

Frequently Asked Questions – Academic Appeals

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the [Regulations Governing Academic Appeals](#). It gives practical advice and guidance about the process, but is not intended to replace the Regulations. Further information can be found on our [Webpages](#).

What decisions can I appeal against?

Academic Appeals can be made against academic decisions. Appeals are usually against the decision of a Board of Examiners to ratify your mark, or against the outcome of an Academic Integrity Panel or a Fitness to Practise Panel. If you are not sure if you can appeal against a particular decision, please contact the Curriculum and Quality Assurance (CQA) Team in your Faculty for advice.

If you wish to raise an issue with teaching, supervision, administration, materials or facilities, these will more likely be considered as complaints, but please contact the CQA Team in your Faculty for advice.

The Regulations set down decisions that cannot be appealed. You should note that appeals based solely on academic judgement will not be upheld.

How long do I have to submit my appeal?

This is set down in the Regulations. In most cases you have 10 working days to submit an appeal but if you are a pre-sessional student, or wish to appeal a supplementary decision, you must submit your Stage 1 appeal within 5 working days. You have 5 working days to escalate your appeal to Stage 2 if you are not satisfied with the Stage 1 outcome, and 5 working days to escalate to Stage 3. Working days do not include weekends, Bank Holidays Public Holidays, or University closure days.

If you make your submission after the deadline your submission will not be accepted and the decision of the Board of Examiners will stand, unless you can evidence exceptional circumstances about why your appeal is late.

Can I still attend my Graduation ceremony?

If you passed and were awarded, yes. There is nothing to stop you attending Graduation if it is due to take place whilst your appeal is being decided.

What grounds must I meet?

The grounds are set down in the Regulations:

4.1 That they possess new substantive information supported by evidence which was not known by the student and/or the evidence could not reasonably have been obtained by the student in time to present to the board or panel of the University which made the original decision against which the student is appealing;

You could select this ground if you have recently received new information that you believe would cause the board or panel to change its decision. For example, you may become aware of a new witness that could provide important information to an Academic Integrity Panel. To be successful with this ground, you must be able to demonstrate why you couldn't present the evidence previously. It is not usually sufficient to provide further evidence demonstrating something that the University is already aware of

and has accepted, including where you have new information about a long term or ongoing issue for which you are receiving support.

4.2 That there has been significant failure of due process in the making of the original decision (including but not limited to irregularity in the procedures of the University or significant computational or administrative errors of fact in results published), which the student believes affected the University's original decision;

Use this ground if you feel that there has been a procedural error. For example, if you suspect that your marks have been incorrectly added or if an incorrect weighting has been given to an element of your assessment.

If you are appealing against the decision of an Academic Integrity Panel, you could use this ground to raise concerns about procedural errors at the panel, e.g. if you feel the panel was not constituted in accordance with the Regulations Governing Academic Integrity.

4.3 That their performance had been adversely affected by illness or by other factors (e.g: family crisis) which, in exceptional circumstances, they were unable or for valid reason unwilling to disclose to the University before it made its original decision (also see Regulations Governing Special Considerations (including Deadline Extension Requests) for all Taught Programmes and Taught Assessed Components of Research Degrees).

To use this ground, you should present evidence that your academic performance was affected at a time relevant to the assessment. You must also provide an explanation for why you did not tell the University about the illness or other factors at the time. Stating that you were unaware of the Special Considerations Request procedure will not in itself be sufficient. Similarly stating that you thought you could work through an issue or that you didn't realise how affected you were until you were awarded a fail mark are cases that are unlikely to lead to successful appeals.

What evidence can I submit to support my appeal?

Students are encouraged to submit evidence to support their case. The Regulations do not restrict this to any particular type of evidence, but the reviewer will be able to rely on some types of evidence more than others. For example, a diagnosis from a General Practitioner giving details of how and when your health affected your studies will be more compelling than a statement from your house mate explaining that you said you felt a bit sick. If your appeal revolves around ill health the most compelling evidence is likely to come from a practitioner working in a regulated field who has provided documentary evidence relevant to the period in question. The document should clearly show the name, qualifications and contact details for the person that produced it.

Other types of evidence might include statements from witnesses (the most creditable witnesses will be independent from you), proof of travel, medical evidence related to a third party (e.g. your parent, sibling or child), meeting notes, emails, photographs and letters. The evidence should relate to the appeal ground, so if you are trying to demonstrate the impact on your performance, please provide evidence that relates to you. If you are unsure of what type of evidence could be useful, please contact the Students' Union Advice Centre.

If your evidence is not in English, it is your responsibility to provide a certified translation. The University may take steps to verify that any evidence submitted is genuine.

Who will see my appeal and who will decide the outcome?

Your academic appeal will initially be made to the CQA Team in your Faculty and considered by an appropriate member of staff. This is often a Module Lead, Programme Lead or Senior Tutor. The member of staff may need to make enquiries about your candidature and progression as well as any

previous Special Considerations Requests or Academic Appeals. Depending on the points you raise, they may need to check information on your student record or with other teams in the University, for example to check what advice or support you have previously been given.

If you are concerned about the impartiality of the appointed member of staff, please contact the CQA Team in your Faculty before the preliminary meeting. If the appointed member of staff feels that your appeal meets the grounds, the case will be referred back to the original panel or board and the Chair will consider whether or not the decision should be changed in light of the issues you raised.

The Regulations set down who will consider Stage 2 and 3 academic appeals. If your appeal is seen by a full Panel at Stage 2 or 3, your appeal submission will make up part of the papers that will be seen by the panellists and the School Representative. If any other people are invited to speak, the level of information to be supplied to them will be dependent on the nature of their involvement. However, where appropriate, this will be limited and redacted of sensitive personal information.

If my appeal is upheld, what outcome is likely?

This depends on the nature of your appeal. If there has been a computational error related to your mark this will be corrected and as a result of that your grade may change. If your appeal was related to health or other factors affecting your performance, the most likely outcome for upheld appeals is to offer another opportunity at the assessment. **It is not possible to invent marks through the academic appeals process.** Similarly, it will not be possible to allow you to progress to the next year of your Programme unless you have successfully passed the current year.

What happens if I am offered another attempt at an assessment as a result of an appeal?

If your appeal outcome is to offer you an additional attempt at an assessment and you agree to proceed on that basis, the marks you subsequently achieve will be those noted on your transcript and used to calculate your award classification if relevant, even if you perform worse than at the original attempt.

What happens if I am not satisfied with the outcome of my academic appeal?

The full procedure is set down in the Regulations Governing Academic Appeals. When the internal procedures are exhausted you may make a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator and ask them to review your case. To do this you will need a Completion of Procedures letter, which you can request at the end of Stage 2 or 3. Completion of Procedures letters are automatically produced for all appeals rejected at Stage 3. For further information see <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/making-a-complaint-to-the-oia/guidance-for-students.aspx>

Where can I get further support to make my academic appeal?

- Your Personal Academic Tutor/Pastoral Tutor or an academic member of staff.
- The CQA Team in your Faculty will be able to provide guidance on the Procedure. <http://www.calendar.soton.ac.uk/sectionIV/student-appeals-appendix.pdf>
- The Students' Union Advice Centre has trained advisors that support students in making academic appeals and can attend your preliminary meeting and any subsequent meetings to support you. The University encourages students to seek this support. (<https://www.susu.org/support/advice-centre.html>).