

Appeals Policy for HE Taught Courses – Student Guidance

Introductory Information

Making an appeal is a formal procedure in every institution. This guidance is to try and help you understand the policy and the way the process works at AUB. Don't forget if you would like to talk it through with somebody on an informal but confidential basis you are welcome to contact: academicadvice@aub.ac.uk or with the Students' Union Sabbatical Officers.

THE TWO MINUTE GUIDE TO APPEALS

INFORMAL STAGE: Before making an appeal (See guidance page 2-3)

- Read the appeals policy and student guidance;
- Look at the grounds for appeal – does your situation match one or more of these?
- Talk it over: email academicadvice@aub.ac.uk or Students' Union Sabbatical Officers;
- Make an appointment and meet with your Course Leader.

If you still decide that you wish to go ahead with your appeal, this is where it gets formal.

FORMAL STAGE: Making a formal appeal (See guidance page 3)

- Complete the AP1 form and email to the University Secretary at studentappeals@aub.ac.uk
- Don't forget to add your evidence; if you are including personal information about a third person (e.g. illness of a relative), check data protection rules (**Page 4**);
- You should receive an acknowledgement within the week, if you don't, chase it up;
- Keep checking your email.

Processing of your appeal (See guidance page 4-5)

- The University Secretary will send your appeal form to relevant members of staff who have to respond within an agreed timescale.
- If your appeal is based on mitigating circumstances a Mitigation Board will be held.
- Once everybody has replied the University Secretary will present all the information to the Chair of the Exam Board for decision.
- The University Secretary writes to tell you the decision via email.
- If your appeal is rejected you may be able to ask for a review of the decision – check the Policy and if you feel that you have a case contact the University Secretary within 7 days.

REVIEW STAGE: Appeals Panel Meeting (See guidance page 5-6)

- Keep checking your email as you will be contacted about dates and arrangements;
- All the documentation that the panel members see, is sent to you – read it!
- The meeting is likely to be virtual. Decide if you are going to attend – it's up to you, it won't affect the decision;
- If you do decide to attend, find a friend from the AUB community to come with you and discuss with them what you are going to say.
- If you decide not to attend, give AUB an email address and check it – you might be emailed with a query; make sure you reply promptly.
- The decision is sent in writing within five working days of the meeting.

BEFORE YOU MAKE AN APPEAL

What is an Appeal?

If you feel that an assessment decision has been made unjustly, you may be able to challenge this decision by making an appeal. You are entitled to make an appeal so long as the grounds for your appeal match one or more of the grounds set out in the Appeals Policy at Paragraph 2.1

The important point about Appeals is that they are about assessment outcomes, this means either:

a unit mark

or

a decision made about your progression to another level of the course

or

degree classification

What the Appeals policy does NOT cover

If you are unhappy about some aspect of course delivery or a service, the Appeals policy is not the right procedure to follow. You should look at the Complaints Procedure which is on Viewpoint <https://viewpoint.aub.ac.uk/things-to-know/Pages/complaints.aspx>

If you want further advice on the Complaints Procedure, please make an appointment to see the Senior Investigating Officer by emailing complaint@aub.ac.uk.

When can I make an appeal?

Decisions about award take place at the Progression and Awards Boards, which for BA and MArch students are scheduled in June and July and for most MA students, September. You can only make an appeal once confirmed results have been published.

What is the difference between an Exam Board and the Progression and Awards Board (commonly known as a PAB)?

Student results for each course will be considered by a subject Exam Board; it confirms individual unit marks and makes recommendations on award and progression. The PAB checks that all systems and processes associated with assessment have operated correctly and confirms all decisions on award and progression.

Is there a deadline?

Yes, you should make an appeal within 15 working days (i.e. don't count Saturday/Sunday) of your results being published – unless you have specifically been given a deadline which allows you slightly more time.

I am unhappy about my results, but I don't know if I should appeal or not. What should I do?

Look at the grounds for appeal (see section 2.1 of the policy); think about whether your particular circumstances match one or more of the grounds listed.

