



SOUTH BANK STUDENTS' UNION

**A D V I C E**  
**S E R V I C E**

GUIDE TO ACADEMIC APPEALS

## Academic Appeal

An academic appeal is a way for you to request a review of an academic decision made by the university, usually through the examination board. You can use this procedure to contest the decision made by the examination board.

You can only make an academic appeal on specific grounds:

- The university made a material error, i.e. an arithmetical or administrative error or error of fact (but not academic judgement) in the results published following the decision of the examination board; or
- The Examination Board acted unreasonably when it considered your progression and/ or award but did not take your supported extenuating circumstances claim into account in accordance with the extenuating circumstances procedure; or
- There was a material defect or irregularity in the conduct of the assessment which can be shown to have had an adverse effect on your performance.

**If you do not meet one of these grounds, your appeal will be rejected.**

### Academic Judgement

Academic judgment is the idea that the academic who is marking your work is an academic expert in your area of study. This means that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to decide on marks awarded for an assignment or module, research methodology and whether feedback is correct or adequate. The content or outcomes of a course will also normally involve academic judgement.

The following areas do not involve academic judgement:

1. Decisions about the fairness of procedures and whether they have been correctly interpreted and applied
2. How the university has communicated with the student
3. Whether an academic has expressed an opinion outside the areas of their academic competence

### Evidence

Academic appeals must be supported by relevant evidence at each stage of the process. Evidence includes (but is not limited to) copies of assessment marks, or mark sheets, extracts from the student handbook.

Academic appeals submitted without relevant evidence will be rejected.

### Undisclosed Extenuating Circumstances

Undisclosed extenuating circumstances are no longer considered under the appeals process. If you wish to make the university aware of a previously undisclosed illness or some other unforeseen difficult personal circumstances that affected your results, you will need to go through the extenuating circumstances procedure.

Please note that as the claim will be outside of the 5 working days, you will need to have strong evidence that proves your circumstances and your claim must also explain why you did not submit within the specified time period.

If you wish to submit a late claim, please access the extenuating circumstances claim form through MYLSBU.

### **The Appeals Process Stage 1- Preliminary Review Meeting**

To start the appeal process, you must book an appointment with your course director to discuss your case. You should explain the basis for your appeal and present any support evidence that you have. You have 10 working days to contact your course director (usually by email) from the date of your result of decision. If you do not make contact within 2 weeks, you may not be able to start the appeal process.

You should be invited to a meeting (face to face or virtual) with your Course Director within 5 working days of your request. You will normally meet your Course Director alone unless you have a good reason to be accompanied. You might need to provide evidence.

In your meeting, your Course Director should discuss your situation, explain any relevant university policies or procedures and direct you to the university support services if necessary. You should take all the evidence that you feel supports your case to the meeting so that your course director can review it and do their best to resolve the issue.

The Course Director will then take one of the following steps:

- Correct the decision informally, for example, because there is a clear error that can be rectified without the need to convene an Appeals Panel;
- If the matter cannot be resolved informally, recommend that the matter be referred to the Appeals Panel for formal consideration;
- Reject the appeal. An appeal can be rejected for various of reasons, but commonly it is because the issue is not one that falls within the grounds, it is not supported by relevant evidence, had no merit or has been submitted outside of the time limit without good reason.

You will receive a system-generated email documenting your discussion with your Course Director and detailing the outcome within 5 working days of your meeting. This is just their

recommendation, so if you are unhappy with what your course director has suggested you may still take your appeal to stage 2.

Please note that the recommendation might be an indication as to whether your appeal would be successful, so you should consider this carefully and may want to gather further evidence to support your case.

### **Stage 2- The Appeals Panel**

Once you have received the email from your Course Director, if you are unhappy with the outcome of stage 1 you can submit a formal appeal in stage 2. The university email sent to you at the end of stage 1 will give you information about how to access the online appeal form via the 'My Appeals' section under 'My Course' in MYLSBU.

You must complete the form in full and upload scanned copies of your evidence within 5 working days of receiving the Stage 1 email. The university expects you to use the electronic form wherever possible, but exceptions can be made for students with disabilities who require a reasonable adjustment and those who cannot access myLSBU (because they are studying at a partner institution or because their access has been withdrawn).

Once your appeal has been submitted, an academic appeals caseworker will be appointed to decide whether it will go to the appeal panel. They will confirm if your appeal has been accepted or rejected within 15 working days.

