

Section 17A



Nottingham Trent
University

Quality Handbook

Part E: Regulations

Section 17A: Notification of Extenuating Circumstances Policy - Requirements

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1. Introduction

Students may need to ask for consideration of personal circumstances for something that has affected their performance in an assessment or their engagement with the course more generally.

- 1.1 Students might be affected by an illness, accident, bereavement or something else that has impacted their ability to study, prepare for, or complete an assessment. Usually this will be unexpected and beyond the student's control.
- 1.2 This policy allows students to tell the University about these circumstances and to request either an extension to their assessment deadline or the opportunity to be assessed at the next opportunity (normally during the referral period). It can be used for all types of assessment.
- 1.3 The policy will normally be used for short term circumstances that impact a student.
- 1.4 If a student's circumstances have had (or are likely to have) a longer-term impact (for example for a whole or multiple years), then this policy may not be appropriate. In such cases, students may be advised to consider other options such as a break in study, varying their rate of study or support to study.
- 1.5 Students who are facing longer-term or serious difficulties should seek support from their School and/or Student Support Services, as appropriate.
- 1.6 The policy applies to all students except those on research degrees or studying at a partner institution.
- 1.7 The policy is not intended to be used where a group of students is impacted by an event, such as a fire alarm during an exam. Such incidents are managed by the University and the outcome communicated to all students impacted.

2. Principles

The policy works on the basis of trust and is designed to ensure all students are treated fairly.

- 2.1 Students affected by personal circumstances may be anxious, distressed or unwell and may find it difficult to talk about their circumstances. Throughout this process students will be treated with compassion, and in a way that is fair and consistent. Therefore the University will ensure that:
 - a. circumstances reported by a student are given independent consideration at each stage to avoid potential bias;
 - b. reasons are given for all actions and decisions made;

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- c. timescales for submission and response are reasonable and manageable for students and colleagues;
 - d. information provided by students is treated as confidential and is only shared with those who need it to make decisions or provide support.
- 2.2 The policy works on the basis of trust and that notifications of extenuating circumstances are genuine.
- 2.3 Fraudulent or malicious use of the policy, for example false claims or evidence, are a breach of this trust and are therefore considered to be academic misconduct. Such cases are investigated under the Academic Integrity policy.

3. Advice and support for students

Students affected by personal circumstances are able to access support as needed.

- 3.1 Students affected by personal circumstances may need to access support either in relation to their notification of extenuating circumstances or more generally around their wellbeing.
- 3.2 Students requiring support related to their notification of extenuating circumstances should speak to their School in the first instance, this may be a Personal Tutor, School Administrator or Course Leader.
- 3.3 Students needing wellbeing support or requiring individual requirements to put in place should contact Student Support Services. Their School can facilitate access to Student Support Services if needed.
- 3.4 Students can also seek advice from the Student's Union Information and Advice Service or access the peer-support scheme.

4. Types of notifications of extenuating circumstances

There are two types of notifications of extenuating circumstances which a student can use where they have been impacted by personal circumstances.

- 4.1 There are two types of notification of extenuating circumstances, which are:
 - a. Extension request for up to seven or fourteen calendar days; or
 - b. Request to complete the assessment at the next available opportunity
- 4.2 Students should indicate in their submission which type they are requesting.
- 4.3 Extension requests are normally for short-term circumstances which affect the student for up to two weeks, and are usually for coursework type assessments.

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- 4.4 Completing the assessment at the next available opportunity is often used where a student has been unable to complete an exam or other 'on the day' assessment such as a presentation. It may also be used for circumstances which affect a student for longer than two weeks.

5. Submitting a notification of extenuating circumstances

Notifications of extenuating circumstances are submitted through the NEC portal.

