

Academic appeals for coursework students

What is an appeal?

The University of Sydney provides all enrolled students with an internal process for appealing decisions made by the University.

Common appeals include:

- a mark on an essay or exam
- the overall mark in a unit of study
- a fail grade or removal from a placement
- a finding of plagiarism or misconduct
- a decline of a special consideration or special arrangements application
- a decline of credit for previous study
- a decline of an application for a DC grade

Are there things I cannot appeal?

The University does not give a list of what can and cannot be appealed. It is up to you to clearly identify what you are appealing and make a well-reasoned argument.

Your appeal must identify a lack of due process, which means explaining how the decision failed to properly follow one or more University of Sydney policies or procedures, e.g. an essay marked without following the published marking criteria.

Examples of where you would not have strong reasons to appeal include:

- receiving a poor mark or grade alone is not a reason for appeal
- working hard and unexpectedly failing is not a reason for an appeal
- simple extensions (up to 2 working day extensions at the discretion of your unit coordinator) are informal arrangements and cannot be appealed

It may be difficult to appeal an academic's judgment, expertise, or discretionary powers, e.g. appealing a failed placement where your supervisor assessed your performance as incorrect or inadequate, since your supervisor used their expertise in making the decision. **If you fail a placement**

and are not satisfied with the feedback you receive, we recommend you [contact us](#) for advice.

Sometimes what you are disputing might constitute a [non-academic complaint](#) rather than an appeal.

Stage 1 – Resolution with the original decision-maker (informal appeal)

If you are concerned about an academic decision, the first step is to make an appeal directly to the person who made the decision.

A few points to remember:

- You have **15 working days** to make your appeal – starting from the date of the decision or release of result (working days do not include weekends or public holidays).
- We recommend making your appeal in writing so you have a written record.
- If you are appealing an exam, you should review your exam script before making your appeal (see below).

Depending on your faculty, you make the appeal by either emailing the decision-maker or completing a form online. The University website has more information about [appeal guidelines for specific faculties](#).

For special consideration and special arrangements: you can submit an [informal resolution request](#) online.

Request for further feedback

Many stage 1 appeals are requests for further feedback about an academic decision. Most unit coordinators are happy to give further feedback, but are unlikely to change a mark or grade without being presented with strong reasons.

Review the exam script

If the assessment is an exam you should **review the exam paper** before contacting your unit coordinator. The faculty will schedule exam review times, but if you miss these you may email your unit coordinator to request a review of your exam paper. If the matter is not resolved you will be referred to a faculty-level appeal.

The University's reply

The relevant decision-maker should deal with the issue **promptly** and give you a **full explanation** for the decision. If not resolved they need to explain the next step in the appeals procedure and refer you to a copy of the Appeals Rule.

For final exams/assessments you may not be able to receive a response by your unit coordinator before staff go on holiday or the University closes for the summer break. The important thing is to email your unit coordinator within **15 working days** of the decision, as this ensures your appeal is submitted in time **regardless of when you receive a response**.

More information

Advice on how to make a Stage 1 appeal can be found on the [University website](#). Also, check our [frequently asked questions](#).

Stage 2 – Faculty-level appeal (formal appeal)

If your concerns are not resolved or you believe there was a failure to follow due process, you may submit an appeal to your faculty (or the Academic Panel for credit, special consideration or arrangements applications) within **20 working days** of the stage 1 appeal decision.

A faculty-level appeal requires you to write a letter stating your reasons for challenging the academic decision.

The appeal letter should:

- explain your grounds for appeal, outline any breaches of due process (if there are any) and confirm you have submitted an informal appeal but are unsatisfied with the outcome
- include a copy of your previous stage 1 appeal with any attached documentation
- include the date of the stage 1 appeal decision to show you are lodging your stage 2 appeal by the **20 working day** deadline.

If you would like help writing your stage 2 faculty-level appeal, [contact us](#).

Full directions on how to lodge a faculty-level appeal are found on [the University website](#).

What happens if I'm late?

If you are late in lodging a formal appeal, the faculty will usually not accept it unless you are able to give a **reasonable explanation** for the delay with **documented evidence**. Not knowing the appeals policy, or being on holidays during the appeals timeframe, are not considered valid reasons for lateness.

