

Royal Academy of Dramatic Art

Academic appeals policy and procedure

Introduction

1. This policy and procedure relates to **academic appeals** that can be made by RADA students registered on taught programmes of study leading to a King's College, London award who request a review of a decision of an assessment board or other committee/academic body charged with making a decision on student progression, assessment and awards.
2. All students have the right to appeal against the decision of an assessment board, and the process described below will be conducted without bias. No student appealing under the procedures described here, whether successfully or otherwise, shall be treated less favourably or in any way disadvantaged than if they had not made an appeal. RADA commits to maintaining appropriate confidentiality throughout the process, with only the necessary parties involved having sight of any appeal documentation you submit. All circumstances you cite will be taken into due consideration.

We will also ensure that reasonable adjustments will be made throughout the process to take account of disabilities as necessary. This may include amending timeframes.

3. This policy and procedure may be used if you wish to appeal against a final decision of an assessment board, or a committee or equivalent body which affects your academic status or progress at RADA, including (but not limited to) the following:
 - a. a decision that you be expelled from RADA or be excluded from your programme, or an element of programme or study, on grounds of unsatisfactory work/attendance/progress or failure to meet academic or professional requirements
 - b. a requirement that you interrupt your studies on grounds of unsatisfactory work/attendance/progress or failure to meet academic or professional requirements
 - c. the result of a formal assessment or the award of a particular degree classification.
4. This policy and associated procedures do *not* relate to student appeals concerning the outcomes of the [admissions process](#), the [Student Complaints process](#), the [Academic Misconduct Process](#) or the [Student Non-Academic Misconduct process](#), all of which have their own associated appeals procedures.
5. Any appeals deemed to be vexatious or frivolous will be rejected, with the reasons for the rejection given in writing by the appropriate member of staff (see 12 below).
6. If you wish to appeal you must do so on your own behalf and no later than 15 working days after formal confirmation of the decision affecting you. An appeal submitted by a third party will not be accepted unless accompanied by signed written authorisation from you.
7. Students have the right to withdraw the appeal at any time but once withdrawn, the appeal cannot be re-instated.
8. If at any stage during the academic appeal process it is established that a student has grounds for an appeal then the School will ensure that the appropriate remedial action is implemented as soon as it is possible to do so in order to address the issues that gave rise to the appeal.

9. Reasonable and proportionate incidental expenses necessarily incurred by a student making a successful appeal will be net by the Academy.

Grounds for an Appeal

10. An appeal may only be made on the grounds that you allege any of the following:
- a. circumstances affected your performance and may have had a material effect on the decision; and, for good reason, the examiners may not have been aware of these circumstances when the decision was taken
 - b. there was a material administrative error or procedural irregularity in the assessment process or in applying the regulations for your programme of study so as to cause significant doubt on whether the decision might have been different if the error or irregularity had not occurred
 - c. there was material evidence of prejudice, bias, discrimination or inadequate assessment on the part of one or more of the examiners
 - d. there was a disproportionate penalty. In specific circumstances, for example, where your work has been marked down for some form of academic misconduct, you may make an appeal against the severity of the penalty, if you feel that the punishment is unjust.
11. You **cannot** appeal on any of the following grounds:
- a. disputing the academic judgement of examiners which was arrived at following due process
 - b. matters that have already been considered and rejected under the Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedure, unless additional evidence in support of the original claim is provided for the purpose of the appeal and there is a valid reason why the additional evidence was not submitted with the original claim
 - c. matters that could have been considered by the assessment board if you had given notice to have it considered before the board met, and you had no valid reason for having failed to give such notice
 - d. claims that academic performance was adversely affected by ill health, where there is no medical evidence certified by a recognised medical practitioner, GP or hospital consultant, or other evidence deemed appropriate by the assessment board to support the application (see also below for further details on evidence).
12. We may terminate consideration of a misconduct allegation if we consider it to be frivolous (made without foundation) or vexatious (in bad faith, mischievous, spiteful, vindictive or malicious). Examples of frivolous or vexatious allegations may include but are not limited to:
- a. allegations which are obsessive, harassing, or repetitive;
 - b. insistence on pursuing non-legitimate allegations and/or unrealistic outcomes;
 - c. insistence on pursuing what may be legitimate allegations in an unreasonable manner;
 - d. allegations which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance;
 - e. demands for redress which lack any serious purpose or value
13. Prior to taking a final decision as to whether to request a review or not, you are advised to contact your Programme Director/subject leader to attempt to resolve the issue informally.
14. Advice on the academic appeals procedure is available from the Deputy Registrar (Academic Services). You can have an initial informal conversation, outlining the issue, what evidence you