- 5.1 Notification of extenuating circumstances for all types of assessment must be submitted through the [NEC portal](#) as soon as possible **before** and not later than **seven calendar days** after the submission date or the date of the exam/on the day assessment.
- 5.2 Notifications of extenuating circumstances received 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 seven calendar days, for example hospitalisation. Such requests should still be submitted via the portal.
- 5.3 Students can only submit two notifications of extenuating circumstances for the same assessment. This may be:
- An initial request for a seven day extension, then a second request for a further seven day extension;
 - An initial request for a seven or fourteen day extension, then a second request to complete the assessment at the next opportunity.
- 5.4 Requests for a seven day extension should not be submitted more than seven calendar days before the assessment deadline/date.
- 5.5 New personal circumstances disclosed after results have been released are considered through the Academic Appeals policy and process.
- 5.6 Students are normally expected to submit the notification of extenuating circumstances themselves. A notification may be accepted by someone else such as a parent or guardian where the student gives written authority for this.
- 5.7 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 allow the parent or guardian to act on the student's behalf with prior written consent.

6. Evidence

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Evidence requirements depend upon the type of notification the student is making.

- 6.1 For a seven day extension, students can submit a self-certification form in the following circumstances. Additional, independent evidence is not required.
 - a. They had a short illness in the seven calendar days before the assessment deadline or event, and they did not attempt the assessment.
 - b. There is an impact or fluctuation of an ongoing medical condition or disability, for which the student has an Access Statement in place.
 - c. Access to specific laboratories is restricted due to illness.
- 6.2 For other seven day or fourteen day extensions, or to complete the assessment at the next opportunity, additional, independent evidence is needed. Where evidence is not provided, there may be a delay in considering the request or it may not be approved.
- 6.3 Appendix two provides examples of suggested evidence to support notifications of extenuating circumstances.
- 6.4 Evidence should normally be:
 - a. Written by a professional who is independent of the student such as a medical practitioner, personal tutor, Student Support Services, etc, although in some cases a letter from a family member may be accepted, such as for a bereavement.
 - b. On official headed paper, signed and dated by the author, or sent via email from an organisation's email address.
 - c. At the same time as the circumstances occurred.
 - d. In English, or with an official translation.
 - e. A scanned copy of an original document.

7. Deciding whether to complete assessment

Students need to decide whether they are able to complete their assessment where they are affected by personal circumstances.

- 7.1 Sometimes students will need to decide whether to complete an assessment where they are affected by personal circumstances.
- 7.2 When making this decision, students should look at those circumstances likely or unlikely to be accepted as set out in Appendix one and seek support from appropriate University staff.

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- 7.3 If a student has not yet received the outcome of a notification of extenuating circumstances request but chooses to attempt/submit the assessment, they accept that:
- a. they are declaring themselves fit to complete the assessment; and
 - b. the work will be graded and the grade will stand; and
 - c. they cannot later submit a request for reconsideration.
- 7.4 Students cannot submit a notification of extenuating circumstances after they have completed an assessment.
- 7.5 Assessment submitted after the original deadline/assessment event without a notification of extenuating circumstances is subject to the late submission policy as set out in the Common Assessment Regulations (Quality Handbook Sections 16A-C).

8. Outcomes

The policy is designed to provide circumstances in which a student can demonstrate their academic ability unhindered. The University will not adjust grades or degree classifications as an outcome of a notification of extenuating circumstances.

- 8.1 There are three possible outcomes of a notification of extenuating circumstances:
- a. NEC Request approved
 - b. NEC Request partly approved
 - c. NEC Request not approved
- 8.2 Where a notification of extenuating circumstances is approved, the outcome will be:
- a. An extension of up to either seven or 14 calendar days
 - b. To allow the student to be assessed at the next available opportunity. The School informs the student of when the next available opportunity is.
 - c. To provide the student with the opportunity to vary their rate of study or take a break in study.
- 8.3 A partly approved outcome might be given where a notification has been submitted for multiple assessments but the request is only approved for some but not all of these assessments.
- 8.4 Where a notification of extenuating circumstances is not approved the student will be informed of the reasons for this. The timing of communicating not approved outcomes should be considered to ensure that students are able to access support if they need to.

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- 8.5 If a notification of extenuating circumstances is not approved, and the student has not completed the assessment by the deadline, the late and non-submission policy in the Common Assessment Regulations applies.
- 8.6 The University will not adjust grades or degree classifications as a result of an approved notification of extenuating circumstances.