For example, if you feel that you have been affected by health problems:

- Do you have medical evidence to show that the period of ill-health matches the time when you doing your assessment work.
- Can you give reasons why you did not speak to someone earlier and ask for support through the mitigation procedure?

Will my future grades be affected if I make an appeal?

No. If you decide to make an appeal, the University will consider your case fairly and without prejudice; you will not be disadvantaged by making an appeal.

I don't understand what is meant by "academic judgement"

When your tutors/external examiners assess work they are drawing on their professional and academic knowledge, often built up over a number of years, to evaluate how well a piece of work has met the assessment criteria. This includes checking that the mark is consistent with the standards applied at other institutions across the higher education sector. You may be unhappy with the mark that you have been awarded, but this does not in itself form grounds for appeal. There needs to be evidence that something went wrong in the assessment procedure, and that the result is therefore unfair.

INFORMAL STAGE

What is the point of the meeting with the Course Leader?

If you wish to make a formal appeal, you should meet with your Course Leader first. This is a confidential meeting in which you are able to discuss your mark(s) or your general performance.

Always start this meeting with an open mind; it may be that there has been a genuine misunderstanding which can be sorted out. After the meeting you might feel that, although you are disappointed with your grade, you do at least understand the reason for it.

If you decide you still wish to go ahead with your appeal, this is the point at which things go "formal" (see below).

FORMAL STAGE

Making a formal appeal

You need to complete the AP1 form and email it to the dedicated email box: studentappeals@aub.ac.uk

Completing the form

The form will give you a structure and help you ensure that you provide the right information. You can also contact: academicadvice@aub.ac.uk they will not be able to make your case for you but will help you plan how to best present your case and focus on the important points.

Do:

- Make it clear what you are appealing against – is it against classification of degree, a particular unit mark, a decision that you are required to intermit?
- Make clear the grounds on which your appeal is based (See section 2.1 of the Appeals Policy)
- Provide a full explanation of why are making an appeal; make sure you include all **relevant** details including dates where possible.
- Provide relevant evidence – **this is essential.**
- Make it clear what you want to gain from this appeals process.

Don't

- Waffle – provide enough detail to make the situation clear.
- Lose focus – do not include all the things that you have been unhappy about for the last three years.
- Make subjective comments that cannot be backed up by evidence – instead, keep it neutral, let the evidence speak for itself.
- Include information that you would not be happy for the Chair of Examination Board or an appeals panel to read.

Confidentiality of information – who will see your appeal

In line with data protection legislation, your appeal will be kept confidential and only accessed by staff where there is a specific reason for them seeing the information.

The members of staff who will see your appeal will be primarily the University Secretary and the Chair of the Examination Board. It may be that as part of the consideration of your appeal, further information or clarification of particular points will be needed from the Course Leader or a particular tutor. If this applies in your case, relevant sections of your appeal will be sent to the Course Leader/tutor. If there is any sensitive information that you would not want a tutor to see, you should make this clear to the University Secretary when you first submit your appeal.

If you are appealing on grounds of mitigation, the mitigating circumstances aspect of your appeal will be considered by the Mitigation Board (Mit Board). Members of the Board are: The Academic Lead on Standards and Quality, Directors of School, Director of Student Experience and Employability and the University Secretary.

If your appeal progresses to the panel stage – panel members will be senior academics who have had no connection with your studies and a representative of the Students' Union.

Using evidence that provides information about a third person

If you are appealing on grounds of mitigating circumstances because you have been affected by the illness/personal crisis of a third person, you need to be aware of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Remember that the important point is to show how the situation impacted upon you; it is not enough just to detail information about a third person and automatically assume that those making the decision on your appeal will understand the connection.

If, however, you do want to provide some evidence which includes personal information about a third person, you must make sure that they understand how their information will be used and kept. If they are happy to supply this information, they should sign the relevant section of the AP1 form.

DON'T FORGET...

This form is the basis of your appeal. You cannot change the form once it has been submitted so it is really important that you take your time in ensuring that the way you have completed the form is as good as it can be

Once you are satisfied with the way in which you have made your case on the form, attach all your evidence and email to studentappeals@aub.ac.uk

Processing of an appeal

What happens once I have submitted my appeal?

