

## **Academic Appeals Made Simple Frequently Asked Questions**

The following information is intended to help you understand the College's regulations and procedures so you can make an informed decision about how to deal with an appeal. It is not intended to replace or supplement the College's academic regulations. You cannot rely purely on this information when making an appeal. It's intended to answer common questions students ask the students' union (SU) academic advice worker but may not answer your specific question or apply to your specific circumstances. If you are considering appealing it's best to contact Annie Mitchell, the SU academic advice worker, to discuss your case in detail. See contact details below.

### **Can I appeal my marks/classification?**

Yes, you have the right to appeal but that's not the same as having grounds for appeal.

### **When should I appeal?**

Within 14 days of getting your confirmed results, which is usually around July for undergraduates or November for postgrads. It's important not to miss the deadline, otherwise you'll have to show "good reason" for the delay, and "good reason" is defined very narrowly by the College.

### **What are the grounds for appeal?**

There are only two: procedural error or extenuating circumstances (ECs), which either weren't taken properly into consideration or which, for good reason you failed to make known at the right time. The right time would have been, in the case of exams, usually a couple of days after the last exam. The deadline for ECs should be made known to students, so check QMPlus, emails, etc or ask your school admin staff.

### **What kind of procedural error?**

A procedural error might be something like you think your marks have been added up incorrectly. You can ask for an admin check before you appeal but if you're not satisfied with the answer you can move on to an appeal.

### **I want to appeal on the ground of ECs but I didn't submit them at the right time, can I still appeal?**

Yes, you have a right to appeal but you'll need very strong evidence to demonstrate why you couldn't submit ECs at the right time. A good reason might be, for example, you were hospitalised during or just after exams so couldn't submit an application.

### **I sat exams/submitted coursework and applied for ECs saying I was ill during the exam period, or bad stuff happened to me throughout the year, but my ECs were rejected. Can I appeal?**

Yes, you have the right to appeal, however, the chances of success are not high if you sat the exams, or submitted coursework. The College has a fit to sit policy, so by turning up to exams or submitting coursework you're declaring there's nothing wrong with you. It's then very difficult to argue later that there was something wrong with you. It's different if you fall

ill during an exam, and if this happens you should get medical evidence and submit an extenuating circumstances application.

### **What aren't grounds for appeals?**

Some of the reasons cited by students in their appeals include the following, none of which are grounds for appeal:

- you, your friends, tutors, anyone other than the person(s) who marked your work thinks it deserves a better mark;
- your lecturer told you what to do to get a good mark and you feel you did what was required; or your lecturer gave you positive feedback on an early draft of your work;
- you worked really hard and attended all classes;
- you weren't feeling well before the exams but thought you'd try to sit them anyway;
- lots of bad things happened to you during the year;
- you need a higher classification to get the job you want.

### **What's the point of ECs?**

If you can't sit exams or submit work because of ECs, and the ECs are accepted, you'll be able to retain your first sit status and sit the exams/submit the work when you're better. They might also be useful if you're borderline for classification.

### **Who makes the decision about my appeal?**

An appeals office caseworker and the chair of the appeals panel make a decision. It's only very rarely that an appeal panel meets to hear a case, and it's usually all done on paper with no face-to-face meetings.

### **How long will it take to get a decision?**

Both stages of the appeal process, including a final review, should normally take no longer than three months in total. It may take a shorter or longer period. Nothing changes while you appeal, so you'll still graduate with the classification you were originally awarded. You can't progress to the next academic year unless and until your appeal is successful.

### **What should I put in my appeal?**

Your appeal should be very clear and to the point. Don't repeat yourself or include irrelevant details. On the other hand, if you're unsure it's best to include more rather than less. You need to make it obvious why what happened to you fits into one of the grounds for appeal, i.e. there's been a procedural error because the marks appear wrong but the department refuse to do a proper admin check. You can contact the students' union academic advice service for help with your appeal form. It's very important to include relevant evidence, e.g. a doctor's letter, and anything not in English will need an official translation. Letters from friends or family usually won't carry much weight because they won't be viewed as objective.

### **What happens after I submit my appeal?**

You should receive a casework summary from the appeals office caseworker a few weeks after you submit your appeal, and you'll be asked to respond. After you've responded the caseworker will make a recommendation to uphold or reject your appeal and will send the

case file to the chair of the appeals panel. If they both agree their decision will stand, if not it will go to a panel hearing. If your appeal is rejected you can move to a final review by the Vice Principal for Teaching and Learning or the Academic Registrar. Further information on this stage can be obtained from the SU academic advice service. Once this stage is completed all the internal procedures are at an end and, if you want, you can take your case to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

### **If my appeal is successful will I definitely get the result I want?**

If your appeal is based on a procedural error the appeals office staff can ask for it to be corrected. The correction might not change things very much, e.g. progression or degree classification, but in some instances it could. If your ground for appeal was ECs, your application will be referred back to the exam board for consideration. Referral back to the exam board isn't a 100% guarantee that your ECs will be accepted. If your ECs are accepted that still doesn't necessarily get you what you want, if what you want is a remark of your paper or extra marks added on because of ECs. You might instead be allowed to retain your first sit status, or have a further resit.

### **What are my chances of success?**

It's difficult to say, as it comes down to the strengths and weaknesses of the individual case. You need to realise, however, that not many appeals are successful, so don't get your hopes up too much. In 2014/15 academic year only 17% of appeals were upheld and, of those, not all the students ultimately got what they wanted. For some students it's worthwhile appealing anyway, even if they aren't successful, because they can feel they've tried everything and aren't left with regrets later. The SU academic advice service is here to help you even if the advice worker thinks you don't have a strong case.

### **OK, I want to appeal so what do I do next?**

Before you appeal speak to your tutor first to try to get a better understanding of why you got the marks you did. If you still want to appeal check out the appeal form and guidelines: <http://www.arcs.qmul.ac.uk/students/student-appeals/appeals/index.html>

Contact Annie Mitchell, the SU academic advice worker, for advice and help with your appeal. Email: [a.c.mitchell@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:a.c.mitchell@qmul.ac.uk) It's not always necessary to have a face-to-face meeting, as sometimes it's easier and quicker to discuss matters over the phone, or Skype if a student is overseas. Annie will need to see all relevant paperwork, e.g. medical evidence, to help with your appeal.

### **What can the SU do to help?**

- listen to your account of why you're unhappy with your marks and to your questions about appealing;
- explain the appeal process in detail, and identify the strengths and weaknesses of your case;
- read through and advise on the wording of your appeal form and statement, and check your supporting evidence is relevant;
- read your casework summary, and advise on your response;
- read through and advise on the wording of your final review request;

- act as your representative if you chose to take your case to the OIA at the end of the College internal appeal process;
- help you to understand your options at every stage and offer you support throughout the process.

**What the SU can't do:**

- advise you whether or not to appeal - this has to be your decision;
- write your appeal or statement for you;
- submit your appeal on your behalf;
- tell you what the outcome will be or the exact date you'll receive a decision;
- make the College give you the outcome you want;
- make the appeal process go any quicker. It's important to remember that a large number of students will be appealing at the same time, all wanting a decision urgently.

It's important to remember that the SU doesn't have access to your student record, so any advice it provides is based on information you disclose, or any information it can obtain from the College if you give appropriate authorisation for disclosure. It's really important, therefore, to provide the SU advice service with any information requested. It's also important to remember that while the advice service, and the College, may be sympathetic to your case the College normally won't suspend regulations because a student has had personal problems, and the advice service has to advise you on that basis.