

# Appealing an academic decision

What to do if you want to challenge a decision about your study

## Is an appeal the right option for me?

If a decision has been taken about your academic progress - for example, a decision by the Board of Studies, Board of Examiners, Exceptional Circumstances Committee, or Fitness to Practise Panel, and you wish to challenge that decision, the procedure for doing this is through an academic appeal.

All students have a right to appeal an academic decision, but you can only appeal if you can demonstrate that you have good grounds.

## Grounds for appeal

There are 2 possible grounds for appeal:

- *Procedural irregularity* - where the department or university has failed to follow its own policies and procedures; and/or
- *Exceptional circumstances* - where exceptional circumstances have affected your ability to study, or to complete your assessments, and you weren't able to raise this at the time.

If you are appealing on grounds of exceptional circumstances, you will also need to demonstrate that you raised the issue at the time and your circumstances were rejected, or provide a "good reason" as to why you were prevented from submitting a claim for exceptional circumstances earlier.

## Academic judgement

It is not possible to appeal academic judgement. This is a judgement that is made about a matter where only the opinion of an academic expert is sufficient. This is usually involved in a decision on academic work, such as deciding a mark, providing feedback and supervision. If you are dissatisfied with the quality of your supervision, feedback or marking, and this is due to not receiving the service you were expecting, then making a complaint may be a more suitable route.

## Evidence

All appeals need to be accompanied by supporting evidence.

If you are appealing on grounds of procedural irregularity, you usually need to identify which University policy or procedure has not been followed. You will need to demonstrate that a policy breach or failure has occurred in your case, and that your study or assessment was disadvantaged as a result. Evidence can include email correspondence, letters, and notes from meetings.

If you are appealing on grounds of exceptional circumstances, you need to provide evidence from an independent professional who saw you at the time you were affected. They need to confirm that the circumstances occurred, and give their professional judgement on how these circumstances affected you and your studies.

If you didn't raise your exceptional circumstances at the time, your evidence also needs to confirm the reasons why you did not.

Examples of people who can provide supporting letters include GPs, counsellors, the police, health visitors, and social workers.

If you can't get evidence by the time you need to submit your appeal, you can submit evidence at a later date. Your appeal will be put on hold until all your evidence is received.

## Submitting an appeal

The first stage of the appeals process is to complete the Academic Appeal Formal Stage Online form. Guidance notes and links to further guidance are on the form. See: [york.ac.uk/students/studying/progress/appeals/](http://york.ac.uk/students/studying/progress/appeals/)

We advise you also look through the YUSU Appeals Checklist and further information before submitting your appeal: [yusu.org/well-being/academic-issues/academic-appeals](http://yusu.org/well-being/academic-issues/academic-appeals)

You have 28 days from the date of the formal decision letter or email from the University in which to submit an appeal. Late appeals will only be accepted where a student can demonstrate good reasons for the delay.

The University strongly advises that you seek support from either YUSU Advice and Support Centre or GSA Advice Service (for postgraduate students) to help guide you through the process. Our service is independent from the University and confidential, and we can advise on the evidence needed for your appeal, as well as how to complete the online form. We can also signpost to other relevant support.

## Possible outcomes

An appeal can be upheld, partially upheld, or rejected.

If your appeal is upheld, you may be offered one of the following outcomes:

- resubmitting work, submitting work or taking examinations 'as if for the first time'
- an element of repeat study
- the removal of a penalty
- where you have completed your programme and a year other than the final year has been affected, having your degree classification re-calculated using alternate weighting ratios

Depending on the timing of your appeal decision, you may be required to take a [Leave of Absence](#) and complete assessments "out of residence" (ie away from university) before progressing onto the next stage of your programme.

**Please note: The Special Cases Committee cannot alter a mark.**

If your appeal is partially upheld, this means that part of your claim has been accepted, and it is possible that one or more of the outcomes above will be offered.

## Review Stage Appeal

You have the option of submitting a Review Stage Appeal if you can demonstrate good grounds that

- A procedural irregularity occurred in the consideration of your Formal Stage Appeal; and/or
- You have new supporting evidence, and a good reason why this could not have been presented at the Formal Stage ;and/or
- The Appeals decision was manifestly unreasonable in the circumstances

Review Stage Appeals must be submitted within 10 calendar days of receiving the outcome for your Formal Stage appeal. It is recommended that you seek advice from YUSU/GSA on your Review Stage appeal as soon as possible.

## How long does the appeal process take?

University guidance states that the appeals process should normally take no longer than 90 days to complete. During busy times of the year, it can take longer. If your appeal is particularly complex or there are other exceptional circumstances, or there is a delay in submitting your evidence, you may be advised that your appeal will not be resolved within this timeframe and an explanation should be provided.

## How do I track the progress of my appeal?

If you are unsure about the progress of your appeal, you can email [appeals@york.ac.uk](mailto:appeals@york.ac.uk) to ask for an update. You should also contact them if there are any delays to submitting evidence or changes to your circumstances.