You should receive an acknowledgement of your appeal. If you have not heard anything within a few days, contact the University Secretary immediately. Keep a fairly regular check on your emails but it will probably take a few weeks for the initial investigation.

What action does the University Secretary take?

They will look at the appeal initially just to make sure that there are no instant problems e.g. you forgot to add your evidence

They may send your form to relevant members of staff for comment see section on confidentiality of information above . Staff will normally be given a week in which to respond, but there may be occasions where longer is required. In these cases, you will be notified of the delay; and you will not be disadvantaged by this.

Where an appeal includes grounds of mitigating circumstances, the University Secretary will hold a meeting of the Mitigation Board to consider the evidence provided.

Once everybody has replied the University Secretary will assemble the following information:

- Your appeal form and evidence
- A transcript of your marks
- Minutes of the relevant exam board/Progression and Awards Board
- Responses from staff
- Response from Mitigation Board, if appropriate.

What is the decision making process?

The University Secretary will present the information to the Chair of the Exam Board who will make a decision on your appeal.

The Decision is:

Either

The evidence and replies all indicate that the appeal has justification and should be upheld. If this happens the Chair of the Exam Board could override the previous decision and make a different recommendation to the PAB or they could refer the matter back to the Exam Board for further discussion.

Or

Lack of evidence and the responses all indicate that there is no case to answer and the appeal should therefore be rejected: the University Secretary will write to tell you and that the appeals procedure is finished.

Can I ask for the decision to be changed?

If you are unhappy with the decision you might be able to proceed to the Review stage of the appeal, but you can only ask for a review of the decision if you can show one of the following:

- The appeal process was not followed correctly.
- New evidence has become available that you were not able to provide when you made your original appeal.
- The decision of the Chair of the Exam Board was unreasonable in view of the evidence.

If you want to have the decision reviewed you have to let the University Secretary know within seven days of you being informed that your appeal has been rejected.

REVIEW STAGE

Appeal Panel Hearing

What is an appeal panel hearing?

It is a formal meeting attended by senior academic staff together with a Students' Union representative to consider your case for review.

NB It is not there to make a decision about your appeal itself, but it looks at the way in which your appeal has been considered.

Who are the panel members?

Academic Staff, and a student representative nominated by the Students' Union - nobody who has had any contact with you during your time on the course will be a panel member.

What about attendance?

You can attend if you want, it is entirely up to you; attendance or non-attendance has no impact on the decision. It is likely that the meeting will be held virtually. If you are not attending, what we do ask is that you provide us with an email address that you check regularly, because if a query arose that the panel felt needed to be answered before making a decision, we could email you quickly and give you a couple of days to provide a reply.

I do want to attend, can I bring anybody?

Yes you can bring someone with you, but they must be a member of the University community e.g. a friend who is a student here, or a student representative. You must let us know in advance if you are bringing somebody.

How do I prepare for the meeting?

- You will be sent all the documentation 7 days before the meeting. Make sure that you read everything carefully and make a note of any queries.
- Although the panel will give you every encouragement to make your case, it is a formal meeting and it is understandable that you might be nervous. It is probably a good idea to write down all the really key points of your case. If you are bringing somebody with you, go through everything with them and give them a copy of your key points so that they can jog your memory if you forget anything.
- Don't forget to focus on your case for review – i.e. what you are trying to show is why the initial decision on your appeal should be set aside.

What happens at the meeting?

Once you have been introduced to everybody at the meeting, the format will be decided by the Chair, taking account of your individual situation. You will be given a chance to explain why you think the original decision should be set aside. The panel may also ask you questions.

What about the decision?

You will be notified in writing of the decision of the panel within five working days of the meeting.

FURTHER INFORMATION

How long does the process take?

For students who receive their results in June/July, appeals panels usually take place in September. For examination boards which take place at different times of year, the whole process should be completed in about eight weeks.

What happens to the documentation connected to the appeal.

This will be held confidentially in an electronic file for a period of time in line with the University Retention Policy (currently 6 years following completion of studies).