

Nottingham Trent University

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## **Quality Handbook**

### **Part E: Regulations**

#### **Section 17A: Notification of Extenuating Circumstances policy**

## Contents

1.	Introduction.....	2
2.	Principles .....	2
3.	Scope .....	3
4.	Definition of extenuating circumstances .....	4
5.	Deciding whether to undertake assessment .....	5
6.	Notification of extenuating circumstances process .....	5
7.	Outcomes.....	6
8.	The role of the Notification of Extenuating Circumstances Contact .....	7
9.	The role of the Notification of Extenuating Circumstances Panel .....	9
10.	The role of the Board of Examiners.....	9
11.	Evidence for notification of extenuating circumstances.....	10
12.	Appendix one: Examples of appropriate evidence for notification of extenuating circumstances .....	12
13.	Appendix two: Examples of circumstances which are not eligible for notification of extenuating circumstances .....	13

## 1. Introduction

**The University recognises that on occasion a student's academic engagement or performance may be affected by illness or other unexpected events that are beyond their control. The University also recognises that students with an Access Statement may have recommended reasonable adjustments in place related to assessment.**

**The Notification of Extenuating Circumstances policy is designed to provide students with a fair opportunity to show they can meet the academic standards of the course and to be able to seek advice and guidance where they have been impacted by circumstances beyond their control.**

## Requirements

- 1.1 The Notification of Extenuating Circumstances policy is one of several policies and processes designed to support students who encounter barriers to engagement and academic performance. These include:
  - a. Access Statements;
  - b. Variation to Study Rate;
  - c. Break in Study;
  - d. Support to Study;
  - e. Request for Reconsideration; and
  - f. Academic Appeal.
- 1.2 Students who are encountering difficulties should seek guidance and support from their School and, as appropriate, from Student Support Services.
- 1.3 The Notification of Extenuating Circumstances policy applies to all forms of assessment.

## 2. Principles

**This policy is designed to ensure that all students are treated fairly**

## Requirements

- 2.1 Principles of fairness include:

- a. avoiding potential bias by ensuring independent consideration at each stage of the process;
  - b. giving reasons for actions and decisions made by the University;
  - c. operating reasonable timescales for submissions to, and responses from, the University.
- 2.2 The University will ensure that students with protected characteristics, as defined under the Equality Act 2010, are treated fairly and without discrimination.
- 2.3 Information provided by students under this policy will be treated confidentially and will only be shared with those who need it for the purpose of progressing a request or providing support.
- 2.4 The Board of Examiners will be able to review the profile of notification of extenuating circumstances submissions made by the student during the current and/or previous academic year.
- 2.5 Where a notification of extenuating circumstances involves multiple issues which do not fall neatly into the categories in this policy, e.g. because it also covers issues that fall within the remit of a complaint, these matters may be considered together.
- 2.6 Fraudulent or malicious use of this policy will be considered to be academic misconduct and will be referred to the Academic Integrity Policy as set out in Quality Handbook Section 17C.

### 3. Scope

**The Notification of Extenuating Circumstances policy can be used by all Nottingham Trent University students with the exception of those named in the explanatory notes below.**

### Requirements

- 3.1 This policy applies to:
  - a. All students currently enrolled with the University, including on part-time and distance learning courses, on an apprenticeship route and at a School-Based collaborative partner; except research degree students, for whom a separate policy applies.
  - b. Students on a break in study or on a placement.

#### Explanatory notes

- Research degree students are subject to Quality Handbook Sections 11 and 17F.

- Students studying at a School-Based collaborative partner should submit notifications of extenuating circumstances to the University via the partner.
- Students studying at a Validated Centre should use the partner's own policy.

- 3.2 **Requests by a Third Party on behalf of a student.** Students are encouraged to use this policy personally. The University will only accept a notification of extenuating circumstances from a Students' Union representative, a parent/guardian or other third party if the student provides written authority for them to do so. Where consent is provided to, and accepted by, the University, all communications relating to this process will still be copied to the student to ensure they are kept informed. The University reserves the right not to engage with a third party if, in our view, they do not behave in an acceptable manner.
- 3.3 If a notification of extenuating circumstances is made by a student who is under the age of 18, the University will notify their parent or guardian in writing and keep them informed of progress. The University will only permit the parent or guardian to act on the student's behalf with prior written consent.
- 3.4 Students with an Access Statement should use this policy to request additional time to complete assessments even where the reason for the additional consideration request is related to a disability / long term health condition stated in their Access Statement and additional time for assessments have been recommended as a reasonable adjustment.

