

Stage 1 appeals: Frequently asked questions

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Resolution with original decision-maker (informal appeal)

Unhappy with your exam results? Failed your final assessment? We have answered your most common questions about stage 1 informal appeals. This is also known as 'Resolution with the original decision-maker' and is the first level of appeal.

You have **15 working days** from the date your results are released to submit a stage 1 appeal. Weekends, public holidays and the University closure in December–January do not count in terms of this deadline. The 15 days do not start from when you personally checked your results or emails.

Contacting your unit coordinator

Q. I found out I failed my final exam. Can I talk with my unit coordinator?

Yes. You may contact your unit coordinator to request feedback. **Before you contact your unit coordinator, attend your exam review session** or review your paper according to your faculty's procedures, if possible. Seeking feedback on your exam can be considered as the start of the stage 1 appeal timeframe.

Q. Who will review my stage 1 appeal?

The unit coordinator for your subject will review your stage 1 appeal – or they may delegate a tutor or another academic to review it on their behalf. The

person who reviews your stage 1 appeal should provide their name and contact details.

Q. I don't think the unit coordinator likes me. Can I informally appeal to someone else?

You cannot choose who you appeal to. In most cases a stage 1 appeal will be directed to the relevant unit coordinator.

Exam paper review

Q. Can I review my exam paper?

Yes. It is your right to review your exam paper.

Some faculties and schools have a set timetable for exam review sessions. You may be required to register to attend one of these sessions. Make sure you follow the instructions that your faculty will email to you. You will not be able to discuss your answers during an exam review session.

Q. Why should I wait until after I've reviewed my paper before submitting my appeal?

Attending your review session or reviewing your paper will give you an opportunity to understand the marking and any written feedback. You can use this feedback to have a more constructive and informed discussion with your unit coordinator.

Q. What should I check for in the exam paper review?

You will be given up to 10 minutes to review the paper. The important things to check:

- Is the calculation of your total mark correct?
- Are there marks given for each question and written feedback?
- Are there questions you think you answered adequately, and deserve a higher mark for?

After you leave the exam review, you should write down all of your notes immediately so that you don't forget any details.

Q. What can I do if I can't attend the scheduled exam paper review?

If you are unable to attend, email your unit coordinator and request another time to review your paper.

Q. I am overseas and I can't review my paper, but want to appeal. What can I do?

For semester 1 2020 final exams, all students who were offshore were given access to an online review session. Those who were unable to attend the review session could contact the faculty to request a further review session. The process and contact details for the exam paper review were emailed to students or published in Canvas. It is likely the same process will apply for semester 2 2020 final exams.

If you are a Business School student, you may also submit a 'file note' as a stage 1 appeal to request general feedback to understand your performance on an exam. Based on the response to your file note, you may consider a further appeal.

Q. My faculty won't allow review of multiple-choice questions. Why?

The University doesn't allow review of multiple-choice questions to manage educational integrity risks. If you have concerns about not getting access to your multiple-choice exam script, contact your faculty's Associate Dean of Education. For further feedback on your exam paper or to better understand areas for improvement, contact your unit coordinator.

Q. At the exam paper review I was not allowed to take notes or photos. Why is this not allowed?

The University wants to minimise the risk of exam questions and papers being shared. **After you leave the exam review, you should write down all of your notes** immediately so that you don't forget any details.

Q. I reviewed my exam paper but there were no comments and only a total mark. Can I ask for more information?

Yes. You can contact your unit coordinator to request feedback on your exam or the marking of your exam paper. University policy states that you have a right to understand your assessment mark and be provided with feedback to make improvements. Your unit coordinator may ask you to submit a stage 1 appeal if you require further feedback.

Q. What if the exam paper review is after the appeal deadline?

If this happens, don't wait for the exam paper review – start your appeal within the deadline. You can start the appeal by emailing your unit coordinator to request further feedback or an explanation about your mark.

We suggest you email with the subject line: 'Request feedback on [name of assessment]'. You should explain, 'I am contacting you as I am considering submitting a stage 1 appeal for [assessment task]'.

Q. I have reviewed my exam paper and I am still not satisfied with my results. How and when do I start an appeal?

You may submit a stage 1 appeal to your unit coordinator within **15 working days** from the date you received your result. [Check the University student appeals website](#) for information on how to write an appeal. This website also states [if your faculty has specific appeals guidelines](#). For example, the Business School uses a ['file note' form](#) for their stage 1 appeals. Some unit coordinators are willing to have a meeting at the first stage of appeal, which you can request by sending an email.

