

This document is intended to be an informal guide to Formal Academic Appeals which are described in full in Section 6 of the “Procedures relating to student academic appeals” found here: <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/policies/calendar/part1/otherregs/appeals/>. Please note, the procedure covers a variety of types of appeal for which specific information is given in the other sections of the link above. This FAQ guidance is specifically intended for those students on Taught programmes who may be seeking to submit a **Formal Stage Appeal**.

Useful glossary of common terms			
FCT	Faculty Cases Team	ADE	Associate Dean Education
UCT	University Cases Team	APAC	Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committee (also known as an Exam Board)
SEP	Senior Education Partner		
DEP	Deputy Education Partner		
APVCE	Associate Pro Vice Chancellor Education		

What is a Formal Appeal?

A Formal Appeal is the most common type of academic appeal at the University. It is one which is made against an academic decision or recommendation made by an Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committee (APAC, also known as Exam Boards). The decisions made at APACs relate to marks and progression on a programme of study, and following the notification of those decisions a student may choose to submit a Formal Appeal where they believe it has unduly affected their academic progress. The Formal Appeal stage is the first stage of appeal following an APAC.

What is a formal appeal?

A Formal Appeal is the first stage of appeal. If you feel you have grounds to appeal you will need to submit a formal appeal form, to the relevant team, in line with the timescales laid out in the procedures. There are criteria you need to meet in order for your appeal to be eligible for consideration, and you will also be required to supply any relevant evidence to support your case. If you are unsure about any of this, there are support teams who can help you.

What is a review appeal?

An Appeal Review is an appeal against the outcome of a Formal stage appeal. You can only submit an appeal review form if you have had a formal outcome to a formal stage appeal and you need to apply for appeal review within strict timescales, according to strict criteria.

What are the grounds for appeal?

This is a summary of the three grounds under which an appeal can be made:

- a) Material circumstances affecting your performance which a Board of Examiners had not been aware of before reaching its decision, but only if you can present reasonable grounds why these circumstances had not been presented to the Board before its meeting (i.e. you must provide evidence demonstrating why you were unable to present these circumstances via the mitigation procedures).
- b) Procedural irregularity in the application of assessment procedures.
- c) Prejudice or bias by the Examiners and/or makers.

What can I appeal at the formal stage?

There are 6 areas relating to the process of assessment which can be appealed, four of which specifically relate to Formal Appeals for Taught Students:

1. A formal assessment result.
2. A degree classification.
3. A decision consequential to an academic failure e.g. termination of registration.
4. *(This one applies just to research students) A decision relating to their registration status, such as transfer to continuation status or early submission of thesis etc.)*
5. A decision reached is one which no reasonable body, properly directing itself, could have arrived at (for Mitigation appeals).
6. *(this one must be submitted via the Unsatisfactory progress form) A decision consequential to unsatisfactory academic progress.*

What can I not appeal?

There are some things which cannot be appealed. These include:

- Academic judgement for example of a marker, moderator or external examiner.
- Dissatisfaction with the Formative assessment of work by academic staff.
- Matters of dispute (these should be raised by the student under the Complaints Procedure).

Matters pertaining to the provision of a service, misinformation, issues with facilities or the quality of teaching or supervision, should be raised under the [Student Complaint Procedure](#); these are not strictly speaking academic decisions and therefore will not be addressed under the Academic Appeals procedures.

More information on exclusions from appeal is at section 4 of the procedure.

How do I make the board of examiners (or APAC) aware of my circumstances?

Some students tell us that they had personal circumstances that affected them during their studies but that they didn't know how to tell the board of examiners. This actually refers to the [mitigation policy](#) available to students throughout their studies. These [procedures](#) are the way in which the University takes account of situations where students find themselves facing difficult personal circumstances and/or personal health issues.

The options available to student via the mitigation policy are either extension or deferral. During the course of the year the mitigation committee and its delegates will make recommendations on mitigation applications. It is the advice of the Mitigation Committee which is considered by the APAC, and by these means that the 'Board of Examiners' are made aware of material circumstances which may be affecting a student's performance. It is not for the student themselves to present information to the Board of Examiners; so long as you have applied for mitigation at the appropriate time and provided all the necessary information within your mitigation application, due process can be followed.

