

# Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) Procedure

Effective from 1 September 2023

This PEC procedure is applicable to **all taught students** and should be read in conjunction with the [Personal Extenuating Circumstances \(PEC\) Policy](#). It sets out the types of difficulties that may be classed as Personal Extenuating Circumstances, how a student can apply for an adjustment to mitigate against the adverse effects of their personal circumstances, and the types of adjustments that may be applied.

Issues relating to alleged inadequacy of teaching or supervision will not be considered under this procedure. Instead, you should use the [Student Complaints and Resolution Procedure](#).

This procedure should not be used to challenge the academic judgement of examiners or the outcome of any assessment. Challenges to academic judgement are not permitted under any University procedure.

Research students who are experiencing personal extenuating circumstances are advised to contact their supervisor or Graduate School in the first instance, and to consider the adjustments that can be made to research degree programmes on [the PGR Change of Circumstances webpage](#).

Please see [Appendix 1](#) for a list of terminology and definitions which you may find useful while reading this document.

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## INTRODUCTION

Newcastle University expects students to complete all assessed work in line with their peers on modules and programmes, including by adhering to scheduled deadlines. However, we recognise that sometimes you may experience unforeseen, unavoidable and difficult personal circumstances which can affect your ability to study and complete assessments.

Circumstances which may be considered under this procedure include:

- Bereavements;
- Jury service;
- New periods of ill health, or a worsening of an ongoing illness of disability;
- Disruption that has resulted in you not receiving the necessary teaching or support for your assessments;
- Any other significant personal difficulties (experienced by you or any dependents) that are outside of your control and which may impact on your ability to study or complete assessments.

The PEC procedure allows you to formally let your School know of any circumstances which may be adversely impacting your ability to study, and to request an adjustment to be made to your assessments to mitigate against your individual circumstances.

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## SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

We understand that facing difficult personal circumstances can be stressful. You may find it helpful to seek support and advice via the following routes:

- **The University's Counselling Service**  
Email: [sws.therapyappointments@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:sws.therapyappointments@newcastle.ac.uk)
- **Disability support**  
Including long term mental health, specific learning difficulties and autism spectrum conditions: email [disabilityadvisor@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:disabilityadvisor@newcastle.ac.uk)
- **[The Student Financial Support Team](#)**
- **Postgraduate Support**  
Telephone: 0800 030 5182
- **[TalkCampus](#)**  
24/7 peer support network where you can talk to other students from around the world if you are concerned about your mental health)
- **[iNCLude](#)**  
Free self-help app that can help you take small steps to improve and maintain your wellbeing)
- **[Silvercloud](#)**  
Online Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to help you develop techniques to manage stress and anxiety

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## PERSONAL EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES (PEC) PROCEDURE

If you are experiencing unforeseen and unavoidable difficult personal circumstances, where possible you should seek advice and guidance from your personal tutor or supervisor in the first instance.

Not all difficult or distressing events will be considered as Personal Extenuating Circumstances, since there must be a **demonstrable adverse effect on your academic performance**. For example:

- You are unable to submit assessed coursework by a deadline, or attend a scheduled examination or practical activity;
- You believe that your personal circumstances may result in you underperforming either during – or in preparation for – an assessment.

Please see **3.1: Grounds** above for a list of events or circumstances that will not generally be considered under this procedure.

## PEC submission

*For step-by-step instructions for submitting a PEC, please see this [video guide](#). You may also find it useful to consult [Fig. 1: Quick Guide to PECs](#).*

All PEC submissions must be made as close as possible to the time your problems arose. Where the adjustment you are seeking is an extension, your request should normally be submitted no later than the original deadline.

If you need to submit a PEC to request appropriate adjustments, you should fill in the online PEC form, available via the [Self Service Portal \(S3P\)](#). You should complete the form fully for any PEC request you make, including for self-certification PECs, and provide clear details of the dates you were affected, how long your difficulties lasted, and which specific assessments/examinations you feel may have been adversely impacted.

