

Guidance for students considering a Formal Appeal

You are strongly advised to read this guidance **BEFORE** submitting a Formal Appeal.

This guidance document applies to all students eligible to submit a Formal Appeal under the Queen Mary [Appeal Policy](#). Please note that this **does not include appeals against admissions decisions**, which are subject to the [Admissions Appeals and Complaints Policy](#).

General principles

Students who submit a Formal Appeal will not be disadvantaged or penalised, although students must consider that the appropriate resolution in their case may not be the specific resolution they are seeking. **Queen Mary cannot resolve a Formal Appeal in a way that contravenes its regulations.**

Privacy and confidentiality will be respected and any information provided by an appellant will only be disclosed to those directly involved with the case, or such administrative staff as may be necessary.

An appellant can expect their request to be handled impartially, confidentiality and within a reasonable time-scale. Sometimes it will not be possible to resolve an appeal in a timely fashion; if that is the case, a student will be updated regarding the status of their case.

Do I need to submit a Formal Appeal?

Before you submit a Formal Appeal you should make sure of the following:

- You have contacted your School/Institute and you are clear why a certain decision was made.
 - You may also wish to contact the Queen Mary Students' Union Advocacy and Representation Manager. The QMSU provides free, independent advice for students who wish to submit a Formal Appeal.
 - Other people you may find helpful to talk to include your:
 - Academic Advisor
 - Programme lead/director
 - School/Institute Administrator
 - School/Institute student support contact
- You can provide evidence that the decision you wish to appeal against was either:
 - Subject to a procedural error, **AND/OR**,
 - Exceptional circumstances, illness, or other relevant factors were for good reason not made known at the appropriate time or were not properly taken into account.
- **If you wish to appeal a particular mark or marks**, you should have exhausted all of the relevant School/Institute procedures for obtaining feedback on your performance. Further information on these types of appeals is below.

Please consider and act on the above points as they may prevent the need for a Formal Appeal. **Queen Mary encourages informal resolution in all situations relevant to the appeal process, and students are strongly encouraged to consider informal resolution where appropriate.**

Request for feedback before submitting a Formal Appeal

Students sometimes receive disappointing results and a natural reaction is to find out if they are correct. Note that in almost every case published marks are correct as great care is taken when calculating, transcribing and publishing marks before they are officially released.

If you are unsure why you received a certain mark, then your first step should be to request some feedback from your School/Institute. This may include attending a 'result surgery' after your marks are confirmed and released to understand why you received the result you did, or by asking your examiner for additional feedback.

If you have taken the above steps but you still wish to submit a Formal Appeal against a result, then you are required to provide evidence in support of a procedural error otherwise it is likely that the appeal will be rejected as a challenge to academic judgement.

What is academic judgement?

The mark awarded for any assessment is a reflection of your achievement as determined by the examiner(s) in accordance with a prescribed marking scheme. A challenge to academic judgement is not valid grounds for appeal. In other words, an examiner's marking will not be scrutinised once it has been through the appropriate marking procedures and the marks have been confirmed by the appropriate Examination Boards. **Your work will not be remarked by another examiner.**

Simply being convinced that your performance must have been better because of the amount of revision or hard work you put in, or because you disagree with the marks and comments/feedback left by the examiners on your work are not valid grounds for an appeal. If this is the basis of your appeal then it will likely be automatically rejected. You should obtain feedback on your performance instead to understand why you received the result you did

How do I submit a Formal Appeal?

1. Complete the Queen Mary Formal Appeal form that can be found [here](#). You must complete all sections of the form that apply; advice on this is given below.
2. Provide a statement in support of your case, written in your own words. Any statement should be concise and contain only the information you wish to be considered. It is very helpful if you provide a timeline of events and refer to evidence where it exists.
3. Provide evidence in support of your appeal, or list any evidence which is yet to be submitted, but will be submitted within 7 calendar days of the date of submission.

You will need to submit all of the above, to the Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Office. You must submit your form electronically from your Queen Mary email account to appeals@qmul.ac.uk.

If you are unable to submit a Formal Appeal in the manner described above, you must contact the Appeals, Complaint and Conduct Office as soon as you are able to do so to discuss alternative arrangements.

When do I submit my Formal Appeal?

You must submit your Formal Appeal **within 14 calendar days of the official notification** of the decision you are appealing against. For example, if you receive your official results or an academic misconduct outcome on **7 July**, you have until **11.59pm on 21 July** to submit an appeal.

Please note that the deadline cannot be extended, although discretion can be exercised if there is a good reason for the late submission. You must provide evidence in support of that good reason or it is unlikely that your appeal will be considered.