Please note, the Appeals procedure states under 3.1 a) *"It is not sufficient to say that the student was unaware of the procedure for submitting a mitigation request, or that they chose not to do so at the time."* We are unable to uphold appeals where students have simply chosen not to apply for mitigation at the point of their assessment.

Why am I not able to just ask for my grade to be increased as a remedy to my appeal?

Chapter 10.1.1 of the Teaching Quality Assurance Manual notes that the University “*measures students’ actual achievement rather than potential achievement*”, meaning the mark awarded for a submitting formal assessment cannot be challenged and will not be changed on the basis of material circumstances. It is highly unusual for a student’s grade to be increased as a result of an appeal. The possibility of a deferral in the assessment/module appealed would be more a likely outcome and only if this were applicable to your case. In such circumstances we are careful to remind students that if a deferral were offered and accepted as a result of an appeal, the mark from the original assessment would be discarded and the mark for the deferral - whether higher or lower than the original assessment – would be retained.

For cases where grounds other than material circumstances were in question, such as a procedural irregularity in the marking process, the team would look for evidence that demonstrated that an error had been made on the part of the University. It would still be unusual for a student’s grade to be increased on this basis. It is more likely that the outcome would recommend a review of the marking of the piece of work. In such cases students should be aware that the mark may change as a result of a re-mark, but it may decrease or increase, or it may result in the same mark being agreed upon even after review, so students should not assume that requesting a mark increase is necessarily going to result in the desired end result.

I made a mistake with my submission, why is this not grounds for appeal?

The procedure lists under its grounds for appeal ‘Procedural irregularities occurring in parts of the assessment procedures, or in reaching another academic decision, and that this procedural irregularity, which has disadvantaged the student, was significant enough to have materially affected the decision/recommendation made, rendering it unsound’. This pertains to actions of the University or staff responsible for administering those procedures. It does not account for ‘Human Error’ or procedural irregularity on the part of the student.

When can I appeal?

You will have a ten working-day window in which you may submit a Formal Appeal. This window begins on the day on which you are officially notified of an APAC decision. Typically, this will be the progression notification as the end of a stage of study, such as the release of your end of year results or, if required, the release of your reassessment results.

As an example of the ten working-day window: if your end of year results and progression decision is notified to you on Friday 16th June; the ten working-day appeal period closes on Friday 30th June.

Can I appeal early?

If you submit your appeal early i.e. before the ten working-day window opens, you will very likely be told that your appeal cannot be considered at this time.

Please be aware that assessment results released to you during the course of the year are indicative or provisional marks only i.e. they might still be subject to change. As such, the decisions relating to those marks are not yet formalised as the APAC will not yet have made their decision on those marks. The same applies to decisions made by the Mitigation Committee, who report into the APACs at the close of the Academic year. Therefore, until those marks and decisions have been finalised by the APAC, any appeal will be deemed to be ‘too early’ and you will be advised to resubmit it following the formal APAC notification, if you still feel you have grounds to do so.

The main exception to this would be if your case relates to severe mitigating circumstances (such as hospitalisation) which meant that you were unable to apply for mitigation for your assessment(s) using the mitigation process at the normal time for mitigation applications. In such cases, you will be required to provide evidence that you were unable to apply for mitigation at the appropriate time, and a judgement will be made as to whether or not your appeal can be considered early.

Can I appeal late?

An appeal submitted later than the ten working-day working window will normally only be considered in very exceptional circumstances.

Such circumstances would likely be where you can evidence that you were unable to engage with the procedures at the appropriate time. In such cases, you will be required to provide evidence that you were unable to submit your appeal within the normal timeframe, and a judgement will be made as to whether or not your appeal can be considered late.

The University has strict timescales in appeal cases to be equitable to all students, and to ensure that the student body is treated consistently. The University can only accept a late appeal if a reasonable ground for late submission can be presented, as stated in section 4.4.

How do I submit an appeal?