If you have experienced significant personal circumstances that you have not been able to disclose prior to your assessments, you will have a final opportunity to submit a PEC to your School before your results are considered by the Board of Examiners so that they can take it into account when considering your overall marks profile for the year. Your School will inform you of the date of the final PEC Committee and the deadline for PEC submissions to be considered at it. However, it should be noted that where you have already received adjustments for the specific circumstances, the PEC Committee may not support your application to receive further adjustment/discretion for the same issue.

Where available, you should provide independent documentary evidence alongside your PEC form. Documentary evidence may include medical notes and supporting statements from your personal tutor. Accompanying evidence must be relevant to your PEC submission and should detail all the important points you would like the PEC Committee to consider. Where independent evidence is not available to you (for example, if you have experienced a bereavement), you may submit a personal statement to outline your circumstances. Guidance for composing a personal statement can be found in [Appendix 2](#).

Your PEC application will be logged and you will be sent an automated acknowledgement. The application will then be sent to your Academic Unit, where your case will be reviewed and an appropriate outcome determined.

You will be notified of the outcome of your PEC application by your Academic Unit via S3P. They will confirm whether your PEC has been approved and, if so, details of the adjustment agreed.

## Possible outcomes

If your PEC submission is approved, an appropriate adjustment may be made to any assessments which have been affected. The adjustment agreed by the PEC Committee may differ from that which was specifically requested if the PEC Committee believe it is more appropriate to your circumstances.

Due to the professional requirements of some programmes there may be different Personal Extenuating Circumstances rules which will be made clear to the programme cohort in the

programme handbook or equivalent. If in any doubt, please speak to your Personal Tutor in the first instance

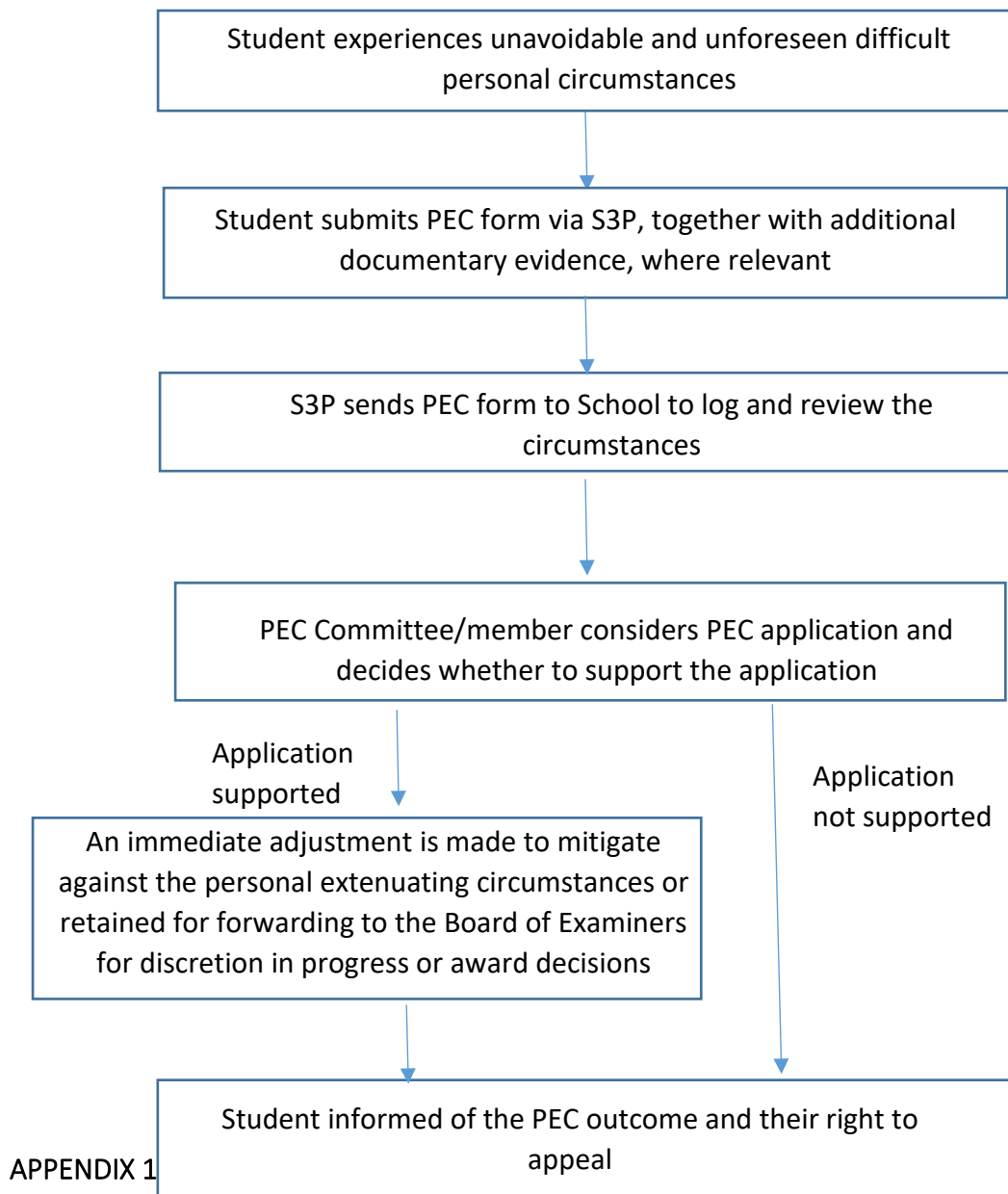
The PEC Committee on consideration of all the available information, may decide not to support any adjustment or recommendation for Board of Examiners discretion.

