

Academic Appeal



University of
Chester

Guidance notes for an appeal using form AA-1

The academic appeal procedure is designed to enable students to raise concerns about their academic progress in the light of decisions made relating to their assessments. The University is keen to ensure that any concerns are fully considered and that, where appropriate, action is taken to deal with them.

Students may have concerns about assessment decisions for a number of reasons; but it is important to remember that simply being unhappy with the marks or outcomes that have been decided is not, in itself, sufficient grounds for an appeal. It is always in the student's best interest to raise concerns with the department(s) concerned before submitting an academic appeal. Doing so gives an opportunity for dialogue about the reasons behind a decision or, if there has been a mistake, provides an opportunity for it to be put right without having to go through the appeal process.

The academic appeal procedure does not allow students to challenge the marks that they have been awarded for a particular piece of assessment. Even where an appeal is upheld, unless there has been an administrative error in processing a mark, the usual outcome is to allow another opportunity for an assessment to be undertaken again.

These notes are intended to act as a guide to the appeals procedure. They explain what students can expect of the University, how to complete the academic appeal form and provide some information about what evidence students may wish to consider submitting. If the answer to your query cannot be found in this guide, please either contact the Chester Students' Union for confidential or impartial advice, or contact academicappeals@chester.ac.uk.

Academic Quality Support Services
January 2018

Quick Guide

There are 3 stages to the University's academic appeal procedure:

1. The Preliminary Stage

Students must submit an appeal within 10 (calendar) days of receiving confirmation of a decision they want to appeal against. The preliminary stage is intended to be an initial review of the submission to check that the appeal can be accepted according to the procedure.

2. The Investigatory Stage

If your appeal is accepted for investigation at the preliminary stage, an Officer in the Student Affairs team of Academic Quality Support Services will undertake the investigation. The points that you have raised will be considered and the department(s) concerned will be asked to respond. This will enable the Academic Appeal Board to take a balanced view of your appeal.

3. The Academic Appeal Board

Your case will be heard by the Academic Appeal Board. You won't be expected to attend the meeting, but you will receive a summary of the response(s) provided to your appeal and you will be able to make any further comments prior to the hearing. The Board will make a decision on whether your appeal has been successful or not and you will receive a letter from the Officer who investigated your case to explain the outcome.

There are some other parts to the academic appeal procedure, but not all cases will go through these:

- **Preliminary stage review:** if your appeal is rejected at the preliminary stage, you might be entitled to ask for a review of that decision.
- **Resolution:** if during the course of investigating your appeal, it becomes clear that an error has been made, we might try to resolve your appeal before it goes to the Appeals Board. We will keep you updated if this applies in your case and you will be able to comment on the proposed resolution.
- **Appeal review:** if your appeal is rejected by the Academic Appeal Board, as with the preliminary stage, you might be entitled to ask for a review of that decision.

Academic Appeal Form

You may submit an academic appeal using the form available on Portal up to 10 days after receiving confirmation of a decision that you want to appeal against. This guidance is specifically for appeals using form **AA-1**. Below is an explanation of each section of the form and how to complete it:

Part A: About you

This section of the form gathers some basic information about you and your programme of study. To speed up communication, we will normally only send you letters about your appeal via email. By default, we will use your University of Chester email account, but you can specify a private email address as well. If you want a hardcopy of any of the letters we send to you via email, you will need to respond to the email to make a request.

There are three important questions in this section that you must answer. They are:

- Have your studies been terminated? You should tick 'yes' only if the effect of the decision you are appealing against means that you are no longer a student of the University.
- Have you been prevented from progressing to the next level of study? If you are an undergraduate student and the effect of the decision you are appealing against means that you cannot progress to the next year (i.e. from Level 4 to Level 5 or from Level 5 to Level 6), then you should tick 'yes'.
- Have you been sponsored by the University for a Tier 4 student visa? Most students who have come to the UK to study from outside the European Economic Area will require a Tier 4 visa.

Part B: Talking to others

You might find it helpful to allow us to talk to other people about your appeal. This section asks whether you want to give your permission to discuss your case with the Chester Students' Union and/or with a third party. This might be a spouse, parent, guardian or friend. For security, if you, or anyone else, contacts us about your appeal, they must be able to give us the unique reference number of your case that you will receive once we acknowledge your appeal.