The University's reply

You should receive an acknowledgement of receipt of your appeal within **3 working days**, and the faculty should make reasonable efforts to provide a formal response within **10 working days**.

Stage 3 – Appeal to Student Appeals Body (SAB)

If concerns are still not resolved by a stage 2 faculty-level appeal you may submit a University-level appeal to the Student Appeals Body (SAB).

For a stage 3 appeal you must write a letter explaining how the faculty **breached due process** in their decision on your formal appeal.

Your stage 3 SAB appeal letter needs to:

- show that it is within time
- show that there is a faculty-level appeal outcome
- explain why due process was not followed - this means explaining how the decision failed to properly follow one or more University of Sydney policies or procedures

SAB appeals must be submitted within **15 working days** of the faculty-level decision. We can help with your SAB appeal – [contact us](#).

After you submit your appeal:

If your appeal meets the requirements, it will be considered by the SAB. If the SAB decides not to proceed to a hearing, this decision is not appealable.

If your appeal is considered by the SAB:

If it is confirmed that you have fulfilled the requirements for a SAB appeal, you will receive confirmation of a hearing date at least **10 working days** before an appeal hearing.

Once your SAB appeal is accepted, the faculty will be given the opportunity to respond in writing. You will receive this response from the Student Affairs Unit (SAU) at least **5 working days** before a hearing.

The SAB appeal involves a meeting ('hearing') where you and a representative from your faculty meet with the SAB panel to answer questions regarding your appeal.

The SAB panel is made up of three people:

- the Chair of the Academic Board (or their nominee)
- an academic
- a student representative

None of these panel members will be from your faculty to ensure neutral decision-making. You have a right to request a support person or advocate, such as a SUPRA caseworker, to attend the SAB hearing with you.

The written outcome given after the hearing is the **final decision** at the University.

It is important to know the SAB cannot force a faculty to change a decision. The SAB makes recommendations that are not binding on a faculty. However, the majority of SAB recommendations are usually accepted by faculties.

Information and advice on how to submit your SAB appeal are found on [the University website](#).

Other appeals

- For appeals against **exclusion from a coursework** degree we recommend you also read our [Show Cause & Exclusion Survival Kit](#).
- For appeals against **termination of a Higher Degree by Research** candidature, our [HDR Guide](#) has useful information.
- Read more information [about appeals of special consideration and special arrangements](#).
- For stage 1 appeals regarding **academic credit**, students should email the Student Credit Team: sc.credit@sydney.edu.au
- You have the right to formally **appeal a credit decision** by writing to the Academic Panel: [appealing a credit decision](#).

Am I still enrolled if I submit an academic appeal?

You must be a **currently enrolled student** to submit an appeal. While your appeal is being considered you will remain enrolled in your course until all levels of appeal are finalised or decided.

Can I appeal a group work decision?

At the informal stage, all members of the group must consent to the appeal and be listed on the appeal form. You can also appeal a finding of academic dishonesty for a group work assignment. If you are unhappy about a group work result and considering an appeal, [contact us](#).

What if my academic appeal is still not resolved?

One external complaint option is to contact the [NSW Ombudsman](#). For local students, recommendations by the NSW Ombudsman are non-binding on the University, but you can usually expect them to be followed. For international students, Federal Government requirements mean the University is obliged to implement any decision or corrective action the NSW Ombudsman recommends.

The Ombudsman will only investigate complaints on limited types of conduct. For more information on the NSW Ombudsman:

(02) 9286 1000
ombo.nsw.gov.au

Useful tips

- Use email rather than phone calls or face-to-face conversations so you have **written documentation**.
- If you have a face-to-face meeting, send an email as confirmation of what was discussed.
- Read your unit of study outline at the beginning of the semester so you understand the content and assessments, late penalties, and whether your unit coordinator will allow simple extensions.
- Make sure you receive **sufficient feedback** on each assessment task as you progress towards the final assessment of a unit.

Student appeals website

[Visit the student appeals website](#) for further info.

Policies

- [University of Sydney \(Student Appeals against Academic Decisions\) Rule 2006 \(as amended\)](#)
- [Coursework Policy 2014](#)
- [Assessment Procedures 2011](#)
- [Student Complaints Procedures 2015](#)

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