To submit a formal academic appeal you need to:

- 1) complete a Formal Appeal form in full and save it as a Word Document or .pdf file
- 2) ensure you are able to provide all the evidence to support your case
- 3) send your Formal appeal form and evidence within the ten working-day window by e-mail to the relevant e-mail addresses below:

- Faculty of Environment, Science and Economy - ESE-Facultycases@ex.ac.uk
- Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences - HASS-Facultycases@ex.ac.uk
- Faculty of Health and Life Sciences - HLS-Facultycases@ex.ac.uk
- For students based at our Penryn Campus - Penryn-Facultycases@ex.ac.uk
- For all Postgraduate Research appeals - pgr-student-cases@exeter.ac.uk

For any other type of appeal (such as review stage appeals) please contact studentcases@exeter.ac.uk.

Can someone else submit for me?

The University is unable to accept appeals submitted by third parties (including any health professions, parent, or tutor of the student concerned). Nor are we able to discuss details of an appeal with any third parties without the written consent of the student. This is due to data protection regulations and is intended to safeguard your personal information. All appeals must be received from students directly, ideally from their University of Exeter email address.

Which form do I use?

The formal appeal form is at section 6.1 of the Procedures, it is entitled 'Formal Appeal Form'. Other forms listed in the procedures relate to other types of appeal and should not be used in appealing against marks or progression decisions made by an APAC.

What format should I use?

Please submit your formal appeal form in Word or .pdf format. It is not possible for the team to access documents submitted via share facilities such as “google-docs” or one-drive.

What evidence do I need to provide?

You are required to supply any evidence you feel is relevant to support your case. The evidence should be independent, i.e. not written by a family member, for example. If it is medical evidence this should be verifiable (we will not take steps to validate your evidence for you, you must do this yourself), and if it was originally produced in a language other than English it is your responsibility to provide an authenticated translation.

However, it is entirely your decision as to what evidence you supply to support your appeal. If you need advice on what will best serve your purpose we recommend that you contact the Students’ Guild Advice Unit, or your Welfare Advisor in your Hub or Info Point.

Please note, our procedure states that it is the responsibility of the student to provide their own supporting evidence, especially if this is medical evidence as there can be issues with data confidentiality if we are attempting to obtain anything on your behalf. If the evidence is already held by another team at the University, we may contact them to request a copy, but this may cause delays in our consideration of your appeal, so it is best if you provide such information with your appeal form if you can.

What if I don’t have my evidence in time to meet the deadline?

If you intend to submit an appeal but do not have access to all your evidence yet, please ensure to submit your Formal Appeal Form within the 10 working-day window with a note to explain when you expect to supply your evidence.

Where a student declares the pending evidence in their appeal form we are typically able to allow up to two further weeks for students to provide additional evidence. We would liaise with you to agree a reasonable deadline for your remaining evidence, and we would then hold the consideration of your appeal to give you an opportunity to provide this evidence. If you do not supply your evidence within that new timescale, it will very likely be necessary to consider your appeal without the remaining evidence, so you should ensure to contact the team if you think there may be further delays.

The 30-day response window would start at the point we received all the additional evidence, or from the evidence deadline, whichever is sooner. This does mean that additional evidence can cause a delay to the outcome for the appeal, therefore, the sooner you are able to provide this evidence the sooner we are able to proceed with your case.

Will my ILP and relevant medical records be available to those hearing my appeal?

It is your responsibility to provide any and all information which you feel is pertinent to your appeal. In some circumstances we may seek to clarify your evidence by cross referencing this with information held on file by other teams within the University, including the Wellbeing teams. We would only request information which was deemed relevant to the matters raised in your appeal, as per the General Data Protection Regulations.

If the evidence is already held by another team at the University (such as medical evidence you supplied with an earlier mitigation application), we may contact the relevant team to request a copy, but this can cause delays in our consideration of your appeal, so it is best if you provide such information with your appeal form if you can.

Who will see my appeal and evidence?

Appeal forms and evidence may be seen by senior Faculty staff such as the Senior Education Partner and Professional Services staff administering your case. Please be assured that Appeals and evidence are handled in strict confidence in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation requirements.

