

justask

A GUIDE TO...

ACADEMIC APPEALS

From Bristol SU, providing support for:

- Understanding grounds for appeal
- The appeal process
- Making your appeal stronger



BRISTOL SU
the best student life

This leaflet is intended to be used by Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate students as a general guide to appealing against a decision made by a faculty board in respect of an assessment or a students' progress. If you are a Postgraduate Research student, the process of submitting an appeal is slightly different – please contact a Just Ask Adviser if you require assistance.

This leaflet should be read in conjunction with the University's Exam Regulations and your faculty and school handbooks. For details of how to appeal against a decision made, or a penalty imposed please speak to an Adviser in the Just Ask team.

GROUNDS OF APPEAL

The University will only consider an appeal on specific grounds:

1. There has been a material irregularity in the decision making process sufficient to require that the decision can be re-examined. For example, if the University has not correctly followed its own procedures.
2. A student's performance in assessment has been affected by illness or other factors that the student was unable for good reason to divulge before the meeting of the board. See our separate Extenuating Circumstances guidance for more information.
3. A penalty imposed under the Examination Regulations is wrong or disproportionate. This refers to penalties for exam offences, such as cheating or plagiarism.

You cannot appeal against the University's academic judgement - that is, on the basis that its assessment of the academic quality of your work is wrong.

If you experience problems with your supervision or teaching, you must raise these with your school or department as soon as possible. Appeals raising such problems for the first time will not be considered.

Similarly, if you are appealing because you were ill or had any other problems that had a serious impact on your academic performance, your appeal will not be considered if you did not bring these to the University's attention at the time

without good reason (please see our Extenuating Circumstances guidance).

HOW TO APPEAL

The appeal process involves two stages: the Local Stage and the University Stage (explained in more detail below). The University expects that students attempt to resolve matters at the Local Stage before a University Stage appeal will be considered. To start the appeal process you should complete and submit an appeal form to your Faculty Education Manager (FEM) within 15 working days of receiving the decision you wish to appeal against.

You can download a copy of the appeal form at: bris.ac.uk/secretary/studentrulesregs/examregs

Please ensure you complete all sections of the form, outlining:

- On what grounds you are appealing
- The reasons you are dissatisfied with the appealable decision
- What outcomes you are seeking

You must include any supporting evidence (e.g. medical evidence) at this time, unless there are good reasons why this is not possible. If you are waiting for evidence do not delay submitting your appeal, but explain that the evidence is not yet available and that you will send it in as soon as possible.

THE LOCAL STAGE

At the Local Stage, your faculty considers your appeal. Normally the appeal will be reviewed on behalf of the Dean of the Faculty by the Faculty Education Director. An additional academic member of staff with no prior involvement with the appeal may also be invited to assist in the decision making process.

AN APPEAL CAN ONLY BE MADE ON THE GROUNDS ON THE PREVIOUS PAGE AND YOU MUST STATE THE OUTCOME YOU ARE SEEKING FROM YOUR APPEAL.

**A JUST ASK ADVISER CAN GIVE YOU FEEDBACK ON YOUR APPEAL FORM BY EMAIL:
BRISTOLSU-JUSTASK@BRISTOL.AC.UK**

If you wish to attend the review where your appeal will be considered, you should make this clear when submitting your appeal. You are entitled to be accompanied to the review by an Adviser, friend or representative. However, there is no guarantee that requests to attend appeal review meetings will be granted, and in practice we find that most such requests aren't granted

A Bristol SU Just Ask Adviser can attend the review with you in an advisory capacity. If the reviewer considers the appeal can be resolved locally they may:

- Refer the student's extenuating circumstances (ECs) to be reconsidered by an ECs committee if they don't think enough weight was originally given to the ECs.
- Allow the student to submit late evidence of ECs if they believe that the student had good reason not to submit them at the appropriate time.
- Refer the appealable decision for reconsideration by a board of examiners with or without a recommended outcome.

If the reviewer decides that the appeal cannot be resolved locally, you may ask for your appeal to be progressed to the University Stage (see below). You should be notified of the outcome of the review within 25 working days of submitting your appeal form to the FEM, or if your appeal is out of time, within 25 working days of the University confirming it will accept submission of a late appeal.