The Appeals Panel is made up of experienced academic staff from across the university. An elected officer from the Students' Union is also invited to attend. Once the appeals panel has reviewed your case and made a decision, the caseworker will write to you within 5 working days to tell you the outcome and its impact. The decision will be one of the following:

- The panel's recommendation is referred to the Examination Board to change its decision.
- The appeal is rejected
- Further investigation is required

If further investigation is needed, the caseworker could contact anyone involved (including you) to ask for more information. Any information gathered from university staff will be provided to you at least 5 working days before the next panel meeting, and you can submit a written response at least 3 working days before the meeting for the panel to consider.

If you are unhappy with the decision, you can request that your appeal be considered at a stage 3 review.

### **Stage 3- Formal Review**

This is the last and final part of the University's appeals process. To progress to stage 3, you must make your request within 10 working days of the stage 2 decision. You must submit your request to an academic reviewer by emailing [appeals@lsbu.ac.uk](mailto:appeals@lsbu.ac.uk) under the heading

'Stage 3 Review Request.' You should include your full name and student number in the subject line or your email.

The grounds to request a formal review are:

- There were material and identifiable procedural irregularity by the university in its conduct of the appeal at stage 2;
- The outcome or decision at stage 2 was unreasonable and could not be justified by the evidence;
- There is new, relevant evidence of procedural irregularity and/or unreasonableness in relation to the original decision that was not known to the panel at stage 2, and you have a good reason why you could not have provided the evidence before

These are quite restricted grounds, which means you have to be very clear and provide evidence to show what went wrong with your appeal at stage 1 or stage 2 as well as how this put you at a disadvantage. The university considers a decision to be reasonable if all factors have been considered in a balanced way. You cannot simply say you disagree with it. You must explain why the decision is unreasonable.

The academic reviewer will write to you within 10 working days to tell you that either:

- Your request will be referred for consideration by a panel (usually held within 15 working days of the academic reviewer's letter/email)
- Your request is not eligible for review because you do not meet the grounds, have not supported your claim with evidence or submitted your request out of time.

In this case, you will be sent a completion of procedures letter.

The review panel will be made up of the Provost (or their nominee), 2 senior academics and usually the president of the students' union. You will not usually have a right to attend this meeting.

The review panel will take one of the following decisions:

- Reject the review
- Uphold the review and substitute its decision for that of the appeals panel at stage 2.

The decision of the review panel is final. You should receive the decision in writing and with reasons, usually within 10 working days of the meeting. If the decision is in your favour, the university will not send you any further communication unless you specifically request a completion or procedures letter. If the decision is not favorable to you, you will receive a completion of procedures letter automatically within 28 days of the decision.

If you remain unhappy with the outcome, you are entitled to take your matter to the office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for their consideration. You must do this within 12 months of the date of your completion of procedures letter.

### **Frequently asked questions**

#### **My appeal relates to issues with my course director, do I have to contact them at stage 1?**

If your problem involves your Course Director, you should contact your Head of Department or Head of Division within 10 working days instead.

#### **I can't attend a preliminary Review meeting; does this mean I can't appeal?**

If you're not in the country or can't attend a meeting in person, you can ask for this meeting via email, phone or Microsoft Teams. However, if you do not have some form of meeting with your Course Director you may not be able to progress further with the appeals process.

What happens if my course director doesn't offer me a preliminary review meeting or send me the email?

If your Course Director fails to take all the steps within the set timeframe of stage 1, the university will consider you to have entered stage 2 of the appeals process. You should contact the Appeals team at [appeals@lsbu.ac.uk](mailto:appeals@lsbu.ac.uk) to tell them the problems you have had in stage 1 and they will direct you to the online form. You must complete this form to initiate a stage 2 appeal.

#### **How long does an appeal take?**

The university aims to complete all internal processes within 90 calendar days of the appeal being submitted at stage 2. However, this does require you to engage with the process, meet deadlines for submission of information and attend any meetings scheduled.

I've submitted my appeal but it's taking a long time, is there any way to speed up the process?

Unfortunately, not. Appeals are dealt with by the university in the order they are submitted, so the best way to get a quicker response is to submit your appeal and evidence as soon as possible.

#### **Can anyone help me submit an appeal?**

Yes. The Students' Union Advice Service can help and advise you on the best way to put forward your case. We can go through the appeal form with you if you are unsure about how to complete it. We can also discuss what evidence you should try to include in your appeal. However, we cannot write an appeal for you. This is your appeal and must be in your own words.



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