Is it possible to meet and discuss my appeal with someone?

The Formal Stage appeal process is a paper-based exercise; the decisions of the APAC are notified to students in writing and the evidence required to support an appeal must be documented. Therefore, typically all consideration would be done without the need to meet with you or discuss your appeal with you directly. However, if it is causing you distress and you need to talk through your concerns with someone there are Wellbeing teams who are happy to support you during this process.

When will I know the outcome of my appeal?

You will normally receive an acknowledgement of receipt for your appeal submission within a week, this will include details of the date by which you can expect to receive your outcome.

A formal response will be e-mailed to you within 30 calendar days of the Faculty Cases Team receiving your full Formal Appeal submission. This response will typically take the form of an Outcome Letter.

What if there is a delay to my outcome?

At very busy times of the year or in the case of a very complex appeal more time may be needed to process your appeal. If this is the case for your appeal, you will be notified by e-mail. Where possible we will clarify a new date by which you can expect to receive your outcome.

Unfortunately, it is not normally possible for the team to provide more regular updates on the progress of an appeal whilst it is being processed as this detracts from the time needed to process outcomes.

Can you provide my outcome sooner than the 30 days?

Unfortunately, it is not possible for us to guarantee a response sooner than 30 calendar days. Some appeals require lengthy consideration, and it may not be possible to provide a fair and reasonable outcome as quickly as you might hope. However, the team does take steps to identify priority appeals, such as those where future assessments may be impacted by the decision being made.

We do appreciate the situation can be stressful for students, so we do our best to provide outcomes as soon as reasonably possible.

What if I have reassessments scheduled which form part of my appeal?

Students who have planned assessment re-sits should prepare for those and if necessary, sit their assessment as expected while an appeal is pending, as there is no way of knowing if an appeal outcome will void these submissions until the outcome has been agreed.

What can I expect the outcome to say?

The outcome to an appeal depends on the case and evidence supplied. In general terms, there are four types of outcome:

- Upheld (successful)
- partially upheld (partially successful – this may be where we are unable to offer the remedy you requested but can make an offer of some sort)
- not upheld (unsuccessful)
- or dismissed (typically this would be where, on the face of it, your appeal had no grounds for consideration or investigation).

Your outcome letter will give some details of the reason(s) for the decision as well as the overall decision.

In some instances where appeals are upheld or partially upheld there may be more than one option available to you. These will be outlined to you in the outcome letter and, if you are satisfied with the outcome, you will be asked to contact a particular team to confirm your choice of the options offered. You must ensure to do so within the timeframe outlined to you in the letter.

Why is the outcome so formal?

The outcome letters form part of a formal process, designed to appropriately explore academic decisions but also to ensure that Students receive fair and reasonable treatment in line with anyone else who may have found themselves in the same situation. The response to your appeal should address all the issues you raise in your appeal, although in some cases referring directly to these issues may be quite triggering for anyone reading the letter, so it won't necessarily name each incident or impacted moment. This means that the letters themselves can be quite long, official documents. This reflects the fact that a thorough and meaningful review of your case has taken place, and the matters raised have been taken seriously. Some students do struggle with this level of detail or formality, so they are encouraged to reach out for help and support in reading and understanding their letters if necessary.

To ensure parity of treatment, some of the wording in the outcome letter may sound a bit generic. It is not intended to be minimise the struggles you may have faced, but for data protection reasons the letters would typically not refer to your personal information or specific incidents or examples you have given in your appeal. The letter may not reference these matters directly, but please be reassured you that all appeals are read thoroughly, and consideration is given to every aspect your raise.

What if I am not satisfied with my outcome?

If you are not satisfied with the outcome to your Formal Appeal, you may submit an Appeal Review appeal against the Formal Appeal decision. If you believe you have grounds to request a review of the decision made at the Formal Stage you should follow the procedures detailed in section 7 of the appeals procedure by sending your completed Appeal Review form and any other evidence or documentation to studentcases@exeter.ac.uk within 10 days of being notified of the outcome of your Formal Appeal.

