



## Personal Circumstances Procedure

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7.0		Student Experience Directorate	Senate	Academic Year 2025/26

<b>Review Date</b>	Completion by August 2026
<b>Section Responsible</b>	Student Experience

<b>Purpose of Policy/Procedure</b>
<p>This Procedure explains the process for students informing the University of their personal circumstances.</p> <p>The process of recording and considering personal circumstances was formally part of the Personal Circumstances and Academic Appeals Procedure. The two procedures are now standalone documents. Only minor amendments have been made to this procedure in the process of extracting it from the previous Personal Circumstances and Academic Appeals Procedure, and to ensure consistency with information provided on the Personal Circumstances webpage.</p>
<b>Scope of Policy/Procedure</b>
<p>This procedure applies to the following groups of students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All students on taught credit bearing programmes delivered wholly by the University, regardless of mode or location of study;</li> <li>• All students on taught credit bearing programmes delivered jointly by the University for which the University is the administering institution;</li> <li>• All full-time and part-time students on research programmes for which the University is the awarding institution.</li> </ul> <p>This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:</p> <p><a href="#">General Academic Regulations</a></p> <p><a href="#">Academic Appeals Procedure</a></p> <p><a href="#">Policy and Procedure on Extensions to Coursework Submission</a></p> <p><a href="#">Voluntary Suspension Guidelines</a></p>

Contact Team	Student Experience
Contact Email	1
Committee Route	Quality Assurance Committee for approval with reporting to Education Strategy Committee and Senate for information.

# University of Strathclyde

## Personal Circumstances Procedure

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## Personal Circumstances Procedure

### Introduction

1. The University's procedure for the consideration of personal circumstances seeks to ensure that all students are treated fairly, are not disadvantaged by circumstances beyond their control and that the standards of the University's awards are maintained.
2. The University acknowledges that students can occasionally encounter circumstances that negatively impact their studies, attendance and/or performance in assessments/exams. The University defines these as personal circumstances.
3. If a student's attendance and/or performance in assessments/exams has been affected by exceptional, severe, or uncontrollable circumstances, they should record this using the personal circumstances facility in Pegasus. Students should also inform their academic department of these circumstances as soon as possible.
4. All disclosures of personal circumstances will be considered confidentially, sensitively and respectfully in accordance with the University's [Equality and Diversity policies](#). Where a student has declared a disability the University will put in place any [reasonable adjustments](#).
5. More information on how to record personal circumstances can be found on the University's [Personal Circumstances](#) web page. All evidence submitted in support of personal circumstances should align with the [Personal Circumstances Evidence Guidelines](#). Submitted evidence may not be accepted for academic mitigation if it does not meet the standards described in the document linked above.

### Scope

6. This procedure applies to the following:
  - a. All students on taught credit bearing programmes delivered wholly by the University, regardless of mode or location of study;
  - b. All students on taught credit bearing programmes delivered jointly by the University for which the University is the administering institution;
  - c. All full-time and part-time students on research programmes for which the University is the awarding institution.
7. The University Senate has overall responsibility for overseeing the Personal Circumstances Procedure, with day-to-day responsibility given to the University Secretary.
8. Boards of Examiners are supported by Pre-Boards (PBs) or Personal Circumstances Boards (PCBs), which meet to consider students' Personal Circumstances and their impact on their performance in assessment. Following consideration of students' Personal Circumstances and associated evidence, PBs or PCBs make recommendations to Boards of Examiners regarding any academic mitigation.

## Advice and Support

9. A student may wish to speak to a member of staff in their Department for advice and support in submitting personal circumstances, for example their Adviser of Studies, Programme Leader, Year Leader, or Director of Postgraduate Research/Graduate School.
10. The Strath Union Advice Hub can provide students with free, impartial, and confidential advice for students facing personal challenges. More information can be found here: [Strath Union Advice Hub](#).
11. The University understands that a student engaging with the Personal Circumstances Procedure may find the experience stressful. Students are encouraged to engage with the University's wider [support services](#) if they are experiencing distress.
12. Students who may require reasonable adjustments to teaching, learning and/or assessment in relation to a disability or long-term health condition should speak to a [Disability Adviser](#) as early as possible. The Disability & Wellbeing Service will assess the information provided by students and communicate reasonable adjustments to departments ahead of the published assessment adjustment deadline.

## Equality and Diversity

13. All disclosures of Personal Circumstances will be considered in accordance with the University's [Equality and Diversity policies](#). Where a student has declared a disability, the University will endeavour where appropriate to ensure that information is available to them in appropriate formats, with reasonable adjustments made to proceedings within the procedure as required.

