

BEST PRACTICE GUIDE TO ACADEMIC APPEALS

WHAT THIS GUIDE IS ABOUT

This Guide is about challenging academic decisions.

You should follow the procedures as describe in the [University guidance](#), which can be found by either searching for “appeals” at Brunel intranet or via brunel.ac.uk -> about -> quality and standards -> Policies and Guidelines A-Z.

This Guide will **not** focus on following procedures but on ensuring that you put forward the best case possible. Therefore it is essential that you familiarise yourself first with the steps of the process as described in the [Academic Appeals – A Guide for Students](#) and then use the tips contained in our guide to make sure your appeal is of best quality.

You have only one chance to get it right, so read the University’s and our guides carefully; your academic career may depend on it.

BEFORE YOU START

Before you start to draft your Appeal Form you must first consider whether an Appeal is the most appropriate avenue for addressing your concerns.

Other possibilities to consider could be:

- If you are still within 5 working days of the assessment deadline, Extenuating Circumstances may be a more suitable option. Please see our [Guide to Extenuating Circumstances](#) which can be found in the University Procedures section of our website.
- If the circumstances are ongoing and likely to continue you may want to consider taking some time out (Please see our [Change of Plan Guide](#) which can be found in the University Procedures section of our website.)
- If you did not do so well in an assessment but do not have serious or significant circumstances then you should seek feedback on the assessment in question to better understand where you went wrong.
- You could submit a Formal Complaint about the circumstances if the issues are concerning someone’s behaviour or your student experience.

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APPEAL STAGES

1. Informal Discussion
2. Formal Appeal
3. Eligibility Check
4. Review

Please read the [University guidance](#) to find out more about these stages.

DEADLINES

Be aware of the academic appeals deadlines:

- The clock starts ticking the day your *formal* (not provisional) results are published- so you must carefully check your e-Vision and note the date. Ask at your TPO if you are unsure.
- You should discuss your results with someone appropriate in your College within 5 working days from the day your results were published. Always approach your personal tutor first.
- If you intend to proceed to Appeal, you must do so within 10 working days from the date of publication of your results
- If you are unhappy with the outcome of your Appeal- you can ask for a Review within 10 working days from the date of the Appeal decision.

GROUNDINGS FOR AN APPEAL

There are **three** grounds on which you can challenge a decision of the Board of Examiners. If you cannot identify at least one of the appeal grounds, your appeal will be rejected at the Eligibility Check stage. You can appeal on 1 or more of the grounds below:

1. Extenuating circumstances:

An extenuating circumstance is a serious or significant event, and its consequences, which have significantly impaired your academic performance.

Normally you should submit Extenuating Circumstances (ECs) within 5 working days of the deadline affected by the Extenuating Circumstances; this may involve more than 1 module.

If you didn't submit your ECs before your appeal, it is crucial to explain clearly and provide evidence why not. Not submitting your ECs before your Appeal does not mean your Appeal will be rejected- but you need to be very open and honest about why you were not able to submit your ECs on time.

If you have submitted extenuating circumstances already and these were rejected, you will need to provide new information and evidence and then explain why you were not able to disclose these details earlier.

Please note: you do not have to have missed an assessment deadline to submit Extenuating

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you do not have to have failed the assessment- you can still appeal the grade on grounds of extenuating circumstances even if you have passed the assessment.

2. Procedural irregularities:

Procedural irregularities are where the correct procedures in conducting examinations or assessing coursework were not followed and this has affected your results.

Procedural irregularities can involve any assessment and/or process but the Procedural irregularity must have an important effect on the outcome.

For example: if students were told that they could take a text book into the exam but on arrival are informed that they cannot, they would be disadvantaged by the misdirected preparation and revision.

As with any appeal, you will need to provide evidence of the procedural irregularity. In order to know if something has gone wrong, you need to know the process. For example: If you believe your work has not been marked properly, you need to know the process of marking in order to know that an error has occurred. Just believing your work was not marked properly is not a valid reason to appeal.

Senate Regulation 4 sets out the marking process in detail but this will not help unless you know what actually has happened with your work: Was the work moderated or 2nd marked? Did your work get sent to an External Examiner? Always seek further clarification from your personal tutor and/or Adviser at the Advice & Representation Centre (ARC).

