

Guidance for Submission of Personal Extenuating Circumstances



Students who believe that their study or ability to complete assessments is being adversely affected by unforeseen and unavoidable personal extenuating circumstances should advise their School by completing the on-line PEC form, available via the student's Self Service Portal (S3P), so that appropriate adjustments can be made. Students are advised to carefully read the notes below before submitting a PEC application. (Link to S3P - <https://s3p.ncl.ac.uk/login/index.aspx>).

1. Students are expected to progress their studies, and complete all assessed work, in line with their peers on modules and programmes. This ensures fairness to all students as, for example, all students are given the same time to complete assessments.

Variations to the normal 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 etc. Rules are not entirely prescriptive and each case is taken on its merits.

2. The PEC form enables the School to consider the 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)

And, for all students **except those starting or restarting undergraduate stage 1 programmes during the 2018/19 Academic Year**, where there is a positive assessment of the impact of medical or other mitigating circumstances by the Personal Extenuating Circumstances Committee (Conventions 13 and 14).

- recommending discretion at the Board of Examiners – e.g. potentially allowing you to pass the stage despite having failed a core module; allowing you to pass a module by discretion; altering your degree classification.

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

PEC adjustments aim to allow a student to continue on their programme of study. 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.

3. It is the student's responsibility to report any significant personal or extenuating circumstances that had a substantial impact on their performance in their studies or in their assessments/examinations

PEC Forms must be submitted to the Academic Unit, 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.

4. The PEC form must be fully completed and supported by documentary evidence. The form should 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.
 - The student is required to be precise about how their 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 listed and include details about what assessments were affected – e.g. 2nd essay, exam for module X, lab report for module X.
 - Additional statements/documents may be submitted with the PEC form, if necessary. 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.

Example of a complete PEC Form can be found here

<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/Regulations/Procedures/change/PEC.htm>

5. 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.
 - (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, particularly due to poor time management.
6. It is very rare for a case to be approved without some form of independent evidence. Therefore it is important to submit documentary evidence which provides independent corroboration of the circumstances to support the request.
7. If a student has a **disability or long term illness** that requires adjustments, they should have approached the Student Wellbeing Service. Adjustments may have been made throughout the student's studies – e.g. provision of scribes, extra time in examinations etc. The University would not therefore expect to receive a PEC in respect of their disability/long term illness unless there has been some particular change in the

student's condition or additional problems have arisen – it is for the student to demonstrate that and to provide the appropriate evidence.

8. If a student has a **temporary disability**, that requires a short-term adjustment for the examination period, they 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 a claim is made that it has affected revision/studying, which would require additional evidence to be submitted. <http://forms.ncl.ac.uk/view.php?id=10386>
9. If the School receives an unusually high number of PEC applications from a student this could be an indicator that the student is experiencing difficulties which should be addressed under the Support to Study Procedure. The School may therefore instigate this process if it feels it necessary. <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/Regulations/Procedures/f2s.htm>
10. The student is asked to suggest what adjustment they feel is appropriate to their circumstances; however the PEC Committee will make the final decision. This means, for example, that the student may find that they are given a one week extension, despite asking for three weeks.
11. 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.
12. **EVIDENCE should be provided with the form, attached electronically as part of the on-line submission.** It is the student's responsibility to provide evidence to back up their request. Evidence should outline the problems faced and the period of impact – e.g. doctor's notes, 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, a student must submit a new PEC form together with the newly received evidence.

Students must avoid disclosing personal data of another person/s in their complaint unless they have been given permission by them to do so, and the consent of that person is also submitted with the students PEC request.

The following important points about evidence should be noted:

- Students 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.
- 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 the student is specific by providing information such as their relationship to the deceased, the timing of the death (e.g. just before examinations), how much study time was lost (e.g. travelling to join family and/or attend the funeral), the location of the funeral etc. In addition, students are advised to obtain independent evidence such as; a supporting statement from a tutor or other member of staff, to help the committee understand the impact on studies. A relative may also wish to provide a letter of support and a student may, include a copy of a death certificate or other notice of bereavement, if available.
- Students 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

13. If students want to apply for an **extension**, they **MUST** submit a PEC form as soon as possible and **BEFORE** the advertised submission date. Please note this is subject to the University's Submission of Assessed Work Policy which can be found via the following www.ncl.ac.uk/quilt/atoz/policies.htm.
- It is a student's responsibility to ensure that work is submitted on time. Students are advised to ensure that work is submitted (or at least ready to be submitted) **BEFORE** the deadline. Last minute problems e.g. with buses or printers – 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 appropriate documentary evidence.
 - It is only via 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.
14. Students are strongly encouraged to discuss significant personal circumstances with their 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 students may submit a PEC application indicating that their case is highly confidential. Student would need to submit an outline of the confidential circumstances together with the relevant evidence in a sealed envelope marked '*Strictly confidential – PEC evidence for the attention of the PEC Committee only*'.
15. The School which manages the programme of study will receive and log all PEC applications and the outcome for those students.
16. No detailed **feedback** on any PEC application is given. However, Schools will inform students promptly of any adjustment that has been approved, or any application that is unsuccessful. Until such a confirmation is received, the student must continue to attend classes and submit work as required.
- However, no individual feedback is provided in relation to the rating submission that the PEC Committee recommends to the Board of Examiners.
17. The Board of Examiners and its PEC Committee may only operate within **University Regulations**. Key documents are:
- University Regulations, particularly examination conventions – www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/docs/
 - The University Submission of Assessed Work Policy – www.ncl.ac.uk/quilt/atoz/policies.htm
 - The Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) Policy & Procedures
<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/Regulations/Procedures/change/PEC.htm>
 - Programme specific guidance on PEC submission (for medicine and dentistry students)
18. In accordance with Data Protection Legislation and University procedures, a 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 – will be disclosed to the wider Board of Examiners. Summary information may also be made available to the Board of Examiners or other staff.
19. It is possible to appeal against a PEC decision. To do so, the student must follow the Academic Queries

& Appeals Procedure (www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/Regulations/SPS/appeals.htm) initially for level 1, **within 14 calendar days** of the PEC decision.

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