Reasons for appeal

Q. I got a mark of 49, so why can't the faculty award a conceded pass grade?

The University of Sydney does not allow for a conceded pass grade. If you received 49 you should review your exam paper and request further feedback or consider an appeal if you believe you have good reasons.

Q. One of my tutors treated me badly during the semester. Can I use this to appeal my grade?

No. All University staff are expected to demonstrate professional and respectful behaviour towards all students. Grades are awarded on academic merit and the University uses anonymous marking. If you think you have been treated badly by a tutor, you can submit a complaint. [Contact us](#) for assistance in writing a complaint.

Q. Can I argue that my exam performance was affected by illness, emergency or a personal problem?

Unfortunately, no. Serious illness or misadventure are not reasons for an academic appeal, but you may submit a late application for [special consideration](#) for an assessment. In your application you will need to explain your reason for applying late and have appropriate medical documentation relevant to the date of the assessment.

Q. Does SUPRA have a list of acceptable or strong appeal arguments?

No. We recommend that you **clearly explain the reasons why you believe you were incorrectly marked** and/or you should have earned a higher mark according to the assessment criteria. Be specific about which questions or exam responses you are appealing against.

Q. Can I argue that it is too expensive for me to retake this unit or that I need to graduate on time due to visa/career/family/health reasons?

Unfortunately, no. Although these experiences are very difficult, they are not considered reasons for an appeal.

Q. I failed my final exam, but I don't think it was fair because it was online and I was not comfortable with this format. Can I appeal?

Unfortunately, no. Being unfamiliar with an online exam is not a valid reason for an appeal. However, if you felt unusually anxious or stressed during an online exam, you may be able to apply for late [special consideration](#) if you can explain your reason for why it is late and have appropriate medical documentation to support your request.

Q. I failed a subject but had lots of health issues. Can I appeal or ask for special consideration?

If you have appropriate medical documentation that covers the period of your assessment and a good explanation for the delay in application, you may submit a late [special consideration](#) application. If you had ongoing health issues throughout the entire semester, you may consider applying for a [DC grade](#) for the unit of study instead of individual special consideration applications for every assessment.

Writing your appeal

Q. Do I need to use special language in my appeal letter?

No special language is required. However some faculties use an online form so check whether your faculty has a specific appeal process.

Q. Can I still appeal if the faculty states that my grade was checked by multiple markers?

Yes.

Q. Where can I find the assessment criteria?

Check your unit of study outline. If you need a copy, or if you're not sure what a unit of study outline is, contact your unit coordinator.

Q. Can I ask for a re-mark?

Yes. Your stage 1 appeal can ask for a re-mark which is where your original answer, paper, or assessment is marked again. This could be by the same marker or a different academic. Your grade may stay the same or be adjusted. **It is possible to lose marks if your assessment is re-marked.**

Q. Can SUPRA write my appeal?

No. SUPRA's caseworkers are able to advise you how to write your appeal, and can review your draft before you submit it.

Stage 1 appeal outcome

Q. How long will it take for a decision on my stage 1 appeal?

The University policy does not provide a time frame for stage 1 appeal decisions. However, if you do not receive a decision within 1 week we recommend you respectfully email the unit coordinator and ask when you will receive an outcome.

Q. This is my final unit and my final semester. Can I do anything to speed up the decision-making process?

If the outcome is taking longer than 1 week you may contact the unit coordinator and explain your situation. You may ask them whether they require any further information.

Q. Will submitting my appeal before the 15 working day deadline help my chances of a successful outcome?

No. However, submitting your stage 1 appeal as soon as you can means you should get answers to your questions or concerns sooner. Hopefully this will allow you more time to reflect and consider your next steps.

Q. I've submitted my appeal. What can I do while I wait?

We understand it can be stressful when you are waiting for your outcome. If you have waited for **at least 1 week**, we suggest you politely follow up with your unit coordinator by email.

Q. I already contacted my tutor/lecturer/unit coordinator about my stage 1 appeal. They replied and I am still not satisfied with the outcome. Does that mean I have already completed my stage 1 appeal? What else can I do?

If the decision to decline your appeal also refers you to the academic appeals policy, this concludes stage 1. If your unit coordinator replies to your request for feedback or request for a change in mark and does not invite further discussion, this can also conclude stage 1. You now have the option to submit a [stage 2 faculty-level appeal](#), which will be reviewed by a senior academic.

Q. I received my stage 1 appeal outcome and I am not satisfied. What else can I do?

You have the option of submitting a stage 2 faculty-level appeal. Some faculties have specific guidelines for stage 2 appeals.

Getting more advice on your appeal

We are happy to review your written appeal and to offer advice on contacting your faculty. [Contact us](#) for assistance.

Read more detailed advice on [appeals](#) and [special consideration](#).

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