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Part C: Assessments to be appealed

Your appeal must be about the individual marks you have received for each component of assessment. You should refer to your module handbook, Moodle page or results letter to see how each assessment component is described:

- Module code: this will be made up for two letters and four numbers. For example, CD4291.
- Module title: this is the 'name' given to the module by the department.
- Component title: each component of assessment in a module will have a different title.
- Attempt number: students are permitted up to three attempts at each assessment component. You will be able to see which attempt you are on by referring to your results letter.
- Submission deadline: this is the date that you were due to submit the piece of work. If you were given an extension or deferral, your submission date will likely be different to the one published in the module handbook or on the Moodle page.

Examples:

- ***I have completed my programme of study and have been awarded a 2.i degree. I was unwell when I sat my final exams and think that I should have got a first class degree.***

You cannot simply appeal the classification of the degree that you have been awarded. However, you can appeal against the marks awarded for the exams you took whilst you were unwell. You will have to explain why you did not use another procedure (e.g. apply for a deferral or submit an application for mitigating circumstances) at the time.

- ***I have finished my first year, but have not passed all of my modules. I have been prevented from progressing to the second year.***

A decision on whether to allow you to progress to the next level of study with outstanding modules is governed by the progression rules and is an academic judgement which cannot be appealed. However, you might be able to appeal against the outcomes of some or all of the assessment components you have not passed if you have grounds to do so. In limited circumstances, if your appeal is upheld, you may be allowed to conditionally progress.

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Part D: Grounds for your appeal

The AA-1 form can be used for appeals against decisions of either the Awards/Progress Assessment Board, the Mitigating Circumstances Board or one of the committees setup to deal with cases where the Academic Integrity Policy has been breached. **However, your appeal must relate to only one of those Boards/committees.**

Examples:

- ***I submitted an application for mitigating circumstances which was rejected. My results have not yet been published and I am dissatisfied with the decision.***

In this case you must submit an appeal against the decision of the Mitigating Circumstances Board.

- ***I submitted an application for mitigating circumstances which was rejected. My results have now been published and I want to submit an appeal.***

In this case, you must submit an appeal against the decision of the Awards/Progression Assessment Board because your results have now been published.

Parts E -H: Your appeal

Once you have selected the grounds for your appeal, information on the form tells you which part(s) to complete. There is some information at the top of each part which suggests what you might want to write. Please keep in mind the following:

- Typing your appeal is probably better than handwriting it! Our forms are designed to be completed using Adobe Reader. You can print and save a copy of your completed form too.
- Although it might be tempting to include lots and lots of information, think about the things that are relevant to your case. Focus on those and leave out other irrelevant detail. If your appeal is concise it is often easier for us to see what needs to be investigated and easier for the Appeals Board to understand. Bullet points and timelines are good for providing clarity.
- You can type around 460 words into each section. If you want to type more than this, you should think carefully about whether you are including too much unnecessary detail. There are two blank pages at the back of the form if you need a little more space.

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Parts E -H: Your appeal (continued)

- Explain things in the order in which they happened. Appeals which jump forward and back between events are difficult to understand. Remember that the Appeals Board will have lots of cases to read and understand. They will treat each one carefully, but it is in your interest to be clear about the points you're making.
- Refer to the evidence you are providing to support your appeal. It is important to say how you believe that the evidence you have submitted backs up the points that you want to make.

Part I: Outcomes

This section is your opportunity to tell us about the outcome you are seeking. The Academic Appeals Board can never require work to be re-marked, or add marks to your work. This means that the usual outcome of a successful appeal is the opportunity to submit the work again. However, if you have received a late work penalty, you can ask for that to be removed instead of doing the work again.

An exception to this is if the Academic Appeals Board decide that there is evidence of a procedural or administrative irregularity in the assessment process, where the decision of the Examiners is not correctly shown on your results transcript. In these circumstances, the Appeals Board can instruct that action is taken to correct the mistake.

If your appeal is against a decision of the Academic Integrity Review Panel, if it is upheld, the usual outcome would be for the case to be considered again.

Part J: Confidentiality

It is always in your best interests to allow the University investigate your case thoroughly. Anyone who handles your appeal must abide by strict rules of confidentiality. In addition, the regulations provide a safeguard: you will not be academically disadvantaged for having submitted an appeal. However, you do have the right to restrict who can see your appeal. If you want to do this, follow the instructions in Part J of the form.

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Part K: Supporting evidence

Your appeal must be accompanied by evidence which supports the claims that you make.

- If you submit your appeal by email, you must make sure that your evidence is attached to your email as a full colour scan and preferably as a PDF file. You should be aware that we might ask you to provide the original document and if you do not do so, your appeal will be invalidated. Any emails submitted for evidence should be saved and attached, not sent as screenshots.
- If you submit your appeal by post, we will return your original evidence by post once we have taken a copy.
- If you submit your appeal in person either to the Students' Union or Student Welfare, a photocopy can be taken there and your evidence will be handed back to you straight away.

