEC Committees will meet to consider recommendations for discretion. Throughout the year a delegated member of the PEC Committee will review PEC Applications as they arrive.

Scope of Procedure

1. This procedure is to be used only in relation to personal extenuating circumstances submitted by students. Challenges to the academic judgement of the examiners on an assessment outcome are not permitted under the PEC Procedure or any other procedure. A PEC application should be used before the Board of Examiners reaches its decision on a student’s results.
2. After the Board of Examiners has confirmed its decision on a student’s results, the Academic Appeal Procedure should be followed. 

   www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/student-resources/regulations/appeals.htm

3. The PEC procedure applies only to students on taught programmes of study. Research students are advised to consult their supervisor or Graduate School administration team.

4. Where possible, students considering submitting a PEC application should first consult their tutor or supervisor.

5. 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:
   - Student Complaints Procedure (see www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/student-resources/regulations/complaints.htm)
   - Dignity at Work and Study Code of Practice (see www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/student-resources/regulations/dignity.htm)
   - Guidelines for Research Students (see www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/staff-resources/pg-research/handbook.htm)
   - Student Guide (see www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/assets/documents/studentguide.pdf)
   - Public Interest Disclosure ‘Whistleblowing’ Policy (see www.ncl.ac.uk/hr/policy/conduct/documents/policy-conduct-public-interest-disclosure-whistleblowing_rjcb.pdf)

6. The University does not permit the same matter to be the subject of a PEC application and other procedures at the same time. The Student Progress Service should be consulted if there are concerns, by staff or students, about 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. PEC applications from groups of students are not permissible, but individual students may make reference to related PEC applications from other students if appropriate.

Confidentiality

7. The PEC application shall be treated in confidence and disclosed only to parties if it is necessary to progress the application or is otherwise required by law. In such a case, the applicant will be notified in advance of the disclosure.

Grounds

8. PEC applications can only be made on the following ground:
   (i) Personal extenuating circumstances affecting studies.
   (ii) Personal extenuating circumstances affecting assessment.

9. PEC claims made by the student should be supported by documentary evidence where appropriate.

10. Requests for adjustments that relate to the following, are not generally accepted as the basis of a PEC application:
    (i) Instances where an adjustment has already been made.
    (ii) Problems with computers, printers or other technology.

Personal Extenuating Circumstance (PEC) procedure – approved by UTLSEC July 2011
How to apply

11. Students are advised to consult their tutor about submitting a PEC application. Impartial advice on submitting a PEC application may be sought from a Student Progress Officer or Graduate School Administrator, the appropriate Officers of the Students’ Union, or from the Student Advice Centre (Students’ Union).

12. All PEC Applications must be submitted to the academic unit in accordance with the published arrangements in the academic unit.

13. A late PEC application shall only be accepted at the discretion of the PEC Committee if circumstances exist which make it reasonable for the student not to have applied within the normal timescales. Evidence of grounds of a late PEC application must be supplied by the student.

Procedure

14. The academic unit shall log receipt of the PEC application.

15. The application shall be submitted to the PEC Committee (or a designated member of that committee) as soon as possible. If appropriate, the PEC Committee may seek additional information from the applicant or relevant staff. The PEC Committee will review the case and determine an appropriate outcome.

16. Normally, the academic unit will notify the student of the outcome of the PEC application. However, applications received as part of a pre-Board of Examiners call will not generally receive individual feedback.

Outcome

17. The PEC Committee is authorised to approve a number of adjustments in accordance with University procedures. These are:

   a) Extensions within and beyond those permitted as part of the Late Submission of Assessed Work policy;

   b) Exemptions from minor elements of assessed work (maximum of 20% of the module in question);

   c) Deferral of a formal examination or assessment attempt to the next normal occasion;

   d) Extraordinary examinations outside of the regular assessment periods

   e) Setting aside previous attempt(s) at a module, Stage or Semester and allowing repeat tuition if required.

   And

   f) to provide boards of examiners with an assessment of the scope and severity of mitigating circumstances affecting a student, which have not been addressed by a-e above (i.e. to recommend the use of discretion)

18. Other outcomes may also be considered. This includes referral to specialist services within the University or, on occasion, consultation with the relevant Dean. The PEC Committee may also decline to support any adjustment or to recommend for Board of Examiners discretion.
Appeals against PEC Committee Decisions

19. If the Board of Examiners has not yet reached a final decision on the student’s case for that academic year, the student can either:

   (i) Submit a new PEC application with additional evidence to the academic unit, or

   (ii) Seek a review of the original PEC application by submitting an Academic Appeal, including a full copy of the PEC application and outcome correspondence.

If the Board of Examiners has reached a decision on the student’s case, the student should follow the Academic Appeal procedure. www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/student-resources/regulations/appeals.htm

20. An academic appeal shall be lodged with the Head of the Student Progress Service, King’s Gate, Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 7RU or e-mail to casework@ncl.ac.uk within 21 calendar days of the original publication of the examination results of the appellant or within 21 calendar days of notification of any other relevant decision.