Completing the form – Grounds for a Formal Appeal

As noted above, there are two grounds on which you may submit a Formal Appeal; procedural error and exceptional circumstances. You must indicate on the form and when writing your statement on which ground(s) you are submitting your appeal; **you may submit your appeal on either or both grounds.**

The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples that do not meet the permitted grounds; these are listed in the [Appeal Policy](#). Any Formal Appeal based exclusively on one or more of these examples is likely to be rejected, at the discretion of the Head of the Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Office:

- i. appeals against the academic judgement of internal or external examiners.*
- ii. appeals based on the informal assessment of a student's work by academic staff, which includes work that has not yet been confirmed by the relevant examination board/s.*
- iii. marginal failure to attain a higher classification of award.*
- iv. for disciplinary matters, the provision of an apology by a student for their actions is not deemed reason for an appeal to be heard.*
- v. lack of awareness by a student of the relevant procedure or regulations.*
- vi. vexatious or frivolous appeals and appeals with no evidence or grounds for the claims made.*

Completing the form – The subject of the appeal

When writing your statement and completing the Formal Appeal form you must provide the date of the decision which you are appealing against, and a copy of the decision if it does not relate to the latest official release of your results.

Examples of decisions may include:

- An individual module result – *please state the module code, title and the mark received.*
- The classification of an award – *First, Upper Second, Lower Second etc.*
- An academic misconduct decision – *please provide the academic misconduct outcome letter.*
- De-registration from your programme due to academic failure or failure to pay your university fees – *please be specific and explain the reasons.*

Exceptional circumstances – what is a 'good reason'?

Students are expected to submit extenuating circumstances claims to their School/Institute at the appropriate time if they experience circumstances outside of their control which negatively affects their ability to complete any assessments. If your Formal Appeal is submitted on the grounds of exceptional circumstances, illness or other relevant factors which you did not make known at the appropriate time then you must provide evidence of the 'good reason' why you did not do so. In other words, you must provide evidence of the good reason why you were unable to engage with the exceptional circumstances process at the appropriate time.

'Good reason' is defined in the [Appeal Policy](#) as follows:

*'Good reason' requires a student to demonstrate circumstances **beyond their control prevented the disclosure of the relevant factors at the appropriate time.** Personal embarrassment or unwillingness to disclose personal circumstances shall not count as 'good reason' for the purposes of these regulations.*

You must decide what evidence to submit to demonstrate the necessary 'good reason'; we would normally expect independent, third-party evidence in support of the appeal which addresses why you were prevented from disclosing your extenuating circumstances at the appropriate time. In the absence of any evidence of the 'good reason', your appeal will likely be rejected.

The Queen Mary [Advice and Counselling Service](#) offers advice on what kind of evidence a student should try and obtain when submitting an extenuating circumstances claim. This is a useful guide when thinking about what evidence you will need to submit with your Formal Appeal. However, students must be aware that you **cannot self-certify a Formal Appeal**. Any appeal submitted without evidence will be rejected.

What outcome can I request when I submit a Formal Appeal?

You can request whatever outcome you would like, however, students should bear in mind the fact that **Queen Mary must follow its regulations**. There will be no exceptions to this principle. Before submitting an appeal, you must ensure that the outcome you are seeking is possible under the appropriate [regulations](#).

For example, it is common for students to request an increased mark/s as an outcome of their Formal Appeal. This can never happen – assessment will only ever measure what a student did achieve, not what a student had the potential to achieve. If such an appeal is upheld, the student will be offered another attempt at the relevant assessment/s, they will not be awarded more marks. Similarly, a student whose appeal is successful on the grounds of exceptional circumstances cannot simply have their classification raised; they will be offered the opportunity to demonstrate achievement at the higher level.

I've submitted a Formal Appeal – what happens next?

You will receive confirmation that your Formal Appeal has been received and is being considered via an email that will be sent to your Queen Mary email account.

You will normally be notified of the outcome of your appeal within 2 months from the submission of your supporting evidence. Where a case is likely to take longer than 2 months you will be notified to this effect.

A caseworker will investigate your Formal Appeal and submit relevant enquiries to your School/Institute, or any other relevant department, to obtain necessary information, such as minutes of meetings, student records, department handbooks etc. The caseworker will send you a summary of your appeal including any relevant information collected in the course of their investigation. You will be given 7 calendar days to provide any comments on the summary before a decision is made.

