

‘the advice hub’
Your Union Your Support

Guide to...

Academic Appeals

2014-15

What is an appeal?

An appeal is when you would like your school and/or university to conduct a review on an academic decision such as the grading of a paper or exam, your degree classification or a decision regarding progression within your course. An appeal can only be made with valid grounds and should be supported by appropriate documentation (see below).

Please note that if you are making an appeal against your final degree classification or award you will NOT be able to graduate until the process of the appeal has been concluded. For example, you cannot choose to accept your award, graduate and then appeal at a later date.

On what grounds can I make an appeal?

There are four grounds under which you can make an appeal:

1. *Mitigating circumstances*: when health or personal circumstances have affected your performance in an exam and these details were not provided to the Board of Examiners. Therefore, these circumstances were not taken into account at the time that the original decision was made; however, you feel that this would have resulted in them reaching a different decision if they had known. Please note that there needs to be a good reason as to why mitigating circumstances were not submitted when they occurred or at an appropriate time thereafter and supporting documentation will be required.

2. Where it is alleged that staff have *not followed approved regulations and procedures*.
3. Where there has been a *material lack of clarity* on the part of the University which has affected your performance.
4. Where it is alleged that *staff have not acted fairly towards you* by showing bias in the way they have made the relevant academic decision.

You cannot appeal just because you disagree with the marks or academic judgment decisions of the examiners. However, if your grade or the result means you are unable to remain registered at the University, unable to undertake further assessment or progress to the next stage of an academic programme then there is a right to appeal as long as you have valid grounds. If you are not sure whether you have grounds to appeal come into the Advice Hub and speak to us.

How can I make an appeal?

If you are considering submitting an appeal, it is important that you act promptly. Your first step should be to try an informal resolution. Make every effort to contact your mentor, supervisor or other relevant member of staff to discuss the issue and find out whether it can be resolved without formal procedures. If you are unable to resolve the issue informally, you can pursue a formal appeal. There are two stages to the academic appeal process within the University. If you have exhausted the University appeal system there is a final option of an independent administrative review through the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman.

Stage 1: Appeal to the Head of School;

Stage 2: Appeal to the Senior Dean.

Final Stage: Scottish Public Service Ombudsman.

Stage 1 of the process must be completed first. Only if you consider that your appeal has not been dealt with satisfactorily, and feel that the matter should be taken further, should you submit a Stage 2 appeal. Appeals at both stages must be submitted on the correct form by the required deadline.

Stage 1

The appeal should be submitted on an Appeal Form to the Head of School. This should be done no later than 10 working days after receipt of the information which forms the basis of the appeal. Appeal information and the Stage 1 Appeal Form can be found here <http://www.hw.ac.uk/students/studies/complaints/student-appeals.htm>

You are encouraged to fill in the form online if possible. On the form you will be asked to supply the following:

1. Your full name, ID number and detailed contact information.
2. The course you are on, the year of programme (where appropriate) and the location of study (e.g. Edinburgh, Borders).

You will be asked to tick boxes about the following:

1. Whether you have tried to resolve the matter informally (and if not, you must give the reasons for not doing so)

2. The grounds for your appeal
3. The decision that is to be reviewed, ie, unable to progress

You will then be required to give details about your case (up to 500 words), provide any relevant supporting evidence in English (e.g. a medical certificate) and say what you would like the outcome of the appeal to be—for example, you would like your grade to be revised, or a further opportunity to submit work or be allowed to re-take an exam. The form will indicate where you submit your appeal.

You will receive confirmation of receipt of your appeal form from the Head of School within 10 days working days of submission. You should be given confirmation of the outcome of the appeal, in writing, within 30 working days of submission. If the decision on the appeal is expected to take longer you will notified of this and the reason why it has not been possible to meet the deadline.

Stage 2

If you appeal is rejected at the first stage, and you feel that it has not been dealt with satisfactorily and the matter should be taken further, you can appeal to the Senior Dean. This must be done no later than 20 working days after confirmation of the outcome of the Stage 1 appeal has been issued. Appeal information and the Stage 2 Form can be found here <http://www.hw.ac.uk/students/studies/complaints/student-appeals.htm>

Again, you are encouraged to fill in the form online where possible. On the

form you will be asked to supply the following information:

1. Your full name, ID number and detailed contact information.
2. The course you are on, the year of programme (where appropriate) and the location of study.

You will be asked to state why you are not content with the decision made by the Head of School and to tick boxes about:

1. The grounds for your appeal
2. The decision that is to be reviewed

You will then be required to give details about your case (up to 500 words), provide any relevant supporting evidence in English and say what you would like the outcome of the appeal to be. The form will indicate where you submit your appeal.

You will receive confirmation of receipt of your appeal form within 10 days working days of submission. You should be given the outcome of the appeal, in writing, within 30 working days of submission. If the decision on

the appeal is expected to take longer you will notified of this and the reason why it has not been possible to meet the deadline

Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO)

If you have completed the two stages of appeal within the university and are still not satisfied with the outcome, the next—and final—option is for you to go to an independent review. This means a complaint to the Scottish Ombudsman and as this would be an administrative review, it does not look at the substance of the case, but the way in which the internal processes were managed. You will find information about the Scottish Ombudsman here: <http://www.spsso.org.uk/>

Further Questions?

For more detailed information on the appeals process, policies and procedures, as well as the required Appeal Forms, please see the appeals website at <http://www.hw.ac.uk/students/studies/complaints/student-appeals.htm> or come and talk to an advisor in the Advice Hub. We operate a drop-in service.

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