## False Declaration and Student Misconduct

14. The submission of false Personal Circumstances will be regarded as making a false declaration in order to receive consideration under this Personal Circumstances Procedure by a Board of Examiners or Appeals Committee, or to obtain extensions to deadlines or exemption from work. This is a misconduct offence and may result in the case being investigated via the [Student Discipline Procedures](#).

## Data Protection

15. The University recognises that the Personal Circumstances students experience may be personal and private, and that students may be reluctant to disclose them to a member of University staff, however students are encouraged to do so for their own benefit. The University will deal with personal information sensitively and will ensure the Personal Circumstances are not disclosed unnecessarily.
16. Details about the University's processing of personal data can be found on the [Data Protection webpages](#). Students may also wish to refer to the University's [privacy notice](#).

## Personal Circumstances Procedure

### Timing and Notification of Personal Circumstances

17. Personal Circumstances may adversely affect a student's ability to study or their performance in assessment. It is recognised that assessment periods can be stressful. However, students need to be able to plan and manage their time and workload to meet deadlines, to cope with a certain level of stress, and to manage their University studies alongside other responsibilities in life. It is also essential to recognise that illnesses and difficult life events do occur, and that it is a normal part of life to have to manage these and continue with work or study.
18. Students whose attendance or performance has been, may or will be, affected by circumstances that are exceptional, severe and outside their control should inform the University **as soon as they are aware of these circumstances** by recording them on Pegasus under 'Personal Circumstances' and submitting **supporting evidence** as soon as such evidence is available. When a student's performance in examination(s) or other assessment(s) is affected, the circumstances should be recorded using the personal circumstances facility in Pegasus, normally **within five working days** of the latest affected examination/assessment or date of submission of affected assessment. Where an entire semester or examination diet is affected, Personal Circumstances should be submitted as soon as possible and **at least one working week** before the relevant meeting of the Pre-Board (PB) or Personal Circumstances Board (PCB). Notification of Personal Circumstances will not normally be accepted after the PB or PCB has met. [Guidance](#) can be found on the relevant university webpages. All evidence submitted in support of personal circumstances should align with the [Personal Circumstances Evidence Guidelines](#).
19. Students should report in advance any circumstances that they anticipate will affect their performance in assessment. Students who know that they will be unable to attend an exam, or other scheduled assessment activity, due to circumstances beyond their control, should submit Personal Circumstances, along with supporting evidence in good time.
20. If a student does not submit Personal Circumstances they will not be considered by the PB or PCB, and no recommendation will be made to the Board of Examiners<sup>1</sup>. It is the student's responsibility to submit personal circumstances on Pegasus and to upload relevant supporting evidence.
21. Students should clearly state the extent, duration and nature of their Personal Circumstances and how these circumstances affected their studies, attendance and/or performance in assessments/exams.
22. PBs or PCBs will consider all Personal Circumstances recorded on Pegasus for the academic year(s) under consideration by the Board of Examiners. These Boards typically consist of representatives drawn from each faculty/department/programme from which student cases are considered. All Personal Circumstances that have been recorded on Pegasus by the deadlines

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<sup>1</sup> The academic body making award decisions relating to Postgraduate Research students is a [Research Examining Committee](#). The body making progress decisions is the Review Panel. For the purposes of this Procedure, the term Board of Examiners will encompass the Research Examining Committee and the Review Panel.

stated above and which meet the criteria stated below will be considered by the relevant PB or PCB. Based on the information submitted the PB or PCB will make recommendations to the appropriate Board of Examiners as to whether any academic mitigation should be granted.

23. **PBs or PCBs will not make decisions on marks, progress, transfer, or awards.** These decisions are made by Boards of Examiners. A Board of Examiners will take into account recommendations of the relevant PB or PCB.
24. Boards of Examiners may discount all or part of an assessment. They will not mitigate the impact of personal circumstances by raising marks.
25. PBs or PCBs are held just before Board of Examiners meetings. **Therefore, students should be aware that they will not receive notification of any outcome from the PB or PCB. They will receive notification only of the decision of the Board of Examiners.** Faculties/Departments will communicate the meeting dates of Boards of Examiners.
26. Programme Leaders are permitted to take account of Personal Circumstances by discounting a component(s) of an assessment which constitutes no more than 30% in total of the full assessment. Any such adjustment will be recorded by the relevant Department in order to prevent Personal Circumstances being 'double-counted' at the related Board of Examiners meeting.
27. In considering the impact of Personal Circumstances on the student's performance the following will be taken into account:
  - a) The severity of the problem and the length of time involved;
  - b) Any supporting documentary evidence;
  - c) Consideration of the student's performance during the period affected and the student's overall and past performance;
  - d) The type of assessment that was affected;
  - e) How long the student had to complete the work (i.e. date when the assessment was made available and deadline for submission);
  - f) Whether the student's Personal Circumstances were sufficiently mitigated at the time they impacted the student's performance (i.e. an extension was granted to the deadline for an assessment, or a previous discount by the Department, as per paragraph 26).