The caseworker will then present your entire appeal submission, the appeal summary including your comments, and a recommendation on an appropriate course of action to a Chair of the Appeal Panel; the caseworker and Chair will jointly come to a decision on whether or not to uphold the appeal.

While you are waiting for the outcome of your Formal Appeal, you **must** comply with the decision that has been made. For example, if you have been scheduled for resits, you should sit/submit them until and unless the appeal decides otherwise.

What if my Formal Appeal is NOT UPHELD?

If it is decided that your Formal Appeal is not upheld then you will receive written notification of the outcome and the steps available to you should you choose to take the matter further.

What if my Formal Appeal is UPHELD?

If it is decided that your Formal Appeal is upheld and the grounds are of an administrative or regulatory nature then action may be taken to remedy the situation without referral to the original decision-making body.

Where there is substantive evidence that exceptional circumstances were not considered appropriately or, for good reason, could not be made known at the appropriate time the case may be referred back to the decision making body (usually an examination board) for reconsideration. **Note that the decision on whether those exceptional circumstances are then accepted is solely that of the relevant exam board.**

Referral to an Appeal Panel

A Formal Appeal is only referred to a full Appeal Panel for consideration where the Chair of the Appeal Panel and the appeal caseworker cannot agree on an outcome, or if the appeal is particularly complex.

If your case does go to a full Appeal Panel then you will be invited to attend (having been given at least 10 calendar days' notice). You may bring someone with you to the meeting who will be entitled to assist or speak on your behalf. The procedure for a panel is outlined in the [Appeal Policy](#).

Final Review

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your Formal Appeal you may submit a request for a Final Review to the Principal's nominee.

The Final Review process will involve a review of the existing casefile to determine whether:

- i. the appeal procedures were followed appropriately, and/or,*
- ii. the appeal outcome was reasonable in light of the available evidence*

New issues or evidence will not normally be considered at the Final Review stage unless you are able to demonstrate why this evidence was not made available with the request for a Formal Appeal.

Once a Final Review is complete you will receive a Completion of Procedures letter explaining that Queen Mary's internal procedures are complete. The Completion of Procedures letter represents the final decision of Queen Mary.

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your Final Review, as outlined in your Completion of Procedures letter, then then you can submit a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)

The OIA is the independent body with the authority to review any outcome of a Queen Mary Formal Appeal. The OIA is free to students, however, **you must submit your complaint to them within 12 months of the date of your Completion of Procedures letter.**

To obtain a Completion Procedures Letter **you must complete Queen Mary's internal appeal process.**

For more information on the OIA please visit their website: www.oiahe.org.uk

Sources of further advice and information

1. Your School/Institute

▪ Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

- Centre for Commercial Law Studies – <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/ccls/>
- Department of Law – <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/law/>
- School of Business and Management – <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/busman/>
- School of Economics and Finance – <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/sef/>
- School of English and Drama – <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/sed/>
- School of Geography – <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/geog/>
- School of History – <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/history/>
- School of Languages, Linguistics and Film – <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/sllf/>
- School of Politics and International Relations – <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/politics/>

▪ Faculty of Science and Engineering

- School of Biological and Behavioural Sciences – <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/sbbs/>
- School of Electronic Engineering and Computer Science – <http://www.eecs.qmul.ac.uk/>
- School of Engineering and Materials Science – <https://www.sems.qmul.ac.uk/>
- School of Mathematical Sciences – <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/maths/>
- School of Physical and Chemical Sciences – <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/spcs/>

▪ Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry

- Barts Cancer Institute – <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/bci/>
- Blizard Institute – <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/blizard/>
- Institute of Dentistry – <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/dentistry/>
- Institute of Health Sciences Education – <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/ihse/>
- William Harvey Research Institute – <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/whri/>
- Wolfson Institute of Population Health – <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/wiph/>

2. Your School/Institute student support contact

<https://my.qmul.ac.uk/services-and-support/student-support-contacts/>

3. Queen Mary Academic Regulations – Please note that the Academic Regulations are updated every academic year; ensure you are consulting the regulations relevant to your appeal

<https://arcs.qmul.ac.uk/policy/>

4. Queen Mary Students' Union (QMSU)

<https://www.qmsu.org/advice/academic/>

5. Queen Mary Advice and Counselling Service

<https://www.welfare.qmul.ac.uk/>

6. The Student Enquiry Centre

<https://arcs.qmul.ac.uk/students/sec/>

7. The Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Office

Dept. W

81 Mile End Road

London, E1 4UJ

appeals@qmul.ac.uk

8. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)

+44 (0)118 959 9813

enquiries@oiahe.org.uk