

ACADEMIC APPEALS POLICY RELATING TO NON-GRADE APPEALS

1. In line with the QAA Quality Code and the OIA Good Practice Framework an academic appeal is defined as a request for the review of a decision of an academic body charged with decisions on students progression, assessment and awards.
2. Academic Appeals Committee (AAC) is a sub-committee of the Academic Board that makes decisions on academic appeals.
3. Decisions which may be appealed via AAC:
 - a. Exclusion from an examination or assessment;
 - b. Denied requests for course exemptions, course substitutions, or pre-requisite waivers made by the relevant Head of School/Department, or the Academic Registrar;
 - c. Decisions regarding academic misconduct.
4. Grounds for appeal:
 - a. Mitigating circumstances exist. Mitigating circumstances claims must be supported by medical or other documentary evidence acceptable by the AAC. Detailed information pertaining to mitigating circumstances and evidence can be found in the Mitigating Circumstances Guidance;
 - b. A procedural irregularity occurred;
 - c. A decision was manifestly unreasonable or influenced by prejudice or bias, or perception thereof, on the part of the decision-maker(s).
5. Students using the appeal process to bring frivolous or vexatious matters to the University's attention will be subject to disciplinary action.
6. Students found to have provided fraudulent evidence or falsified a claim will be subject to disciplinary action.
7. Appeals require time to be processed correctly. Appeals may result in delays in the confirmation of grades which may have an impact on progression and the timing of the completion of studies/graduation.
8. Information will be used and retained in line with the University Privacy Policy.

Stage I: the Appeal

9. Students wishing to appeal a decision or result stemming from "Decisions which may be appealed" may do so using the appeals process through the AAC.

10. All undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled in courses offered by the University may request reconsideration of any academic matter in which they believe they have been treated unfairly. The University pledges that students studying at all levels have the opportunity to raise matters of concern without the risk of disadvantage.
11. Students must have exhausted the approval routes before entering appeal. They must have documentary evidence of the relevant approval route with the outcomes they are appealing.
12. Appeals must be submitted to the AAC within 5 working days following the decision being appealed using the Academic Appeals Form and sent to appeals@richmond.ac.uk.
13. In the case of a group complaint, one student, identified on the Academic Appeal Form, will act as the lead student, with the other group members' names listed in the relevant section on the form. The University will only contact the lead student in connection with the group appeal. The University will expect the lead student to distribute the University's communications among the group and collate the group's response to the University's enquiries to give to the University. The University cannot be held responsible if the lead student does not accurately provide the views of any member of the Group or if they do not pass on information from the University.
14. A group appeal is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction by two or more students about the University's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by the University.
15. The University reserves the right to propose individual solutions to any group appeal.
16. Only the students about whom a decision has been made can lodge an appeal against that decision. Appeals from third parties are not accepted.
17. Students cannot normally submit an appeal after they have been presented to the University Exam Board to ratify their degree or exit award.
18. The AAC secretary will make a determination on administrative grounds whether or not the case can proceed to the AAC. An appeal may not be considered if there is no substantive case for the AAC to hear or if there is no valid remedy open to the AAC.
19. If a case is to be heard by the AAC, a meeting will be scheduled within 10 working days of receipt of a complete appeal. The AAC will normally expect to resolve a case

at this meeting, and a decision notice will be sent to students within 5 working days from the meeting date.

20. All AAC outcomes will be recorded in the reserved minutes of the AAC.
21. All documents and evidence submitted by students in support of an appeal will be treated with respect for the privacy of the students, and will be confidential to those members of staff concerned with the matters raised in the appeal within the University.

Hearing

22. In the rare event that a formally-instituted hearing is deemed to be necessary, this will be held within 15 working days of the receipt of a complete appeal. At this hearing, the students and faculty member may offer explanations of the situation to AAC, and the Committee members may ask questions of each. The Committee may also call upon other faculty members, staff, or students, to ask questions of them that will clarify any additional aspects of the case indicated.
23. Students may be accompanied to the meeting by a supporter. The supporter may prompt or provide advice to students, but may not address the hearing committee unless invited to do so by the Chair.
24. The AAC Chair will prepare a written report on the Committee's decision made at the hearing, and a copy of this report will be provided to students at the hearing, faculty member, Head of School/Department, and the Academic Registrar, within 5 working days of the Committee hearing.

Stage II: Further Appeal to the Office of the Provost

25. Students who choose to appeal the decision made by the AAC may lodge a "Further Appeal" to the Office of the Provost. Only after all methods for settlement at the level of the AAC have been exhausted can students lodge a further appeal.
26. The Office of the Provost will receive information from the AAC Secretary and other parties involved in a further appeal, and conduct any further investigations or convene hearings deemed necessary.
27. The grounds for Further Appeal are:
 - a. New evidence exists that you could not have reasonably presented in your appeal to the AAC;
 - b. A procedural irregularity occurred in the conduct of the appeal process;
 - c. A decision was manifestly unreasonable or influenced by prejudice or bias, or perception thereof, on the part of the decision-maker(s).

28. Further Appeal procedures are as follows:

- a. Students must file a Further Appeal Form to the Office of the Provost requesting a review of AAC's decision within 5 working days;
- b. If the Further Appeal is on the grounds of supplying new evidence, then this must be presented with the form;
- c. In the case of a group complaint, one student, identified on the Further Appeal Form, will act as the lead student, with the other group members' names listed in the relevant section on the form.
- d. The Office of the Provost will review the material presented at the original AAC meeting plus any additional information provided by students;
- e. The Office of the Provost will request additional information if necessary;
- f. The Office of the Provost will make a final determination within 10 working days and students will be informed of the outcome.

29. The University reserves the right to propose individual solutions to any group appeal.

30. At this point the University's institutional procedures for appeals have been completed. The Completion of Procedures letter will outline for students the role of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

31. If, upon the conclusion the University's institutional procedures the students is dissatisfied with the decision, they may take their appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (<http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>). Students must first have exhausted all appropriate internal procedures at the University before approaching the OIA.