THE UNIVERSITY STAGE

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the Local Stage, or if you have not received a response within the 25 working day time limit, you can request that your appeal is progressed to the University Stage. You do this by making the request in writing to the Student Complaints Officer (student-complaints@bristol.ac.uk) **within 5 working days of the Local Stage decision**, or from the deadline for the University to respond to you expiring.

All you need to do within the 5 working day limit is register your intention to take your appeal to the University Stage. A brief email stating this is sufficient. You can then spend some time preparing a more detailed letter to explain the reasons why you are dissatisfied with the decision at Local Stage. At this point you have the opportunity to explain what happened at the Local Stage and why you are not happy with the outcome.

It can be helpful to use the Local Stage decision letter as a template – the points made in this letter are the points you will need to counter at University Stage. A Just Ask Adviser can give you feedback on your draft University Stage letter.

APPEAL REVIEW PANEL

The first part of the University Stage of the appeals process is assessment by a Review Panel. The Panel will normally be made up of three academic staff members who have had no prior involvement in your case. The panel will review your appeal form and supporting evidence and any other relevant information provided by the University and may:

- Refer the matter back to your faculty for reconsideration with, or without, a recommendation for resolution
- Dismiss the appeal, and issue a completion of procedures letter with the reasons for dismissal
- Recommend that a council committee be appointed to hear the appeal

This part of the appeals process does not involve a hearing.

COUNCIL COMMITTEE HEARING

The final part of the University Stage can be a hearing before a Committee of Council, the University's governing body. However, in practice this rarely happens. If recommended by the Review Panel, a Committee of three members will be appointed to hear your appeal. A student sabbatical officer will be appointed as an additional member of the Committee at your request.

At the hearing, both you and your school or department will have the opportunity to argue your cases. If you do not wish to attend the hearing, you can present your case in writing. You must provide the Council Committee in advance with all evidence and documentation that you wish to rely on in your appeal, so that a bundle of documents can be prepared for everyone to use.

You can be accompanied by an Adviser, friend or representative for support or representation. A Just Ask Adviser can act in this capacity for you – please contact us if you require any assistance.



OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT ADJUDICATOR FOR HIGHER EDUCATION (OIA)

The OIA is an independent body which can review student complaints. It can only consider cases after you have received a Completion of Procedures letter, which will be issued once the University's internal procedures have been exhausted. The OIA will not review issues that have not been through the University's internal procedures first. Please visit www.oiahe.org.uk for further information.

SUPPORT FROM THE STUDENTS' UNION

The rules and regulations governing an appeal can seem extremely complex. If you need advice at **any** stage of the process please contact us (see useful details). We aim to help to clarify the rules and regulations for you, and can advise you on completing the appeal form or drafting a University Stage letter. We can also accompany you to meetings with the University if you require support or assistance, and can assist you in submitting an application to the OIA.

TIPS TO MAKE YOUR APPEAL STRONGER

- Be mindful of the time limits: submitting an appeal and progressing your appeal to the University Stage have **strict deadlines**.
- Remember to raise issues as they happen, not months later. The University will not consider an appeal based on issues that you could have raised earlier.
- Tell your school or department about anything that has affected your performance in an exam or other assessment as soon as you can (see our Extenuating Circumstances guidance).
- Keep copies of any correspondence you send or receive.
If you need advice on any aspect of the appeals procedure, at any stage in the process, please contact an Adviser at Just Ask. We are here to support you through the process and the sooner you seek advice from us the sooner we can help you.
- Keep copies of any correspondence you send or receive. If you need advice on any aspect of the appeals procedure, at any stage in the process, please contact a Just Ask Adviser. We are here to support you

through the process and the sooner you seek advice from us the sooner we can help you.

- Avoid making your appeal too “narrative” and just describing events – always try and relate your circumstances back to the grounds you are appealing on.
- Provide as much detail as possible, but don't waffle! Stick to the issues you wish to raise in a clear, concise manner – be clear about what you're asking for.
- If your appeal is unsuccessful, remember you can apply to the OIA for a review of your case once you have received a Completion of Procedures letter (if your circumstances fall within one of the grounds that they are able to investigate).

Disclaimer: This leaflet is only intended to be read as a guide to the appeals process, and must be read in conjunction with the University's Examination Regulations and your Student Handbook.

bristol.ac.uk/secretary/studentrulesregs/examregs

useful details



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If you have a question that is not covered
in this leaflet please visit Just Ask or email
bristolsu-justask@bristol.ac.uk