



Graduate School Appeals Procedure

Grounds for appeal

Students may appeal against the result of an assessment or submission on one of the following grounds: that there were special circumstances affecting the student's performance such as illness or close family bereavement; that there is evidence of procedural irregularity in the conduct of the examination; or that there is evidence of unfair or improper assessment on the part of one or more of the examiners. An appeal cannot be just a disagreement with academic judgement.

PROCEDURE

Informal procedure

A student who believes that there are grounds for an appeal is encouraged, in the first instance, to discuss the matter within a maximum of 10 days of the publication of results with their Course Director to see whether the matter can be resolved informally. If a resolution of the matter cannot be reached at this level, the student may submit a formal appeal. In the case of Research Students any appeal should be made directly to the OU.

Formal Procedure

Stage 1 - Submission of appeal

- a. Students must submit a written appeal, attaching all relevant documentary evidence, to the Registrar within one week of exhausting the informal procedure.
- b. Documentary evidence of the relevant extenuating circumstances listed above will usually be required to proceed further. In the case of illness the student must provide medical evidence that the illness severely affected his/her ability to prepare for or perform during the assessment or submission and but for the illness the student would probably have passed or achieved a significantly higher mark.
- c. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that all relevant documentary evidence is presented to the Registrar at this stage.

Stage 2 - Initial review

- a. An initial review will be carried out by the Chair of the Graduate Management Committee (GMC) and the Registrar of the circumstances of the appeal and of any relevant evidence. They shall consider whether there are grounds for the appeal within two weeks of the formal submission.
- b. If it is considered that there are justifiable grounds for an appeal, the case will be referred to the Graduate School Appeals Panel.
- c. As soon as a decision is taken, the student will be informed if the appeal is going to stage 3 or being rejected. In the latter case, the student should be informed if a complaint might be appropriate.



Stage 3 - GS Appeals Panel

- a. The GS Appeals Panel shall be made up of the following: the Chair of the GMC; the Registrar; two members of the Graduate School academic staff to be nominated by the School Director; and one member external to the School.
- b. The members of the GS Appeals Panel should, wherever practicable, be independent of the circumstances that gave cause to the appeal.
- c. The GS Appeals Panel shall meet within two weeks of the case been forwarded to them by the Chair of the GMC and the Registrar. The procedure adopted by the GS Appeals Panel to deal with any particular submission shall be at the discretion of the Panel but may include inviting the student to present his/her case verbally to the Panel with any relevant witnesses.

Stage 4 - Decision

- a. Once the Panel has reached a decision it will usually be communicated verbally to the student within 24 hours with written confirmation to follow as soon as reasonably practicable. A record of the decision will be kept in the student's file.
- b. If the student has exhausted all appropriate AA procedures and is dissatisfied with a decision by the GS Appeals Panel or by the case being dismissed by the Chair of the GMC and the Registrar, he/she has the right to submit an appeal directly to the OU (OU Handbook for Validated Awards, appendix 3, section 6)
- c. If the student is dissatisfied with a decision of the OU, he/she can submit the appeal to the Office Of The Independent Adjudicator (OIA).