3. Evidence of prejudice, bias or inadequate assessment:

- Evidence of prejudice, bias:

Where one or more Examiners or members of staff conducting an assessment demonstrate prejudice or bias against you.

As with any appeal, you will need to provide evidence of the bias or prejudice. As allegations of bias and prejudice may severely affect someone's professional career, your evidence must be strong and unequivocal.

- Inadequate assessment:

Where there is evidence of inadequate assessment on the part of one or more of the Examiners or members of staff conducting an assessment.

Do not get confused between an *Inadequate Assessment* and *Procedural Irregularity*, although they can interlink they are different grounds for appeal. Inadequate Assessment tends to relate to failure to adhere to marking practices whereas Procedural Irregularity relates to error in process.

You will need to provide evidence to show inadequate assessment has occurred. For example:

If you believe your work has not been marked properly and the feedback relating to your work does not make sense or is not applicable to your work, asking for verbal feedback is a good way to seek answers and possibly address your concerns.

Page 3 of 8

For fully hyperlinked version go to brunelstudents.com/advice/universityprocedures

It would also help to look through the module outline to ensure you have met all of the learning outcomes and objectives for the assessment in question. These actions will help you make a better appeal if you take that route or help you better understand your assessment and decide against appealing.

You are always welcome to discuss you appeal grounds with an ARC Adviser.

INFORMAL DISCUSSION

If you have considered the above options and you have identified that you may have grounds for an Appeal then you should approach your College for an informal discussion. It is your responsibility and you need to be proactive in arranging a meeting.

Before you submit your Appeal you **must** first arrange an informal meeting with an appropriate member of staff (e.g. your Personal Tutor, Supervisor, or Course Director).

This should be done **normally within 5 working days** of receiving your confirmed results. If you do not attempt to discuss this matter informally then you may not be permitted to enter the formal appeal process- unless you can demonstrate that you have made serious attempts to organise such informal meeting, but this has not been successful.

At the end of this Informal Discussion, or soon afterwards, you should receive a written confirmation of the discussion.

SUBMITTING AN ACADEMIC APPEAL

If you have attended the informal discussion and you still have concerns then you should consider submitting an Appeal.

You have **10 working days** from the date of the release of the results to complete the Appeal Form.

You must adhere to the 10 working days; if you require more time then you should request this, with reasons why, to your College.

You should use the Academic Appeal Form which can be downloaded [here](#) (or search Brunel Intranet for “Academic Appeals”)

Page 4 of 8

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Appeals are submitted electronically to: academic-appeals@brunel.ac.uk

You can still submit a hard copy if you have difficulties with electronic submission- please contact the Appeals, Complaints & Student Misconduct Manager in your College for advice and follow their instructions.

MAKING A START

It is often difficult to know where to start in explaining a situation, whether it is personal or academic, explaining honestly what has happened, to people you do not know; it can be a daunting task. The most logical way of explaining it would be to follow a chronology of the academic year (September – August).

You need to remember:

- That **dates** are vital; if you are not clear about when things happened, your Appeal might take longer to be investigated or it may be rejected.
- It is also important that you are clear what **assessments have been affected**, and how the events that you have experienced affected those assessments.
- Think about whether you spoke to anyone in your department or college about the circumstances you mention, and what advice you were provided with. If you have not spoken to anyone, you need to explain why.

- Don't just describe the circumstances were but explain the impact on you specifically, physically, mentally etc. No one will want to assume the level of impact or severity of your circumstances. Everyone's sensitivity or resilience is different, so talk about how **you** were affected. Make a clear connection between the event/procedural error/etc and your academic performance

WHAT SHOULD I PUT IN MY APPEAL FORM?

Page 5 of 8

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Apart from answering standard questions (for example what is your Student ID etc), there are few crucial points you have to explain:

- Whether the circumstances which have affected you could reasonably have been foreseen. This means whether it could have been expected or predicted using common sense.
- The duration and timing of the circumstance- especially whether the timeframe could have affected the assessment or revision period.
- The impact of the circumstance on your ability to undertake the assessment. In cases of medical circumstances, you will be expected to provide evidence from health professional, explaining not just the diagnosis but the potential effect of this diagnosis on your ability to study, revise, focus and perform well in assessment.
- Your desired outcome- this need to be realistic and achievable. You should discuss the best options with your personal tutor or senior tutor; they will know what is realistic.