9. Students with Access Statements

Students with an Access Statement should use this policy to request additional time to complete assessments.

- 9.1 Some students have Access Statements in place which give details about reasonable adjustments related to a disability or long term health condition. These adjustments may include a recommendation for additional time to complete assessments.
- 9.2 Students with Access Statements still need to complete a notification of extenuating circumstances to receive any additional time needed in the form of an extension of up to seven or 14 days, where the request relates to their health condition.
- 9.3 The Access Statement can be used as evidence to support the notification of extenuating circumstances.

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10. Appendix 1: Examples of personal circumstances

10.1 The following are examples of personal circumstances that are likely to be accepted for a notification of extenuating circumstances

- a. Short-term illness or injury of up to fourteen days duration;
- b. Minor illnesses where this restricted access to particular facilities such as labs;
- c. Impact or fluctuation of an ongoing illness or disability, including mental health conditions;
- d. Hospitalisation;
- e. Serious illness or death of a family member or close friend;
- f. Unexpected caring responsibilities for a family member or dependent;
- g. Significant personal or family crises leading to acute stress;
- h. A crime which has a substantial impact;
- i. Witnessing or experiencing a traumatic event;
- j. Accommodation crisis such as eviction or the home being uninhabitable;
- k. An emergency or crisis that prevents attendance at an exam or accessing an online assessment;
- l. Safeguarding concerns;
- m. Undertaking public duties (i.e. jury service) or competing in national or international sporting events;
- n. Participation in NTSU elections as a candidate during the voting period;
- o. Religious festivals determined by the lunar calendar, such as lunar new year, Rosh Hashanah or Eid.

10.2 The following are examples of personal circumstances that are unlikely to be accepted

- a. Holidays, house moves or other planned events;
- b. Minor illness such as common colds or hay fever, unless the symptoms are particularly severe or where the illness restricts access to particular facilities such as labs;
- c. Assessments that are scheduled close together;
- d. Misreading an assessment deadline, exam timetable or other details of an on the day assessment;
- e. Poor time management;
- f. Minor transport disruption;
- g. Computer, printer or internet failure where the work could have been backed up;
- h. Normal exam anxiety;

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- i. Work pressure (except for apprentices);
- j. Minor life events;
- k. Loss of access to student account as a result of deactivation due to non-payment of fees or debts to the University;
- l. Religious festivals other than those listed in section 10.1;
- m. Disagreement with housemates;
- n. Reluctance to disclose circumstances.

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11. Appendix 2: Examples of evidence to support a notification of extenuating circumstances

11.1 Requests for a short extension of up to seven calendar days can be supported by the University's self-certification completed in full.

11.2 The following table provides examples of evidence for different types of circumstances for longer extensions or requests to complete assessment at the next opportunity. These are indicative and there may be other evidence that a student considers to be relevant.

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

Personal Circumstances	Examples of appropriate evidence
Longer term illness or injury (over 7 calendar days) Infectious disease that could be harmful to others Hospitalisation	Medical certificate/fit to work note from a medical practitioner, pharmacist or hospital. Prescription, pharmacist label for medication.
Impact or fluctuation of an ongoing illness or disability including mental health conditions	Access Statement Medical certificate Letter from a medical professional, counsellor or Student Support Services
Serious illness or death of a family member or close friend	Letter from personal tutor, Student Support Services or close family member News or media report
Crime which has a substantial impact	Crime number Crime report (where this can be obtained) Letter from personal tutor
Unexpected caring responsibilities for a family member or dependent	Letter from a child's school, childcare provider Social Services, medical practitioner, personal tutor or Student Support Services.
Accommodation crisis such as eviction or the home becoming uninhabitable	Eviction notice Documentary evidence of the uninhabitability of the home
Significant personal or family crisis leading to acute stress	Letter from personal tutor, Student Support Services, police etc

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Witnessing or experiencing a traumatic incident	
An emergency or crisis that prevents attendance at an exam or accessing an online assessment	

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12. Appendix 3: Considering notifications of extenuating circumstances

Notifications of Extenuating Circumstances are considered by the School, either by an NEC Contact or a panel.