Suggestions for the types of evidence you might want to provide with your appeal are given on page 9 of this guidance. However, you can submit anything you feel is relevant to your case.

If you're unable to provide your evidence at the time you submit the appeal form (for example if you're waiting for a letter from your GP), you should tell us on the form when you expect to be able to send it on.

Part L: Checklist and declaration

You should read through each of the statements in the checklist and ensure that you have read and understood each. When you have completed the form, save a copy for your records. You can then submit your appeal in three ways:

1. By email (preferred)

If you submit your appeal by email, you must ensure that the documentary evidence you provide is attached as a full-colour scan. The University reserves the right to require original copies of any documents that you provide in support of your appeal. Failure to produce the originals, if requested, will result in your appeal being invalidated.

You should send your completed form and evidence as attachments to academicappeals@chester.ac.uk. You are strongly advised to send your form from your University of Chester email account. If you are unable to do this, you should ensure that your email message contains your student ID number, the full title of the programme that you are registered on and your date of birth for verification purposes.

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2. In person to either Chester Students' Union or Student Welfare

Chester Students' Union

Take your form and evidence to the Students' Union building on either the Parkgate Road campus in Chester, on the Warrington campus or at University Centre Shrewsbury. Please remember that the Students' Union can also offer you confidential and impartial advice about your appeal.

Student Welfare

Take your form and evidence to the Student Welfare Office in the Binks building (room CBK-113) on the Parkgate Road campus in Chester or to the Martin building (room WMA-012) on the Warrington campus.

If you submit your form in person, it will be recorded as having been received on that date. However, it might take a day or two to reach Academic Quality Support Services. If you have not received an acknowledgement within 72 hours of submitting your form, please contact us.

3. By post

You can post your academic appeal and supporting evidence to the following address:

Academic Quality Support Services (Appeals)
University of Chester
Parkgate Road
Chester
CH1 4BJ

If you post your form, you are strongly advised to use an appropriate tracking service.

Guidance for evidence

You are responsible for the evidence that you decide to submit with your appeal. However, the following gives some useful guidance for the type of evidence that the Appeals Board would expect to see.

If your appeal relates to illness or other exceptional personal circumstances:

- You should provide medical, professional or other independent evidence. This should clearly show what your circumstances were and how they affected you around the time you were due to submit your assessments.
- Your evidence must also be sufficient to explain why you didn't follow the procedures for requesting an extension or deferral or submit an application to the Mitigating Circumstances Board.
- If you have a long term condition, and you don't have evidence that relates specifically to the time that you were due to submit your assessments, an appropriate medical diagnosis might be sufficient. This will especially be the case where it is reasonable for the Appeals Board to assume that you had been suffering for a significant period of time prior to being diagnosed. **However, this will normally only be acceptable on one occasion as the appeals procedure cannot be used as a substitute for requesting extensions, deferrals or for using the mitigating circumstances procedures at the appropriate time.**
- If you provide medical evidence it should contain a clear medical diagnosis or the opinion of an appropriately qualified healthcare professional. **It must not simply report that you told the healthcare professional that you were feeling unwell.**

Guidance for evidence

- The evidence you provide must relate to you. Therefore, if you are submitting an appeal based on the illness or personal circumstances relating to another person, you must provide evidence of your relationship to that person and the impact that their illness or personal circumstances had upon you. This might include:
 - Evidence of journeys taken
 - Confirmation of time taken off work
 - Letters confirming caring responsibilities from independent bodies.

If you are unable to provide this type of evidence, you should explain why.

- The evidence you provide must be wholly independent. This means that letters of support from family members, friends or others who are not acting in a professional capacity cannot be accepted.
- The evidence you provide must be in English. Where documentation is in another language, you must arrange for it to be professionally translated and provide a certified copy.

If your appeal relates to procedural or administrative irregularity:

- Your statement must be clear enough for the Appeals Board to understand the point that you make. Wherever possible, you should provide evidence to support your claims. Examples might include:
 - Copies of relevant emails between you and members of staff
 - Copies of statements made in the module handbook/Moodle page
 - Copies of marked work and/or feedback sheets

The information given here is not exhaustive and is guidance only. You can choose what documentation to submit to support your appeal. The Chester Students' Union can give you confidential and impartial advice. However, if you are in any doubt, it is always likely to be better to provide more, rather than less documentary evidence.