## Responsibilities of Students

28. Students should make every effort to ensure that they are fit to study and undertake assessments. Where a student feels that there are circumstances that are affecting them adversely, it is their responsibility to seek help either within or outside of the University, as relevant, to assist them in resolving the problem.
29. Students are responsible for ensuring that they are available for all necessary study and assessments.
30. Students are responsible for ensuring that they inform their Department of any circumstances that they consider are affecting their ability to study and/or undertake assessments.
31. Students should note that there are defined timeframes for the submission of Personal Circumstances.

32. Students are responsible for providing the required evidence demonstrating their Personal Circumstances.
33. Students who fail to submit Personal Circumstances prior to the Board of Examiners' meeting, without good reason, may not subsequently appeal against that Board of Examiner's decision on the grounds of Personal Circumstances.
34. Students are encouraged, if appropriate, to register with the [Disability Service](#). Designated staff and Exam Coordinators have responsibility for ensuring that recommended exam and other teaching, learning and assessment arrangements are put in place for students requiring reasonable adjustments.

## Nature of circumstances that will be considered

35. Personal Circumstances will be considered if they have caused a significant impact on academic performance. In general, though not exclusively, circumstances will be of a medical or personal nature affecting the student for a significant period of time and/or during an assessment period. These are normally circumstances that prevent a student from submitting a piece of coursework, sitting an exam or taking part in another form of assessment, or that cause the student to perform significantly less well than they might otherwise have been expected to do (as judged by performance in other assessments).
36. In order to be considered, Personal Circumstances must have significantly affected a student's academic performance, attendance (including examinations or other scheduled assessment events), or ability to meet a submission deadline. Boards of Examiners and Appeal Committees will have regard to the following factors in considering personal circumstances:
  - a) the evidence presented to support the submission of Personal Circumstances;
  - b) the possible effect of the circumstances on the studies in question; and
  - c) the student's overall performance on their programme and specific performance in assessments affected by the circumstances.
37. Students are reminded that Boards of Examiners will not grant academic mitigation to circumstances that could have been reasonably avoided by the student or where it is not clear that there has been a significant impact on academic performance. Minor ailments and personal difficulties of the sort faced by many students in the normal course of University life will not be considered.
38. A list of examples of Personal Circumstances and associated evidence that would be considered and accepted or rejected is provided in the [Personal Circumstances Evidence Guidelines](#).
39. Circumstances must have affected a student's performance sufficiently to justify academic mitigation, which will reflect the level of impact on academic performance that is demonstrated in the student's submission of Personal Circumstances and supporting evidence. The most common form of academic mitigation normally considered by a Board of Examiners is to discount an attempt at an assessment and provide students with a further attempt.

40. Boards of Examiners will normally not grant academic mitigation where there is no or insufficient evidence to support the submitted Personal Circumstances.
41. Students who are aware that they have a disability, long-term physical or mental health condition, or have other long-term circumstances that are expected to have an impact on their performance should make the University aware of those circumstances at the earliest possible opportunity and should seek relevant adjustments through Student Disability Service and Departmental Disability Contacts (DDCs).

## Supporting Evidence

42. All notifications of Personal Circumstances should be accompanied by supporting evidence, wherever possible, in writing, from an appropriate authority. A submission of Personal Circumstances without appropriate supporting evidence is unlikely to be granted academic mitigation. All evidence submitted in support of Personal Circumstances should align with the [Personal Circumstances Evidence Guidelines](#).
43. The nature of a student's Personal Circumstances will dictate the type of evidence required to support a submission. Normally, students should seek evidence from an **independent person, organisation or support service**. Submitted evidence should provide details of the circumstance, its duration, and, where possible, its impact. Where appropriate, it will also include a signature from a relevant third party.
44. If the original document submitted as evidence is not in English, an independent translation must also be provided e.g. from a professional translation service, member of University staff, embassy etc. This translation should not be undertaken by the student, a member of their family or a friend.
45. It is recognised that there may occasionally be circumstances where a student is unable to obtain independent evidence. This should be explained on Pegasus and the PC or PCB may decide to consider the Personal Circumstances at its discretion. The student should speak to the [Advice Hub](#) for further guidance before submission.
46. Dates of evidence must correspond with the details provided in the Personal Circumstances submission. If a student has missed an assessment through ill health, then the illness must coincide with the preparation, writing or deadline of that assessment. Students who miss an examination or another scheduled assessment event (e.g. an invigilated class test or presentation) due to illness should seek medical attention as soon as possible. Students who become ill during an examination or other scheduled assessment event should inform the invigilator/staff member before leaving the examination/assessment event.