- 12.1 Notifications of Extenuating Circumstances are reviewed by the Notification of Extenuating Circumstances Contact (NECC) or their nominee in the School.
- 12.2 The NECC may request additional evidence or have a discussion with the student as part of their review.
- 12.3 Having reviewed the submission, the NECC (or nominee) will decide on an outcome in line with section 9 below.
- 12.4 When reviewing the notification the NECC will consider:
 - a. any prior notifications of extenuating circumstances in the same study year;
 - b. the nature of the circumstances and possible impact;
 - c. any missed learning;
 - d. the impact on any future assessments;
 - e. implications for progression or graduation;
 - f. the final deadline for coursework to be submitted and still be considered at the Board of Examiners.
- 12.5 The NECC should take base their decision on whether a student has requested an extension or assessment at the next opportunity. Where this has not been indicated they should make a judgement based on the nature of the circumstances.
- 12.6 The NECC may decide the student would benefit from a variation to study rate or a break in study. In such cases, the NECC refers the student to the Course Leader who will then discuss options with the student. The Course Leader facilitates access to further support if needed.
- 12.7 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.
- 12.8 Some students who submit 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.
- 12.9 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

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course leader to facilitate this. The course leader should then, with the consent of the student, liaise with Student Support Services.

- 12.10 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.
- 12.11 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 submission.
- 12.12 Where a student is completing a course or module which is jointly delivered by more than one School, a lead School is identified to consider the notification. The partner School must be kept informed of the outcome.

Notification of Extenuating Circumstances Panel

- 12.13 Each School has a Notification of Extenuating Circumstances Panel (NECP) which oversees implementation of this policy.
- 12.14 The NECP meets on a frequency determined by the School.
- 12.15 The role of the NECP is primarily to make decisions on cases referred to them by the NECC.
- 12.16 The NECP reviews the submission and associated evidence and decides on an outcome in line with section 9 below. The outcome is communicated to the student withing **seven calendar days** of the referral.
- 12.17 The NECP also has a role 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. report outcomes to the Board of Examiners and identify any individual cases that might require further discussion by the Board.
 - c. report annually to the School Academic Standards and Quality Committee and Academic Registry on the implementation of this policy.
 - d. minute all NECP meetings, recording all relevant discussion and actions.

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13. Appendix 4: 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.

13.1 The Board of Examiners receives the following reports from the NECP:

- a. A list of students whose notification of extenuating circumstances were **not approved;**
- b. A list of students whose notification of extenuating circumstances were **approved;** and
- c. Individual cases where discussion or ratification by the Board of Examiners is required.

13.2 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.

13.3 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.

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Policy owner
Academic Registry

Change history			
<i>Version:</i>	<i>Approval date:</i>	<i>Implementation date:</i>	<i>Nature of significant revisions:</i>
Sept 2017	12.09.17	01.10.17	Full policy review. Changes include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option for self-certification for short term illness or injury (7 calendar days) • Alignment with Academic Appeals policy and process • Definition of extenuating circumstances updated to reflect significance of timing 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
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"> • Information sharing between departments • Requirement for all submissions to be accompanied by supporting evidence • Staff responsibility for safeguarding and signposting to relevant services • Requests for individual requirements to be made through Student Support Services • Disclosure to School of circumstances affecting a student more broadly • Appendix 2 updated to include financial hardship Requirement for evidence to be contemporaneous with assessment
Sept 2020	16.09.20	01.10.20	Clarification regarding 2 nd 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.
Sept 2024	19.09.24	01.10.24	Language and structure updated in line with the Review of Student Facing policies, including 'upheld' replaced with 'approved'. Examples of acceptable evidence also updated.

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Equality Impact Analysis		
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Sept 2015	09.02.16	CADQ
Sept 2016	01.09.16	CADQ
Sept 2017	01.09.17	Academic Registry