

Guide to the Appeals Procedure

Introduction

There may be an occasion when you feel unhappy with the decision made by the Unit Assessment Board, the Board of Examiners or the Extenuating Circumstances Officer. If this is the case, you can lodge an appeal.

This guide is intended to explain in a straightforward manner the processes you should follow if you think you have grounds for an appeal. However, this is a guidance document only and should not be relied upon alone. The guide should be read along with the relevant appeals section of the assessment regulations for your course. These regulations are contained in the Academic Regulations available on the website at www.port.ac.uk/assessmentandregulations.

We will treat any documentation associated with your appeal confidentially, both that produced by you and by other parties. You can be helped, and accompanied to any meetings during the process, by a friend or a representative of the Students' Union.

It will be necessary for the University to consider your appeal against certain criteria as set out in the Regulations and in the light of any evidence you submit. It is possible that you may not receive the outcome you want, but whatever the outcome, we will give your appeal serious consideration under the regulations and inform you of the reasons for the decision and action taken.

If your appeal is upheld, we will meet your reasonable expenses incurred in making the appeal, up to a maximum of £75. We will need you to present an account of your expenses and all relevant receipts.

How are academic assessments made?

All assessment results are considered by a Unit Assessment Board, which sets the final marks for each assessment and assigns credit for units based on these marks. Another body, the Board of Examiners, then makes decisions about your academic progress and recommendation of awards (for example, certificates, diplomas and degrees).

For further information on this subject, please see the Examination and Assessment Regulations.

Getting advice

If you think an academic decision is incorrect, you may need advice about the options open to you and whether your expectations are realistic.

The following people can advise you how the appeals procedure works and how best to deal with the matter.

Your personal tutor or supervisor

Every student has a personal tutor or, if you are a research student, a supervisor. This member of staff may be the most appropriate person to contact for information on how the assessment was marked and whether you have grounds for an appeal.

A student representative

If you would prefer to talk to another student and get advice, you can speak to a Sabbatical Officer at the Students' Union. There is at least one Sabbatical Officer who has received training on the appeals procedure as part of their work and will have a good understanding of how the procedure works. Your course representative will be able to advise you which is the best Sabbatical Officer to approach, or alternatively go to www.upsu.net/sabbs.

The Students' Union (UPSU)

UPSU offers professional advice and support through the academic support team in every aspect of the appeals procedure within the University and beyond. The team can assist at any stage within the appeals process, including providing advice prior to an academic decision being reached. A representative from the Students' Union can accompany you to any interviews, panels and hearings, should you find yourself in that position. Please contact the Academic Caseworker at the Students' Union by emailing them on academicsupport@upsu.net or

telephoning them on 023 9284 5310. This service is available to all University of Portsmouth students.

The Head of Department

Your course is located in a department and the Head has responsibility for all students and staff associated with the department. They will have a good understanding of how the assessment boards have worked and will be able to advise on procedural matters, including whether you need to approach the Unit Assessment Board or the Board of Examiners in dealing with your appeal.

The Assistant Registrar (Assessments and Student Regulations)

The Assistant Registrar (Assessments and Student Regulations) deals directly with the appeals procedure and can advise whether you have grounds for an appeal. The Assistant Registrar can be contacted in Academic Registry, University House or by phone on 023 9284 3468.

What are the grounds for appeal?

There are limited grounds on which an appeal will be considered. These are any of the following:

- a) If there had been a material and significant administrative error in the information received and considered by the Extenuating Circumstances Officer, the Unit Assessment Board and/or the Board of Examiners.
- b) If the assessments had not been conducted in accordance with the approved regulations for the programme of study.
- c) If some other material irregularity had occurred in the procedures of the Extenuating Circumstances Officer, the Unit Assessment Board and/or the Board of Examiners.
- d) If the decision made by the Extenuating Circumstances Officer was perverse by reference to the evidence supplied by the student.
- e) If the student had been prevented from attending or submitting an assessment artefact by illness or other good cause that related to the student's personal circumstances, that she or he had been unable, for a sound and acceptable reason related to the circumstances themselves, to divulge before the deadline for extenuating circumstances.

Please note: The ground for appeal described at e) might be a situation when an Extenuating Circumstances Form could be submitted.

However, you cannot use the appeals procedure for making known any extenuating circumstances after decisions have been made, unless it can be shown that the circumstances themselves prevented you from using the Extenuating Circumstances procedure. For example, if you were rushed to hospital on the morning of an examination and kept in beyond the end of the semester, you could not have used the Extenuating Circumstances Form and the reason would clearly relate to the circumstances themselves.

I want to appeal – how do I do that?

You should first seek an interview with the Chair of the Unit Assessment Board, the Chair of the Board of Examiners or the Extenuating Circumstances Officer, depending on which element of the decision you are appealing about (as explained in the introduction to this leaflet) to clarify your position.

If, after this interview, you wish to appeal, you have ten working days from the date on which the decisions of the Board or Officer were published to complete and submit the appeal/complaint form at the end of this guide. You should send a hard copy of the form plus any additional documents to the Assistant Registrar (Assessments and Student Regulations) in Academic Registry in University House.

The Assistant Registrar (Assessments and Student Regulations) will check whether your appeal is valid by checking it against the allowed grounds of appeal. If your appeal is not valid, the Assistant Registrar (Assessments and Student Regulations) will return the form to you with advice on what, if anything, you can do to pursue the matter further.