Do not presume that the person making a judgment on your Appeal knows you (even if you have previously discussed the issues with them). You should ensure you provide all of the detail necessary, regardless of who will be making a decision on it.

When drafting your statement ensure that all of the information is there; your department will not read between the lines or make their own conclusions- if the information and evidence is not there then it will not be considered.

And finally- try to be orderly, concise and to the point- no one will want to wade through pages of

information which is not strictly relevant to your case.

EVIDENCE

Evidence is an absolute necessity; it is important that you get some sort of evidence to back up what you have said.

You need to explain what the evidence shows and how it substantiates your claim. It should also show how your circumstances correlate with the timing of the affected assessment.

Do not assume that such connections can be easily made by someone looking into your appeal.

Page 6 of 8

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If you are struggling to get hold of relevant evidence then you need to think outside the box. Think about whom you've talked too or who has witnessed you struggling. Think about close friends and family; can they confirm in a statement that what you are saying is true? A personal statement or letter with a date, telephone number and signature may be adequate.

If you have evidence in another language you will be required to get the documents translated which could take some time.

Never delay submitting your Appeal if you are waiting for evidence. Instead write on the Form confirming the evidence will follow (and a rough date of when it will be available). Please note however that your Appeal may not be considered until the evidence is received by your College.

WHAT CAN'T I APPEAL AGAINST?

- You cannot appeal because the result you have achieved is worse than you would have wished for, or worse than you feel you deserve.
- You cannot appeal "provisional" results- you must wait for formal results, confirmed by the Board of Examiners
- You cannot appeal because you disagree with academic judgment; a decision made by an examiner within their professional capacity and where no specified appeal grounds apply.

- You cannot use these appeal procedures to appeal a decision made by Residences (Halls), they have their own [procedures](#)
- You cannot use these appeal procedures to appeal an academic or non-academic disciplinary penalty. Please visit the [Disciplinaries](#) section of our website

ELIGIBILITY CHECK

Your College's Appeals Officer will look very carefully to establish the following:

1. Whether what you have submitted is an appeal, i.e. challenge to a decision made by the Board of Examiners
2. Whether you have appealed using one of the "appeal grounds"- see "Grounds for an Appeal" section above
3. Whether your appeal was made within the 10 working days deadline, and if not, whether you have explained the reason for the delay

Page 7 of 8

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4. Whether you have provided documents and evidence to support your case, and if this evidence is relevant and credible.

If you are unable to satisfy ALL of the above conditions, your appeal will be REJECTED without any further consideration or proper investigation. You must get it right first time as you will not have another opportunity to present your case to the University. Your next step will be to submit a case to the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator](#).

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL OUTCOMES?

If your Appeal is upheld (i.e. successful), the Appeals Panel will explain what would be your next step; you may be offered an uncapped re-assessment, or may be allowed to return to your course if you have been withdrawn; the range of options is very wide and will be tailored individually to your circumstances.

If your Appeal is rejected, you can request that procedures undertaken during your Appeal are reviewed. This will **not** be another chance to present your case- the University will only make sure that your Appeal has been considered fully and correctly.

In both outcomes you will receive a decision letter, outlining your options.

WHAT ADVICE AND HELP CAN I EXPECT TO RECEIVE FROM THE ADVICE & REPRESENTATION CENTRE?

We are able to assist with the following:

- Helping you to decide if appealing is the best course of action for you;
- Explaining how the process works;
- Helping you to define your appeal grounds
- Helping you think of evidence to provide
- Advising you on how to structure your appeal form; and
- Advising you on next steps if necessary

THE ADVICE AND REPRESENTATION CENTRE

Union of Brunel Students
Hamilton Centre, Kingston Lane
Uxbridge, Middlesex
UB8 3PH

Call: 01895 269 169
Email: advice@brunel.ac.uk
Website: brunelstudents.com/advice

Page 8 of 8