## 4. Definition of extenuating circumstances

**The University uses a shared definition of extenuating circumstances to ensure fair and consistent application, whilst recognising that the specifics of each case need to be considered to support students effectively**

### Requirements

- 4.1 The University considers that additional consideration may be required where a student is affected by circumstances which:
- a. affect their ability to attempt one, or more, assessment;
  - b. cannot be avoided;
  - c. can be corroborated by independent evidence, where required; and
  - d. occurred before or during the assessment event/deadline.
- 4.2 Some students may have circumstances that have a prolonged and/or fluctuating impact on their performance. For some, it may be appropriate for these needs to be managed through an Access Statement that apply over a longer timescale or discussed through the Support to Study policy.

## 5. Deciding whether to undertake assessment

**Students are ultimately responsible for determining whether their performance is likely to be affected by circumstances beyond their control.**

- 5.1 Students need to make a judgement, supported by appropriate University colleagues, about whether or not to attempt an assessment where they are affected by circumstances beyond their control.
- 5.2 A student should not assume that a notification of extenuating circumstances will be upheld and should seek advice to support their decision making about whether to attempt an assessment.
- 5.3 If a student decides to attempt an assessment before receiving the outcome of a notification of extenuating circumstances they accept that:
  - a. they are considered by the University to be fit to undertake the assessment;
  - b. the work will be graded; and
  - c. their performance will be judged on its merits.
- 5.4 A student cannot submit a notification of extenuating circumstances after they have submitted coursework or completed an examination or other timed assessment.

## 6. Notification of extenuating circumstances process

**Notification of extenuating circumstances is used to mitigate against longer-term illness or other circumstance.**

### Requirements

- 6.1 Where a student's academic performance is impacted by illness or other circumstances, or due to reasons detailed in their Access Statement, which are likely to have impacted their ability to complete one or more assessments they can submit a notification of extenuating circumstances. This applies to all assessments. A notification of extenuating circumstances can be submitted at any time during the academic year.
- 6.2 A notification of extenuating circumstances for coursework must be submitted via the [NEC portal](#) as soon as practically possible **before** or within **seven calendar days** of the submission date.
- 6.3 A notification of extenuating circumstances for examinations, presentations or other assessments under timed/controlled conditions must be submitted via the [portal](#) **before** the assessment event. Once a timed assessment has commenced the Request for Reconsideration process must be used upon receiving online results.

- 6.4 Notifications of extenuating circumstances submitted more than **seven calendar days** after the assessment event/submission deadline will not be considered unless the student is able to demonstrate, with evidence, why they were unable to submit within the normal timescales, for example hospitalisation. Such requests should still be submitted via the portal.
- 6.5 A student may only request two notifications of extenuating circumstances for the same assessment. Where a student submits multiple notifications for one or more assessment this may indicate a need for the Support to Study policy to be used.
- 6.6 Notification of extenuating circumstances must be supported by evidence (see section 11). A lack of supporting evidence at the point of submission may lead to delays or the submission being not upheld. For students with an Access Statement, the statement itself can be used as evidence.
- 6.7 Appendix two sets out circumstances that would not be considered eligible for a notification of extenuating circumstances.
- 6.8 Notification of extenuating circumstances are considered by the Notification of Extenuating Circumstances Contact.
- 6.9 Where a student discloses circumstances after the relevant Board of Examiners meeting this will be considered through the University's Academic Appeals Policy and Process (Quality Handbook Section 17B). In these circumstances the student should submit a Request for Reconsideration.
- 6.10 Assessment submitted after the original deadline/assessment event without notification of extenuating circumstances will be subject to the late submission policy as set out in the Common Assessment Regulations (Quality Handbook Sections 16A-C).
- 6.11 The notification of extenuating circumstances process is not intended to act as a request for additional adjustments to be put in place for examinations and other assessments. Where a student needs such adjustments, they should consult with [Student Support Services](#).
- 6.12 Where a group of students are impacted, for example, by disruption to examination due to a fire alarm, disruption in or outside the exam room, or problems with an exam paper, they would not normally be expected to submit a notification of extenuating circumstances. Such incidents are dealt with by the University and the outcome communicated to all impacted students.