Adjustments made as a result of PEC applications, including support for discretion by the Board of Examiners, will **not** result in a change of marks.

## Appeals

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your PEC application, 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](#).

Fig. 1: Quick Guide to PECs



APPENDIX 1

**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 [discretion by the Board of Examiners](#) 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 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:** Students can self-certify a short illness or other minor life event and, if approved, this may result in an extension of up to 7 days to the deadline of an assessment (*see 3.4. Self-certification in the PEC Policy*). Requests for extensions of longer than 7 days should be accompanied by relevant independent documentary evidence (for example, a medical certificate).

**PEC Committee:** A named group appointed by the Board of Studies whose role is to consider the impact of the circumstances reported via the PEC 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](mailto: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](mailto:visa@ncl.ac.uk).*

**Self-Certification/Self-Cert:** On up to two occasions per semester (up to a maximum of four times per academic year), you can submit a PEC to request 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' PEC and will be accepted on trust, although you do need to outline the reason and timelines you have been affected by your personal circumstance. Self-cert PECs cannot result in any adjustment other than an extension of up to 7 days for an assignment submission and cannot cover multiple assessments.

## **APPENDIX 2: Guidance for composing a supporting statement**

While we would always encourage you to provide independent documentary evidence of your difficult circumstances, we understand that sometimes this is difficult or not possible. In these instances, we would encourage you to provide a supporting statement alongside your completed PEC form.

Your statement should include:

- Your name and student number;
- Details of your personal extenuating circumstances (i.e. what has happened?);
- The dates you have been affected (i.e. when did it happen? How long did it last?);
- The specific impact on your studies (i.e. Were you unable to revise/complete your assessment/s? Do you feel you have not been able to concentrate fully on your studies?);
- The timing of the difficult circumstances in relation to your assessment/s (for example, if you experienced a bereavement shortly before an examination or you lost study time because you were required to attend a funeral);
- The specific assessment/s you feel may have been affected by your difficult circumstances;
- A suggestion of what adjustment you feel may be appropriate for your circumstances (for example, an extension to a deadline, deferral of assessments to the next normal examination period – please note that although the PEC Committee will consider your suggestion, they may not necessarily grant you the adjustment you request).

Where possible, it is helpful if you can also provide any additional evidence you may have, such as a supporting statement from your personal tutor.