

How to Write an Appeal Letter

April 2020

If you are planning to submit an appeal you will need to include an appeal letter. The following guidelines outline what information you should include in your letter.

We strongly recommend that you draft your letter in a Word or text document before you submit your appeal online. The appeal application times out after approximately 15 minutes and it will not save your work. If you have your letter prepared in advance, you can copy and paste it directly into the application.

How long does it need to be?

Your letter should be concise and generally not exceed 500-800 words (or a page to a page and a half) typed and single spaced.

Who should I address it to?

You should address your letter to the Associate Director (Studies)

What information should I include?

Your appeal letter should be structured in three parts:

a. The Request:

State clearly what your appeal is about (for instance: "I am appealing the Faculty's decision that I must withdraw from Queen's for a minimum of three years." Or "I am appealing to drop BMED 270 (Fall, 2019)"

b. Explanation of Extenuating Circumstances:

In the second part of your letter, provide a clear and concise explanation of your extenuating circumstances - those unforeseen personal events beyond your control - which have directly affected your academic performance. "Extenuating circumstances, beyond your control" that students typically describe include an acute physical or mental health illness, domestic or family problems, or an unusual academic event. You do not need to disclose the specific details of your circumstances (such as a diagnosis of a condition) but you do need to specifically address the timeline of them and describe how serious or severe they are or were at the time. You will also need to explain what specific impact these circumstances had on the courses you are appealing. You might also outline what steps you took to deal with the extenuating circumstances during or after their occurrence (for example, consultation with a healthcare professional or personal counselor).

Some other questions you may need to address in your appeal letter are:

Why this course only?

If you were registered in a number of courses over a term but you are appealing only one of those courses, you should explain why that course in particular was affected by

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your circumstances and not the other courses you were also taking at the time.

Why didn't you drop the course earlier?

If your extenuating circumstances occurred prior to the drop deadline of the term, you should explain why you did not or could not drop the course in question by the Week 8 drop deadline.

Why can't you finish the course?

If you are asking for aegrotat standing in a course, you should explain why you are unable to finish all of the work required for the course (in other words, why are you not asking to defer the exam or submit work late instead?)

When can you finish the course?

If you are asking for an extension of an incomplete grade, when do you plan to be able to complete the outstanding work for the course? Have your circumstances been resolved or are they now being managed in such a way that you are able to make a successful return to your studies?

If you are appealing to waive a requirement to withdraw, you should explain what specific steps you have taken and plan to take moving forward to ensure that your extenuating circumstances do not continue to negatively affect your academic progress.

If you have submitted previous appeals before based on the same or related circumstances:

The appeal system is not designed to compensate for circumstances that are chronic or ongoing in nature for which the student is unable or unwilling to effectively resolve or manage. Therefore, extenuating circumstances alone do not guarantee a successful appeal. If you are asking to appeal courses for a second or third time based on the same circumstances, you must explain what steps you have taken to proactively manage your condition, why you were not able to drop courses within the drop deadlines and what unforeseen event happened to affect the management of your condition and your studies. If you are registered with Accessibility Services and you received academic accommodations, you should explain what happened outside of your accommodation that affected your studies.

c. Future plan

An appeal should normally include a plan for achieving academic success should your appeal be granted. In the case of a temporary extenuating circumstance, such as a physical illness, the plan for coping with the extenuating circumstance is often straightforward. For example, you are appealing to drop a course late and you propose to retake the course the following year or over the spring session.

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However, in the case of more severe or ongoing extenuating circumstances, you should indicate how you will make personal adjustments to succeed in your future studies. Some of your plans might address academics (e.g., such as taking a lighter course load, changing programs etc) whereas others might pertain more directly to your extenuating circumstance such as maintaining regular meetings with a medical professional or personal counselor. Your appeal letter should specify how your future plans will support your academic goals.