



# Guide to Academic Appeals

This document is a guideline for Macquarie University students who wish to submit an academic appeal against a decision for:

- admission and readmission
- special consideration
- recognition of prior learning
- suspension and exclusion
- fitness to practice
- termination of higher degree research candidature
- decisions relating to the award of PhD, MPhil or MRes degree
- grade appeals

This should be read in conjunction with the [Academic Appeals Policy](#) / [Procedure](#).

## GROUNDINGS FOR APPEAL

An Academic Appeal asks the university to reconsider an eligible academic decision (listed above) due to a procedural error occurring in the original application. The appeal process is designed to check whether you were given *procedural* fairness, i.e. did the university follow the correct procedure when making a decision or not?

You need to consider carefully whether you meet one or more of the grounds outlined in the Academic Appeals Policy, and be able to explain how it caused you substantial injustice. It is not enough to state that you are unhappy with the decision or that you feel it is unfair.

Below you will find the list of eligible grounds, along with questions to ask yourself, to help you identify if you are eligible to appeal the decision.

An appeal against an applicable decision may only be made on the grounds that:

PART A: the procedure for dealing with the matter was unfair in the circumstances because one or more of the following things occurred:

- the student affected was not given a reasonable opportunity, appropriate to the circumstances, to present his or her case or provide an explanation, before the decision was made**
  - What does the relevant policy say about the opportunity to explain before a decision is made?
  - Are there any extenuating circumstances that impacted your ability to provide the explanation?
  - Was there an opportunity to provide information about these circumstances or an explanation before the decision was made?
- the decision maker in making the decision was biased or there was a reasonable apprehension of bias, against the student affected**
  - What does the relevant policy say about how a decision maker should make their decision?
  - Was the decision maker following the policy or did they make the decision based on other reasons?
  - Can you evidence that the decision was not following the policy, and that there is some ulterior/hidden motive driving the decision maker?
  - Can you explain your 'apprehension' of bias or how the decision seemed bias to you?
- the decision maker in making the decision, took an irrelevant consideration into account**
  - What does the relevant policy say about the information which should be considered when making a decision?
  - Did the decision maker consider additional documents or information related to something that is outside of the policy requirements?
  - Can you explain what extra documents, evidence or information was considered, and how this impacted upon the decision that was made?

- iv. **the decision maker in making the decision, failed to take a relevant consideration into account**
  - What does the relevant policy say about the information and evidence which should be considered when making a decision?
  - Did you provide important pieces of evidence and information that the decision maker overlooked?
  - Can you explain what evidence/information (previously submitted) was overlooked or addresses a concern outlined in the decision you received.
- v. **the decision maker in making the decision, acted dishonestly or for an improper purpose**
  - What does the policy say about how a decision maker should make their decision?
  - Was the decision maker following the policy or did they make the decision based on other reasons?
  - Can you evidence that the decision was not following the policy, and that there is some improper or dishonest purpose driving the decision maker?
- vi. **there was no evidence to justify the decision made by the decision maker**
  - What does the relevant policy say about the evidence which should be considered when making a decision?
  - Was the decision based on evidence in accordance with the policy requirements?
  - Was the decision maker mistaken in the conclusions they drew, or did the decision maker misunderstand the evidence that was presented?
  - Can you provide reasons why you believe the evidence available to the decision maker could not lead to the decision that was made?
- vii. **the decision was so illogical or unreasonable that it could not have been rationally made**
  - What does the relevant policy say about the information which should be considered when making a decision?
  - What are the reasons given for the decision? Are the reasons given wholly illogical to the point of being entirely irrational?
  - Can you provide reasons why you believe the evidence or information provided by yourself could not logically or reasonably lead to the decision that was made?
- viii. **the decision was made in accordance with a guideline or direction from the University of general application without regard to the merits of the particular case**
  - This ground may apply if the decision maker did follow the rule of the policy, but in your particular case it does not seem appropriate to follow a general rule.
  - Do you have a specific circumstance that requires unique consideration and flexibility beyond what is normally required?
  - Can you evidence the specific situation and explain why further consideration is required?
  - What difference would this additional consideration have upon the decision that was made?
- ix. **the decision maker made the decision in the particular case in accordance with the wishes of another person**
  - What does the relevant policy say about how a decision maker should make their decision?
  - Was the decision maker following the policy or did they make the decision based on the wishes of another person?
  - Can you evidence that the decision was not following the policy, and that an alternate person who is not responsible for decision making has influenced their decision?
- x. **the required procedure for making the decision was not followed; and**
  - What does the relevant policy say about the procedure that should be followed for the decision maker to make their decision?
  - Was the decision maker following the set procedure or did they overlook one of the important steps which should have been taken?
  - Can you explain how the policy was not followed and how it has impacted upon the decision that was made? and as a result, the student affected suffered substantial injustice.

PART B: as a result, the student affected suffered substantial injustice. In addition to the grounds above, you must explain:

- Why do you believe that the decision caused injustice?
- What are the consequences of the decision to you?
- What kind of detriment or loss will you suffer as a result?
- What kind of disadvantage or inequity does it cause you?

### HOW LONG DO I HAVE TO SUBMIT AN APPEAL?

Strict time limits apply, depending on the type of academic decision you are appealing:

To appeal:	Made under the following policy:	Deadline:
Admission and re-admission	Admissions (Coursework) Policy	10 working days
Special Consideration	Special Consideration Policy	5 working days
Recognition of Prior Learning	Recognition of Prior Learning Policy	10 working days
Suspension or Exclusion	Academic Progression Policy, or General Coursework Rules	20 working days
Termination of Higher Degree Research Candidature	Higher Degree Research Rules	20 working days
Decisions relating to the award of PhD, MPhil or MRes degree	Higher Degree Research Thesis Preparation, Submission and Examination Policy	20 working days
Fitness to practice requirements	Fitness to Practice Procedure (located within the Academic Progression Policy)	20 working days
Procedural irregularities in a Grade Appeal decision	Assessment Policy/Procedure	15 working days

### What should I do if I have missed the deadline?

There are no guarantees a late appeal will be accepted. If you have extenuating circumstances that have prevented you from submitting an appeal before the deadline, you will need to ask permission to appeal late.

To do this, email [academic\\_appeals@mq.edu.au](mailto:academic_appeals@mq.edu.au), and explain:

- What decision you are seeking to appeal (including reference number if appropriate)
- Reasons why you were not able to appeal before the deadline (with evidence)
- The grounds that you want to raise in your appeal.

### HOW DO I SUBMIT AN APPEAL?

When your appeal is ready log into to AskMQ and submit the [Academic Appeals Application](#).

### SUPPORT AVAILABLE

#### Feedback and support with your appeal

If you would like feedback on your appeal against suspension or exclusion, complete the [Student CARE MQ Referral form](#) select “Advocacy support” as the reason for referral, and attach your draft appeal (with evidence) to your submission.

*This guide was prepared for you by the  
Student Advocacy & Support Service.*

*The information is correct as of July 2021*



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