

Common student appeal scenarios

Scenario 1:

"I have been given a mark of 38% for my essay which is only 2% below the pass mark. I worked really hard on this module and know that I should have been given a better mark. I think that maybe the marker is too harsh or there has been a mistake somewhere. Please can you consider giving me an extra two marks so I pass the module?"

This appeal was unsuccessful because this is classed as academic judgement and will not be accepted as a valid appeal case. All marking is subject to vigorous procedures with marks being confirmed and validated by second marking, external examiner verification, and approval by Examination Boards. Students are encouraged to seek the advice and feedback of tutors on their work if they feel they have not done as well as they thought.

Scenario 2:

"I have been feeling a bit stressed and down all year and believe this has affected my work. After receiving my end of year marks I realised how ill I must have been and went straight to see my GP. I have enclosed a letter from him stating that he saw me last Tuesday and that I told I had been feeling depressed. I didn't inform my School as had no idea how this was affecting my work."

This appeal was unsuccessful because this will not be classed as acceptable exceptional circumstances with a valid reason for not having informed anyone. Students are responsible for informing the University if they are experiencing any difficulties that are affecting their work and must seek relevant medical or mental health assistance at the time, although we do realise that there may be some exceptional reasons why this was not possible. Students have to provide contemporaneous supporting evidence with their appeal.

Scenario 3:

"I found out in May that I was suffering from a rash that covered most of my torso. It was very itchy and affected my sleep, meaning I was so tired during the day and found it hard to study. I felt too embarrassed to inform anyone so kept it to myself. However now I have received my marks I can see how this must have been affecting me and wish for my condition to be taken into account."

This appeal was unsuccessful because embarrassment is not usually a valid reason for not having informed the University of exceptional circumstances, although we do realise that there will be extreme exceptions to this. We do understand that some circumstances may be difficult to talk about, but exceptional circumstances will be processed and considered in the most sensitive way.

Scenario 4:

"I had no idea that there was a system for telling the University about my problems. I only know about this now which is why I didn't tell anyone."

This appeal was unsuccessful because all student, undergraduate and postgraduate, those at Keele and those at partner institutions, are informed about the exceptional circumstances procedure several times a year by email. Information is also available on the website, from tutors and other

staff such as Student Experience and Support Officers, and is included in course handbooks. Ignorance of the procedure will not be deemed a valid reason for not having told anyone at the time.

Scenario 5:

“I was going to put in an exceptional circumstances form but could not get the evidence by the deadline so decided not to bother. I now have the evidence and have submitted it with my appeal.”

This appeal was unsuccessful because although we do understand that evidence is not always immediately available, and some will take longer than others to get. However, a student should still submit an exceptional circumstances form at the time with a note saying that evidence is to follow. The University will be flexible on this if they are able (dependant on dates of meetings) and may be able to make a conditional decision based on evidence arriving at a later date. Even if a claim for exceptional circumstances is turned down by a School due to lack of evidence, the Appeals Panel will see that a student attempted to engage with the system and are more likely to be sympathetic. This obviously depends on the kind of evidence that is being waited for; a general medical letter from a GP that has taken two months to submit is unlikely to be seen as an acceptable delay.

Scenario 6:

“From the beginning of the academic year I have been feeling really lethargic, and have lost some weight and my vision has not been quite right. I visited my GP a couple of times but he was unable to diagnose what was wrong with me. He thought I may have a virus but courses of antibiotics have not helped. I was referred to a specialist two weeks ago and have been diagnosed as diabetic. I am now on medication and am starting to feel much better and am now capable of showing my true potential in my studies. I did not submit an exceptional circumstances form during the year as I did not know what was wrong with me and thought I was just run down and would get better in time. I have provided a letter from my GP showing that I visited him in February and April, and that after seeing a specialist I now have a diagnosis which can be treated.”

This appeal was successful as the student demonstrated that they had visited their doctor as they had been concerned about their health, and had only recently been diagnosed with a condition, therefore had been unable to inform the University earlier. They have evidence that they had seen their GP on two occasions and had been trying to get medical assistance. They also demonstrate how they are now able to complete their studies due to receiving treatment.

Scenario 7:

“I had to take reassessment of a first year module during this academic year (my second year) and heard that the module content and essay questions had changed from last year. I was not entitled to attend lectures and just had to submit a piece of coursework. I could not access the new material on e-vision and therefore contacted my School. I was told I would be granted access but it did not happen, and I tried speaking to them again but still had no access. I ended up missing the deadline and have now failed the module resulting in me being withdrawn. If I had known what I had to do I would have done the work.”

This appeal was successful as there has been a procedural irregularity in the conduct of the assessment. This student should have been registered on the module and given the correct details of assessment criteria and deadlines. Even though the student contacted the School the problem was still not resolved meaning that the student was disadvantaged. The student demonstrated that he had attempted to have the problem resolved by providing emails that he had sent to the School. The

Appeals Panel would recommend that this student be offered a further and final attempt of the module and the requirement to withdraw would be rescinded.