If your appeal is valid according to the grounds of appeal, the Assistant Registrar (Assessments and Student Regulations) will forward the appeal to the Academic Registrar who, with an independent member of the Academic Council, will interview you to find out the basis of your appeal. If the Academic Registrar decides that there is no case to answer, your appeal will fail and no further action will be taken.

If the Academic Registrar believes that there is a case to answer, an Appeals Committee will be appointed. The Appeals Committee will decide, after further investigation and possibly a further interview with you, whether the decision of the Board should be reviewed. If this is recommended, the Board will reconsider your assessment as soon as possible and will tell the Academic Registrar its decision, which will then be passed to you.

There is also the option that, where the Academic Registrar and/or the independent member of the Academic Council feel that your case is a strong one, they can recommend action to be taken without involving an Appeals Committee.

Requesting a review of a mark

If you feel there has been a mistake with the mark you have received for a piece of work, you may be able to request a review of the mark. You can only do this if:

- a) there had been a material and significant administrative error in the way the mark was determined – for example, you submitted two pieces of work but only one of them was marked; or
- b) there had been a procedural irregularity in the assessment process as defined in the Examination and Assessment Regulations.

You cannot request a review of a mark simply because you disagree with the academic judgement of the person who gave the mark and any requests made on these grounds alone will be dismissed.

If you want to request a review of your mark, you should write to your Head of Department, explaining why you feel the mark is wrong and provide a copy of the work that you want to be reviewed, within ten working days of receiving the original mark. If the Head of Department feels that your request is valid, they will pass your work on to an appropriate member of academic staff to be remarked. Be aware that your mark may go down as well as up and that there is no appeal against the mark awarded as a result of the review.

If the Head of Department thinks that your request for a review is not valid, they will write to you explaining the reason for their decision. If you believe that the Head of Department's decision is wrong, you have ten working days from the day you received their decision to write to the Academic Registrar, explaining why you think the decision is wrong. The Academic Registrar will review the decision and inform you of the outcome of the review.

What if I still do not think my appeal was handled properly?

If you believe your appeal has still not been resolved properly after the Academic Registrar's review, you can apply to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for an independent review. The OIA handles individual complaints against higher education institutions once a student has exhausted the institution's internal complaints procedure, including academic appeals procedures.

Leaflets on the work of the OIA and scheme application forms are available from the Complaints Officer at University House or on the OIA website at www.oiahe.org.uk. In addition, the OIA can be contacted on 0118 959 9813 or by letter at the Fifth Floor, Thames Tower, Station Road, Reading, RG1 1LX.

I study online and rarely visit the University to make an appeal

It is not necessary to be resident at the University to lodge an appeal. You can still use the process set out above. The appeal/complaint form at the end of this guide can be printed out for completion and sent to the Assistant Registrar (Assessments and Student Regulations) in Academic Registry.

The appeal/complaint form is also available electronically from the University website at www.port.ac.uk/appealform.

Once your appeal/complaint form has been received, any discussions or interviews can be held over the telephone or, if you prefer, via video conferencing facilities. Please remember that, if your appeal is upheld, we will reimburse your reasonable expenses up to a maximum of £75. The outcome of your appeal will be put in writing to you by both email and post to ensure receipt.

I am registered for an award of the University but with a partner institution. Who do I lodge my appeal with?

You should initially try to discuss the matter with your local contact, but your appeal should be lodged with the institute carrying out the validation of the marks or awards.

Accessibility statement

This will depend on the arrangement that exists between the partner institution and the University of Portsmouth and you will need to determine this in discussions with your local contact.

Depending on the nature of the agreement, your appeal may either be heard under the appeal process of the partner institution or under the appeal process detailed here. You can also contact the University's Senior Registrar for Collaborative Programmes on 023 9284 5119 for more information on how to proceed.

The appeals procedure is designed to be accessible to all students. If you have any special needs that mean you are unable to use the appeals procedure in the way set out in this guide, please contact the Assistant Registrar (Assessments and Student Regulations) on 023 9284 3468 or at academicappeals@port.ac.uk to discuss how the process can be adjusted to fit your needs.

This guide is also available in alternative formats. Please contact the Assistant Registrar (Assessments and Student Regulations) for more details.

Finally

If you still have questions about the appeals procedure, please do not hesitate to contact the Assistant Registrar (Assessments and Student Regulations) on 023 9284 3468 or email academicappeals@port.ac.uk.

Issue date

Issued by Academic Registry, September 2014.

Disclaimer

We (the University of Portsmouth) have checked the information in this guide and believe that it is accurate at the time of going to press (September 2014). The University reserves the right to amend the current regulations as it deems necessary.

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STUDENT COMPLAINT/APEAL FORM

STUDENT TO COMPLETE

Student Registration No:

Family Name:

Forename(s):

Course (or Study Route) and year/level:

Address to which the outcome of this process should be sent:
.....
.....
.....
Postcode:
Email:

Unit affected (if applicable)

Artefact affected (if applicable)

Type of complaint: OR
Grounds of appeal:
Details of previous attempts to resolve the complaint:
.....

Evidence of complaint/appeal:
.....

Your preferred outcome:
.....

Student signature Date ... / ... / ...

Did you approach anyone for help in making this complaint? Yes No

If yes, was it:

- a student adviser?
- the VP Academic Affairs, UPSU?
- the University Complaints Officer?
- your course tutor?
- someone else?

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