## 7. Outcomes

**It is not the policy of the University to adjust grades or degree classifications where a student submits a notification of extenuating circumstances, but to provide circumstances in which a student can demonstrate their academic ability unhindered**

## Requirements

- 7.1 There are three possible outcomes of a notification of extenuating circumstances: upheld, partially upheld or not upheld.
  - 7.2 Where a notification of extenuating circumstances is upheld, the University will take one of the following actions:
    - a. provide an extension of up to either **seven or 14 calendar days**.
    - b. allow the student to be assessed at the next available opportunity. The School decides what constitutes the next available assessment opportunity and the decision to offer a student next opportunity attempt is ratified by the Board of Examiners.
    - c. provide the student with the opportunity to vary their rate of study or take a break in study, as defined in Quality Handbook Supplements 2A and 2B.
  - 7.3 A maximum of two extensions may be granted for a single assessment. Each extension requires a separate notification of extenuating circumstances to be submitted.
  - 7.4 A partially upheld outcome may be given where a student has submitted notification of extenuating circumstances for multiple assessments but the request can only be upheld for some but not all of these.
  - 7.5 Where a notification of extenuating circumstances is not upheld and the student has not completed the assessment, the late and non-submission policy in the Common Assessment Regulations applies.
  - 7.6 Where the student is undertaking a course or module which is jointly delivered by more than one School, a lead School is identified which then makes the decision about what constitutes the next assessment opportunity. The partner School must be informed of the decision.
- ## 8. The role of the Notification of Extenuating Circumstances Contact

**The role of the Notification of Extenuating Circumstances Contact is to support student decision making around notification of extenuating circumstances and to consider submissions on behalf of the School.**

## Requirements

- 8.1 Once a student has submitted a notification of extenuating circumstances along with supporting evidence, the request will be considered by the Notification of Extenuating Circumstances Contact (NECC) or their nominee. The NECC may deem it necessary to request additional evidence, have a discussion with the student, or to undertake an investigation.

- 8.2 Having reviewed the notification of extenuating circumstances, the NECC or their nominee will determine the outcome in line with paragraph 7.2 above, and take action in accordance with the following paragraphs. In considering the notification of extenuating circumstances the NECC or their nominee should take into account:
- a. the nature of the circumstances and likely duration of the impact;
  - b. the extent of any missed learning;
  - c. the impact of extensions on future assessments;
  - d. implications for progression or graduation;
  - e. the final deadline for coursework to be submitted for consideration at the Board of Examiners.
- 8.3 The **School Administration Team** will notify the student and the Notification of Extenuating Circumstances Panel (where applicable) of the outcome within **seven calendar days** of receipt.
- 8.4 Where an upheld notification of extenuating circumstances is particularly complex and/or ongoing in nature, has been submitted later than seven calendar days from the original or revised assessment date, or is a request for a third extension, the NECC should recommend that the student be assessed at the next available opportunity. Such outcomes are referred to the Notification of Extenuating Circumstances Panel to be logged and referred to the Board of Examiners for ratification.
- 8.5 In some cases, the NECC may consider the student would benefit from a variation to study rate or break in study. The NECC is responsible for referring the student to the Course Leader to discuss with the student the options available to them. The **course leader is responsible for facilitating access to further support if needed.**
- 8.6 The NECC may decide that a student would benefit from further or specialist support. The NECC is responsible for signposting the student to the appropriate source of support and facilitating access via the Course Leader or Personal Tutor if needed.
- 8.7 Students submitting a notification of extenuating circumstances may disclose a wellbeing risk to themselves or others. In such cases, the NECC is responsible for alerting the course leader who will make a [wellbeing referral](#) to ensure this is dealt with correctly. **Based on the nature of the risk indicated, such a referral may not require the consent of the student.**
- 8.8 Repeated notification of extenuating circumstances of a similar nature may indicate a potential need for Individual Requirements to be put in place or for the Support to Study policy to be used. The NECC should refer the student to the course leader to facilitate this. The course leader should then, with the consent of the student, liaise with [Student Support Services](#).
- 8.9 Where the NECC is unable to determine an outcome on the basis of the circumstances and/or evidence the submission will be referred to the Notification of Extenuating Circumstances Panel.

