

# Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) Policy

Effective from 1 September 2024

## 1. Purpose

This Policy and [the accompanying Procedure](#) sets out how [Personal Extenuating Circumstances \(PEC\)](#) applications submitted by students are managed by the University.

In order to be considered for an adjustment under the PEC Policy, your difficulties must meet all of the following criteria:

- **Significant**  
The circumstances must have had a significant adverse impact on your studies;
- **Unforeseen**  
You must normally have had no prior knowledge that the circumstances would occur;
- **Unavoidable**  
The circumstances must be outside of your control and there must have been no reasonable steps you could have taken to prevent them from occurring;
- **Relevant**  
You must be able to link the adverse effects of the circumstances to the assessments for which you are seeking an adjustment (for example, they must have occurred at the same time as your assessments, or you must be able to demonstrate that they are still having a significant negative effect on you);
- **Documented**  
Apart from self-certification PECs, you should normally be able to provide independent documentation of your difficult personal circumstances. Where documentation is not available, you must provide a written statement explaining the difficulties you are experiencing and their effect on your ability to prepare for or complete assessments.

Your School will consider the PEC and decide whether an adjustment should be made to your assessment(s) to mitigate against your individual circumstances.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All students on taught programmes of study, including taught elements of research degrees and Research Masters (i.e. MRes, MMus, MLitt, LLM, regardless of location of study);
- All PEC requests for additional adjustment consideration submitted during the 2024/25 academic year or later.

This policy **should not** be used by:

- **Research students.** If you are a research student, apart from taught modules you are advised to consult your supervisory team or relevant Graduate School in the first

instance. Information regarding possible adjustments to research degree programmes can be found on the [PGR Change of Circumstances webpage](#);

- **Students wishing to challenge the academic judgement of examiners or the outcome of any assessment.** Challenges to academic judgement are not permitted under any University procedure;
- **Groups of students wishing to seek adjustments.** PEC applications are individual in nature, therefore requests for adjustments by groups of students are not permitted under the PEC process.

### 3. Policy

#### 3.1. Grounds

A PEC may be submitted if you are experiencing any significant personal and extenuating circumstances which are affecting your ability to study. Not all difficult or challenging circumstances require adjustments to be made to your assessments, and PECs are generally only approved for circumstances which meet **all** of the following criteria:

- The circumstances are having a negative impact on your ability to study for or complete assessments;
- The circumstances were unforeseen or unexpected;
- The circumstances were unavoidable (in other words, there are no reasonable steps you can have taken to prevent the circumstances from arising, such as better time-management); and
- The timing of the circumstances has meant that there has been a direct impact on your ability to complete or prepare for assessments.

You should not normally have already been granted any other adjustment to mitigate against your particular circumstance (for example, a previous extension to the deadline, or reasonable adjustments made through a Student Support Plan).

Your PEC requests should normally be submitted **prior** to the submission or assessment deadline or by the Academic Unit/School's published deadline for considering your programme of study's PEC Committee (PECC) or Board of Examiners (BoE). Requests for adjustments made retrospectively are not normally accepted and will only be considered where there is a credible and compelling reason for the delay.

Where your PEC relates to a remote timed assessment (for example, a 24/48 hour take-away paper), a submission of up to 30 minutes late is permitted **without penalty or the requirement to submit a PEC**, due to the challenge of remote assessment/IT difficulties.

#### 3.2. Self-certification

You may submit a self-certification PEC on up to two occasions per academic year. Each submitted self-certification PEC is for an individual assessment, which means that one request **may not** be used to cover multiple deadlines.

Self-certification PECs are intended for minor illnesses or circumstances and you do not need to provide accompanying evidence, although the reason for the request needs to be given on the request form.

The only adjustment that can result from a self-certification PEC is a short extension (of up to 7 calendar days) to an assessment deadline. Self-certification PECs cannot be used for adjustment requests to examinations, repeat attempts, deferrals or extraordinary assessments. If you require any additional adjustments after the initial 7 day extension, or if you have already submitted two self-certification requests throughout the academic year and require further adjustments, you will need to submit a full PEC request with accompanying documentation and your request will be considered by your Academic Unit.

### 3.3 Documentation

Any PEC request, including those for self-certification, should include details of the difficult personal circumstances you are experiencing. You should explain precisely how you believe you have been adversely affected by your circumstances and the specific assessment(s) that may have been impacted.

