



Appeals Procedure



Academic Appeals: An Introduction

- The purpose of this Procedure is to safeguard the interests of candidates.
- The appeals process may be used only where there are grounds for doing so as specified below under **Grounds of appeal**.
- The process **may not** be used simply because a candidate is dissatisfied with the outcome of their assignment, examination or other assessment result.

Appeal or complaint?

An appeal differs from a complaint. An academic appeal is defined as 'a request for a review of a decision of an academic body charged with making decisions on assessment, student progression and awards'. A complaint is defined as 'the expression of a specific concern about matters that affect the quality of a student's learning opportunities'¹. For complaints see the separate document 'Complaints Procedure'.

Assessment process

All assessments undergo a stringent, quality assured setting process, with moderation by external examiners. Candidates' scripts/assignments are marked in accordance with the programme learning outcomes and reflect a candidate's achievement against these outcomes. All borderline cases are reviewed.

Managing the appeal

Appeals are dealt with impartially and confidentially and no appeal impacts on future assessment decisions. Appeals are dealt with anonymously; however, those involved in considering an appeal will require detailed information and supporting evidence relating to the ground of appeal.

Candidates should be aware that

- the appeals process can be lengthy and time-consuming and should not be undertaken lightly;
- having presented themselves for examination, they are deemed to have been fit and prepared for it;
- those considering an appeal will not (unlike, for example, at university) have before them either evidence of comparable performance (e.g. course work results) or any relevant personal reports (e.g. from tutors).
- an appeal may not question the academic or professional judgment or competence of those with responsibility for assessing a candidate's performance.

Grounds of appeal

An appeal may be made only on grounds alleging:

- the existence of circumstances affecting the candidate's performance, of which the Examination Committee was not aware and which might have had a material effect on the outcome. (Note: because of (ii) above this ground is seldom going to be available and,

¹ QAA UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Concerns, Complaints and Appeals.

if it is, adequate reasons must be given why this information was not available to the Committee previously);

Guidance: This is essentially a late mitigating circumstances application (see STEP/CLTI Mitigating Circumstances Policy). In order to qualify for consideration, the adverse circumstances or events affecting your performance must (i) be **unforeseeable or unpreventable**, (ii) have taken place in **close proximity** to the examination and (iii) have been **sufficiently disruptive** to have a significant adverse effect on your academic performance or your ability to complete an assignment by the due date. Circumstances or events that merit consideration may include: suffering a serious illness or injury; the death or critical illness of a close family member; and a significant family crisis leading to acute stress. The Committee will require detailed information and supporting evidence relating to the circumstances. You will also need to **explain why the information was not given previously**, if an application is made after the results have been released.

- (b) that there was a material administrative error or procedural irregularity in the assessment process;

Guidance: An example of this might be not being informed of an examination date/assessment deadline – although it is the candidate's responsibility to find out this information if not presented – or being given incorrect information. You cannot make a speculative application based on this ground – **new or further information and evidence** to support your case must be provided.

- (c) that there is evidence of prejudice or bias on the part of one or more of the examiners;

Guidance: Again, you cannot make a speculative application based on this ground. You must provide **new or further information and evidence** to support your case.

Procedure

1. Before lodging an appeal a candidate is strongly advised to discuss the matter with the Programme Delivery Manager or other appropriate person at CLTI.
2. To make an appeal, a candidate must submit a written statement to CLTI which sets out the grounds of appeal within 14 days² of the release of results or, in the case of the STEP Certificate and Diploma in Trusts and Estates (England and Wales/Scotland/Northern Ireland), the STEP Advanced Certificate in Will Preparation (England and Wales) or the STEP Certificate for Financial Services (Trusts and Estate Planning), within 14 days² of the publication of the examiners' report.
3. On receipt of the appeal CLTI will consider whether it is made on one of the grounds specified above. If not, the candidate will be notified, with reasons for the rejection of the appeal.
4. If the appeal appears to CLTI to have satisfied one or more of the grounds set out above, then if applicable, the Programme Delivery Manager will obtain further information from any or all of those involved in the assessment process. The candidate will be informed of these comments and invited to submit a response.

² "Days" means normal working days

5. The appeal will then be considered by the Managing Director, CLTI; Senior Manager - Professional Development, STEP; and a STEP examiner not involved in the initial marking process (the Appeal Committee) at the next scheduled Panel. The date of this panel will be communicated to the candidate at the time of them making an appeal. The Committee may make any of the following decisions:
 - (a) to allow the appeal;
 - (b) to reject the appeal;
 - (c) to refer the appeal to the STEP Professional Development Committee (or such sub-committee as it shall choose to appoint), on the basis that it has raised serious issues that require further investigation and consideration.

6. If the Appeal Committee decides to allow the appeal, it may amend the candidate's assignment, examination or other assessment result. If the Committee feels that there is insufficient evidence to judge whether the candidate would have demonstrated the appropriate learning outcomes had the ground of appeal not been present, the Committee may instead grant permission for the candidate to re-take the assessment as if it were their first attempt. The Committee may also make any other decision as they see fit.

7. The decision of the Appeal Committee will be notified to the candidate within 5 days³ of the scheduled Panel and, in the case of rejection; the Committee's reasons will be given. The candidate may then within 21 days³ make a further appeal in writing to the STEP Professional Development Committee, whose decision shall be final.

8. Where an appeal or further appeal is referred to the Professional Development Committee, the candidate will be notified of this decision within 30 days³ of the reference.

Examination Feedback

For courses on which examination feedback is offered, this will not be provided until the appeals process has been concluded.

Annual Report

Each year the relevant head of function at CLTI, responsible for quality assurance and student services, will prepare a report on the number and nature of appeals, the outcomes and any general issues that have arisen.

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³ "Days" means normal working days