## 9. The role of the Notification of Extenuating Circumstances Panel

**Each School has a Notification of Extenuating Circumstances Panel which oversees the implementation of this policy.**

### Requirements

- 9.1 The Notification of Extenuating Circumstances Panel (NECP) meets frequently throughout the academic year, as determined by the School.
- 9.2 The role of the NECP is to:
  - a. maintain oversight of all decisions made by NECCs, identify any trends across the School, record and track actions, and ensure good practice is identified and shared.
  - b. make decisions about any cases referred to them by NECCs.
  - c. report outcomes to the Board of Examiners and identify any individual cases that might require further discussion by the Board.
  - d. report annually to the School Academic Standards and Quality Committee and Academic Registry on the implementation of this policy.
  - e. minute all NECP meetings, recording all relevant discussion and actions.
- 9.3 Where the NECP makes a decision on cases referred to them by the NECC, the NECP is responsible for communicating the outcomes to the student within **seven calendar days** of the referral.
- 9.4 The School will retain all documentation relating to NECPs in case they are required for Academic Appeals.

## 10. The role of the Board of Examiners

**The Chair of the Board of Examiners receives a report of all outcomes of notification of extenuating circumstances. The Board of Examiners considers all matters referred to it by the NECP.**

### Requirements

- 10.1 The Board of Examiners receives the following reports from the NECP:
  - a. A list of students whose notification of extenuating circumstances were **not upheld**;

- b. A list of students whose notification of extenuating circumstances were **upheld**; and
  - c. Individual cases where discussion or ratification by the Board of Examiners is required.
- 10.2 The Board of Examiners considers these reports as part of the overall academic decision-making process relating to the performance and progress of students concerned.
- 10.3 The specific details of individual cases will remain confidential unless the Board of Examiners require this information to make appropriate decisions. In such cases the Chair of the NECP will brief the Chair of the Board of Examiners.

## 11. Evidence for notification of extenuating circumstances

**Notification of extenuating circumstances must be supported by independent, reliable and contemporaneous evidence which substantiates the request.**

### Requirements

- 11.1 Students are responsible for providing appropriate evidence to support their request.
- 11.2 A student may self-certify in the following circumstances:
- a. They contracted a short self-limiting illness up to seven calendar days before any assessment deadline or event and did not attempt the assessment or present themselves at the assessment venue
  - b. There is a sudden deterioration in a long-standing medical condition or disability for which the student already has Individual Requirements in place.
  - c. Access to specific laboratories is restricted due to illness
- The maximum extension for self-certification is seven calendar days. Where a longer extension is needed, additional, independent evidence is required.
- 11.3 The University reserves the right to verify evidence submitted. Where it is not possible to authenticate the evidence, the request may not be upheld.
- 11.4 Evidence submitted should:
- a. be written by appropriately qualified professionals who are independent of the student, including for example medical practitioners, personal tutors, Halls of Residence Wardens, Student Support Services and other professionals.
  - b. be on headed paper, and signed and dated by the author. Email evidence may be accepted if it has been sent by the author from the official domain name of the author's organisation.
  - c. confirm that the circumstances were witnessed on the relevant date and not reported retrospectively.

- d. in English.
- e. original copies or scanned copies of original documents.
- f. unaltered by the student.

11.5 The following will not be accepted as evidence:

- a. Extracts of emails merged into a single document;
- b. Medical notes that state a student told the medical practitioner they were ill on a date several weeks or months before the note was issued;
- c. Documents in a language other than English. Students should provide translations of evidence in another language from an accredited translator, e.g. a member of the [Association of Translation Companies](#).
- d. Documents that have been altered in any way.

11.6 Students submitting a request for a revised assessment date in line with reasons and reasonable adjustments included in their Access Statements can use their Access Statement as accepted evidence.

11.7 Appendix one provides examples of appropriate evidence for different circumstances.

## 12. Appendix one: Examples of appropriate evidence for notification of extenuating circumstances

12.1 The following table provides examples of appropriate evidence for different types of circumstances. These are indicative and the list is not exhaustive. If a student is unclear about the types of evidence that might be appropriate for certain circumstances they should seek advice from the School.

12.2 Student should not normally submit photographic evidence of to support their submission, except where this is a photograph of a document or prescription.