Please note, in order to be equitable to all students the Faculty Cases Team do not reconsider appeals at the Formal Stage, this is only possible by taking your case to the review stage.

Where can I seek support with my appeal?

We do understand that submitting an appeal can be a new experience for some students and the circumstances that they wish to raise may be stressful. As the team administrating the process the Faculty Cases Team can provide advice on the procedures but is unable to support students with the contents of their appeals. Instead, we recommend the following support teams:

that students contact the Students' Guild Advice Unit on advice@exeterguild.com or The Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union on advice@thesu.org.uk who give guidance on what students can expect from this process. If the complaint raises a wellbeing concern, the student can contact the [Wellbeing service](#) (Streatham and St Luke's) or [Student Support](#) (Penryn) for support.

You may wish to seek support from the following as relevant to you:

- For Wellbeing support please see <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/undergraduate/life/wellbeing/>
- You may also consider contacting the Student Health Centre or your own GP / healthcare provider
- For students based on Streatham and St Luke's campuses the Students' Guild Advice Unit can offer independent, confidential and impartial information, advice and support to Exeter students involved in a University procedure. To contact them please email advice@exeterguild.com.
- For students based on our Cornwall campuses the FXU can offer independent, confidential and impartial information, advice and support to students studying on our Cornwall campuses. To contact them please email advice@thesu.org.uk or call on telephone number 01326 255861.
- If you already engaging with one of the services on offer, such as your Welfare Advisor in your Hub or info point, we would encourage you to continue to engage with this support during the appeal process. They can be a great help during periods of personal difficulty in your studies.
- We are also able to assist students who require specific support. If you are a disabled student or require reasonable adjustments, we may be able to adjust our processes to help you. If you think we can help you by making some adjustments, please let us know as soon as possible. We will then consider what can be offered.

What happens if several students want to submit an appeal about the same thing?

Students who want to appeal about the same thing can submit a group appeal. The group will need to nominate a member of the group to act as their spokesperson and key contact for the Faculty Cases Team during the appeal process. It is also the responsibility of the group spokesperson to report back to members of the group about the outcome of the appeal.

In the case of group appeals each student will need to give their expressed consent that they wish to be part of the group appeal by signing the statement for appeal. (This can be a listed of typed names rather than handwritten signatures, but the students should each be copied into the email submission of the form so as to act as confirmation of their knowledge of, and agreement to the submitting of, the appeal.

If no member of the group is willing to act as the group spokesperson they may appoint a member of the Students' Guild or Student Union to represent them through the appeal process.

Will I be able to attend graduation if I haven't had my outcome yet?

Submitting a Formal Appeal does not normally in itself prevent you from attending graduation, but there are strict guidelines on who is eligible to attend. For example, students must have already obtained a certain number of credits to be deemed eligible, (more information can be found [here](#)). Therefore, if you do not meet this criteria at the point of appeal it is likely you will not be able to attend the up-coming ceremonies. There may however be the opportunity to attend a ceremony at a later date depending on the outcome of your appeal and any further study you are due to undertake. If you are unsure and want to check whether your attendance at the ceremony has been confirmed you should contact SID@ex.ac.uk.

If you are in a position where you meet the criteria to be eligible to attend and you are making an appeal about your classification or similar, then it's likely that you will still be able to attend the ceremony whilst awaiting the outcome of your appeal. You may receive an empty envelope pending final confirmation of your classification, but please be reassured, students are not processed in order of classification at the ceremony, and only your name and degree programme are mentioned when you cross the stage so nobody will be aware that your degree has not been conferred. Therefore, this should not impact on your experience.

If your appeal is subsequently upheld and details of your degree are updated then your documentation may need to be updated in some way and you may be asked to return the original certificate and / or transcript and your new documents would then be forwarded to you by mail once the outcome of your appeal has been confirmed. This will not be a problem: the Student Information Desk handles this sort of thing.

For advice and information on graduation please visit [Graduation | Graduation | University of Exeter](#) or speak to the Student Information Desk.

Will I still be able to get my Graduate Visa?

Information pending