## Key documents & info

Academic appeals and complaints webpage  
[york.ac.uk/students/studying/progress/appeals/](http://york.ac.uk/students/studying/progress/appeals/)

Exceptional Circumstances webpage:  
[york.ac.uk/students/studying/progress/exceptional-circumstances/](http://york.ac.uk/students/studying/progress/exceptional-circumstances/)

University Guide to Assessment, Standards, Marking and Feedback:

[york.ac.uk/students/studying/assessment-and-examination/guide-to-assessment/](http://york.ac.uk/students/studying/assessment-and-examination/guide-to-assessment/)

## YUSU

[asc@yusu.org](mailto:asc@yusu.org) | 01904 323724

Advice and Support Centre,  
University of York Students' Union The Student  
Centre, James College, Heslington  
(office hours: 10am to 4pm, Mon - Fri)

## GSA

[advice@yorkgsa.org](mailto:advice@yorkgsa.org) | 01904 322718

Book an appointment at:  
[yorkgsa.org/students/welfare/](http://yorkgsa.org/students/welfare/)



# Academic Appeal Checklist

Is an appeal the right option for me?

## Step 1: Checklist

I am appealing an academic decision.

I have received a letter or email confirming that decision, or have been informed that I will be receiving this.

I have grounds for appeal:

- Procedural Irregularity.
- Exceptional Circumstances.
- If exceptional circumstances, I have a good reason for not informing the university of my circumstances at the time.

I am within the 28 day deadline for appealing.

If I am past the 28 day deadline for appealing but have a good reason for not appealing sooner, and have evidence to confirm this.

If appealing on grounds of procedural irregularity:

- I can demonstrate what policy and/or procedure the university has not followed.
- I can demonstrate how this has disadvantaged my study or academic results.

If appealing on grounds of exceptional circumstances:

I have evidence (or can obtain evidence) from an independent professional who can confirm:

- My circumstances at the time I was affected.
- That I sought support at the time, or that I was unable to do so due to my condition.
- That the circumstances affected my ability to study at the time.

I can also evidence that I submitted an exceptional circumstances claim or raised the issue at the time with the Department; or that I had a good reason for not raising these issues earlier.

This checklist outlines the key points for you to consider when deciding whether to submit an appeal. If there are any areas where you are unsure, please contact YUSU/GSA advice and support services, who are experienced in advising on the appeals process. We are independent from the University and all information shared is treated confidentially.

## Step 2: Read the guidance and seek advice

Look through:

- the the Academic Appeal Formal Stage Online Form. Guidance notes and links to further guidance are on the form : see: [york.ac.uk/students/help/appeals/](http://york.ac.uk/students/help/appeals/)
- YUSU's Appealing an Academic Decision Info Sheet and further appeals information: see: [yusu.org/well-being/academic-issues/academic-appeals](http://yusu.org/well-being/academic-issues/academic-appeals)

If you are unsure whether you have grounds for appeal, we strongly recommend you seek advice from a YUSU or GSA adviser (for postgraduates).

For YUSU, please complete a Confidential Advice Record, see [yusu.org/well-being/asc](http://yusu.org/well-being/asc) and email your details to [asc@yusu.org](mailto:asc@yusu.org).

For GSA, please book an appointment at [yorkgsa.org/students/welfare](http://yorkgsa.org/students/welfare)

## Step 3: Complete a draft

When you fill in the online form, you may want to take your time doing so.

**The form will not save your data automatically!**

If you close your window or phone before you press Submit, the form will be irretrievably lost. To save your form part way through, there is an option to "Save and Resume" - you must enter your email address and a password and you will be sent a link to a saved version of the form.

**DO NOT LOSE YOUR PASSWORD OR LINK - if you cannot remember your password your appeal will be lost.**

If you Save and Resume your form, any uploaded evidence will be deleted. Upload evidence only when you are ready to submit your appeal.

Other things to remember when completing the form:

Your appeal goes to the Special Cases Team, who are separate from your academic department and have no prior knowledge of your case. So when writing your appeal:

- Be as specific as you can
- Write in chronological order
- Use names, job titles (e.g. of people you raised issues with), and dates, so it is clear what has happened and when
- Give your assessment module title and dates
- Specify clearly the impact the procedural irregularity or your exceptional circumstances have had on your ability to study or your performance in assessments.
- Only upload your evidence when you are ready to submit.



## Step 4: Contact YUSU/GSA Advice services

You can send your draft appeal to YUSU Advice and Support Centre or GSA Advice (for postgraduates) for feedback prior to submitting your appeal. Our specialist advisers will be able to look through your appeal and evidence to identify any gaps and to support you in presenting your case as well as you can to Special Cases.

To do this, you can save the online form as a pdf, then email it to [YUSU](mailto:asc@yusu.org) or [GSA](mailto:advice@yorkgsa.org) advice services. Advisers can then look through and then send any advice or comments back to you. If you are asking advisers to look over draft appeals, please ensure you allow enough time (at least 2 working days before your submission deadline) for an adviser to provide feedback.

## Step 5: Submit your appeal

The deadline for submitting an appeal is 28 calendar days from the formal decision letter or email you received from the University. You should upload your evidence just before you submit the online appeal form. You should then receive an email confirmation that your appeal has been received.

If you have any questions relating to appeals, please contact YUSU or GSA Advice Services:

### YUSU

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