Circumstances	Examples of appropriate evidence
Short term illness or injury (up to seven calendar days)	The University's self-certification form completed in full
Longer term illness or injury (over 7 calendar days)	Original medical certificate/fit to work note from a registered medical practitioner or pharmacist
Infectious disease that could be harmful to others	Other relevant evidence such as prescription, pharmacist label for medication.
Hospitalisation	Original medical certificate or letter from the relevant hospital. This should include the dates of hospitalisation
Worsening of an ongoing illness or disability including mental health conditions	Original medical certificate or letter from an appropriate medical professional or counsellor
Serious illness or death of a family member or close friend	Original medical certificate or letter from an appropriate medical professional Copy of a death certificate, a letter from the family doctor or a Coroner's Report
Victim of crime which has a substantial impact	Crime number Crime report (where this can be obtained)
Ongoing legal proceedings	Documents from the court or a solicitor
Jury Service	Documents from the court
Financial hardship	Bank statements Evidence of seeking support from financial advice services
Unexpected caring responsibilities for a family member or dependent	Letter from child's school, childcare provider or Social Services

	Original medical certificate or letter from an appropriate medical professional
Accommodation crisis such as eviction or the home becoming uninhabitable	Eviction notice Documentary evidence of the uninhabitability of the home

## 13. Appendix two: Examples of circumstances which are not eligible for notification of extenuating circumstances

13.1 The following are not considered to be circumstances which are eligible for a notification of extenuating circumstances:

- Failure to read assessment deadlines, assessment requirements or the examination timetable properly;
- Pressure of assessments and/or exam stress;
- Loss of access to student account as a result of deactivation due to non-payment of fees or debts to the University;
- Religious festivals, except for those determined by the lunar calendar. This includes Chinese New Year, Rosh Hashanah and Eid;
- Personal disruptions that could have been anticipated such as holidays;
- Accommodation disturbances such as moving house or disagreements with housemates;
- Transport issues;
- IT or computer failure, or failure to save work properly;
- Investigation of a criminal offence, except where a student is required to attend court on the date of an examination or assessment deadline;
- Reluctance to disclose circumstances.

<b>Policy owner</b>
Academic Registry

Change history			
Version:	Approval date:	Implementation date:	Nature of significant revisions:
Sept 2017	12.09.17	01.10.17	Full policy review. Changes include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Option for self-certification for short term illness or injury (7 calendar days)</li> <li>Alignment with Academic Appeals policy and process</li> <li>Definition of extenuating circumstances updated to reflect significance of timing</li> <li>Clarification that NEC process can be used to address a material administrative error during an exam or mistake/irregularity in the conduct of an assessment</li> </ul>
March 2018	17.04.18	06.03.18	Paragraph added regarding student disclosure to NECCs
Sept 2018	12.09.18	01.10.18	Minor updates

April 2019	17.04.19	17.04.19	Small amendment to principle in paragraph 8 to reflect existing practice
Sept 2019	11.09.19	01.10.19	Major updates including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information sharing between departments</li> <li>• Requirement for all submissions to be accompanied by supporting evidence</li> <li>• Staff responsibility for safeguarding and signposting to relevant services</li> <li>• Requests for individual requirements to be made through Student Support Services</li> <li>• Disclosure to School of circumstances affecting a student more broadly</li> <li>• Appendix 2 updated to include financial hardship</li> <li>• Requirement for evidence to be contemporaneous with assessment</li> </ul>
Sept 2020	16.09.20	01.10.20	Clarification regarding 2 <sup>nd</sup> extensions and additional NECs Appendix 2 updated to include childcare issues Appendix 5 added (temporary Covid-19 measure)
Oct 2020	20.10.20	21.10.20	Clarification of NEC outcome timeframe Removal of clause stating that self-certification is not accepted for coursework submissions Appendix 5 reworded to clarify meaning
Sept 2021	07.09.21	01.10.21	Minor clarification on the role of a third party and removal of appendix 5
Sept 2022		01.10.22	Minor amendments including change from working to calendar days, referring students who indicate a wellbeing risk and inclusion of NECC nominees. Allowing students to self-certify for a short extension of up to seven calendar days
Sept 2023	06.07.23	01.10.23	Updates on the use of Access Statements for NECs.

Equality Analysis		
<i>Version:</i>	<i>EA date:</i>	<i>Completed by:</i>
Sept 2015	09.02.16	CADQ
Sept 2016	01.09.16	CADQ
Sept 2017	01.09.17	Academic Registry