Where appropriate, your PEC application should be supported by independent documentation (except where submitting a self-certification PEC, as outlined in 4.3 below). Documentation will be specific to the reported circumstances and relevant to the PEC submission, but may include medical notes or reports from your personal tutor. Where independent documentation is not available or appropriate (for example, in cases of bereavement), an accompanying personal statement is both possible and acceptable. Please see [Appendix 2 of the Personal Extenuating Circumstances Procedure](#) for information on what to include in a supporting statement.

All independent documentation should be provided in English. Where original documents are not written in English, it is your responsibility to provide an official translation of those documents. An official translation is a translation **not** provided by you or a family member.

You may submit copies of documents as your evidence; however, you should be able to provide original documents upon request.

### 3.4 Adjustments

Possible adjustments are listed within the University Regulations, and are:

- Extensions within and beyond those permitted as part of the Submission of Work policy;
- Exemptions from minor elements of assessed work (normally a maximum of 20% of the module in question);
- Deferral of a formal examination or assessment attempt to the next normal occasion (generally August);
- Deferral of a formal examination or assessment attempt to a later normal occasion;
- Extraordinary examinations outside of the regular assessment periods;
- Permission to repeat tuition in residence;

- Setting aside previous attempt(s) of a module, Stage or Semester and allowing repeat tuition if required;
- Allowing a student to proceed to the next Stage of a programme carrying fails;
- The PEC Committee can provide Boards of Examiners with a recommendation of support/no-support for consideration of a Board's discretion, depending on the timing and severity of the mitigating circumstances affecting a student, which have not been addressed by any of the above adjustments.

Due to the professional requirements of some programmes, not all the above adjustments will be available to the PEC Committee. Any programme exemptions to the PEC Policy will be clear to the programme cohort in the programme handbook or equivalent.

For an explanation of these adjustments, please see **Appendix 1** of the [Personal Extenuating Circumstances Procedure](#).

### 3.5. Confidentiality and data sharing

Through the implementation of the PEC Policy and Procedure, the University recognises that it will receive personal and sensitive data. The University will process and share such data with relevant University employees for the legitimate business purposes of processing your PEC application, in line with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

Information you provide within your PEC and accompanying documentation will be treated as confidential and details will be disclosed only to parties if it is necessary to do so in order to process your application. However, if the circumstances you report are particularly sensitive, you may wish to submit accompanying documentation directly to the PEC Committee, rather than via your School. In such cases, you should [submit your PEC form as normal via the Student Portal](#) and indicate on your form that your case is highly confidential. You should then submit an outline of the confidential circumstances, together with relevant documentary evidence, to your School office in a sealed envelope marked '**Strictly confidential – PEC evidence for the attention of the PEC Committee only.**'

You should avoid providing details relating to another person's personal data in your submission unless you are able to provide their consent to share their data alongside your PEC request.

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 invoke other University procedures, such as the [Support to Study Procedure](#). The University may access this information without your explicit consent in situations where a legitimate concern has been raised about your wellbeing and it is deemed necessary in order to assess the risk to you or to others. PEC documentation submitted during the course of your studies may be included for consideration by Support to Study panels.

If the circumstances you report within your PEC request indicate that there is a clear and present danger to you or someone else, colleagues in the Student Health and Wellbeing Service will be consulted and appropriate safeguarding measures may be taken.

Where disclosure of your circumstances is required by law, you will be notified of this disclosure in advance, wherever possible.

### 3.6. Appeals

You have the right to appeal any decision made by the PEC Committee via the [Academic Queries and Appeals Procedure](#).

To submit a Level 1 Academic Query, you should write to the Chair of the PEC Committee, via your School, **within 14 days** of you being notified of the decision against which you wish to appeal. You should clearly outline your reasons for appeal.

If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of your Level 1 Academic Query, you may submit a formal Academic Appeal to [casework@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:casework@ncl.ac.uk) **within 21 days** of your Level 1 outcome or after the Board of Examiners has considered your overall profile of marks and made a progress or award decision.

### 3.7. Relevant documents

#### [PEC Submission Guidance FAQs](#)

This guidance document provides answers to frequently asked questions regarding the PEC process.

#### [Support to Study Procedure](#)

If you have submitted multiple PECs, your School may refer your circumstances to be considered under the Support to Study Procedure. This is particularly likely if your PECs relate to similar or significant concerns. The Support to Study Procedure can provide additional support and adjustments without the need to submit multiple PECs.

#### [Academic Queries and Appeals Procedure](#)

Appeals against PEC Committee decisions should be submitted via the Academic Queries and Appeals procedure. If you wish to be considered for a retrospective adjustment as a result of personal extenuating circumstances, this can also be requested via the Academic Queries and Appeals procedure.

#### [Policy on Assessment and Feedback](#)

University policies and procedures around assessments, marking and feedback.