have and your aim in appealing. You can also discuss the matter with a student representative. There is guidance on the process in the Student Handbook.

Academic Appeal Procedure

Informal resolution

15. You can meet the Course Director to discuss why you are unhappy with a grade, feedback or the outcome of an assessment process as listed above. The Course Director may arrange for you to speak with the tutor concerned, or they themselves will speak directly with the tutor. Once further discussion has taken place the Course Director, in their capacity as final moderator, will determine whether a mark or piece of feedback should still stand. If the mark and/or feedback sheet is altered, this stands as the final version. If it is not altered, then the original mark and/or feedback sheet remains the final version. If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of this process you may make an appeal using the procedure described below.

Note: As RADA's programmes are validated by King's College London (KCL) we follow their Academic Appeals process. This is described below and can also be accessed here: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/aboutkings/orgstructure/ps/acservices/conduct/academic-appeals>

Stage One

16. Stage One Appeals must be submitted on the Stage 1 Academic Appeals form within 10 working days of the formal communication of the decision you are appealing, including publication of results of the relevant module(s) etc. The completed form should be sent to the Deputy Registrar (Academic Services). Appeals received after this deadline will only be accepted at the discretion of the Deputy Registrar.

Evidence

17. Appeals should be accompanied by independent, third party evidence of the mitigating circumstances or administrative errors upon which the appeal is based. It is your responsibility to submit all evidence by the deadline for your appeal, and to have certified translations undertaken where appropriate.

18. Clear, detailed evidence will help to support your appeal. While a greater volume of evidence may cause the process to take longer, it could be worthwhile as it may strengthen your case. Below are some examples of the types of evidence you may wish to present.

19. Evidence of **extenuating circumstances** may include:

- a letter from your GP or hospital
- a letter from a solicitor
- a death certificate
- a medical certificate
- a letter from a court or from the police

If you have a letter from your GP, make sure it describes in as much detail as possible how, in the doctor's opinion, your illness could have had a serious effect on your academic performance.

20. Evidence of an **administrative or procedural/operational error** may include:

- witness statements
- any relevant digital information, including photographs or video
- details of serious disturbances, eg construction work (including dates, times and location)
- formal acknowledgements showing that (eg) coursework was submitted
- erroneous, misleading or poorly worded assignment instructions or information
- screenshots, eg from online learning resources
- relevant emails and text messages

21. Evidence of **prejudice, bias** or other **failure of appropriate assessment**: If you believe these are the grounds for your appeal it can be difficult to provide tangible proof of them, but you must

endeavour to do so as speculation will not be sufficient. You will need to provide anything that supports your claim and casts doubt on the impartiality of tutors or examiners, such as comments made during class sessions or clear favouritism shown towards other students. Evidence might include:

- witness statements
 - any relevant digital information, including photographs or video
 - any relevant emails and text messages
 - comments published by an examiner or tutor that show bias, favouritism or lack of competence. These might include anything published online, on social media accounts and comment sections, as well as official publications to which they may have contributed.
22. Dates of evidence must correspond with the circumstances you are detailing. For example, if you missed an assessment through ill health, medical certification must show that the illness coincided with the preparation, writing/undertaking or deadline of that assessment. (NB: If you miss any form of assessment or attendance due to illness you must seek medical attention as soon as possible. If you become ill during any supervised assessment you must inform the invigilator/supervisor immediately if you need to leave).
23. The following will NOT normally be accepted as evidence:
- Letters from family members or friends. Letters from other students may be accepted where they can provide independent corroboration of relevant events
 - Character references generally confirming your good character or how hard you have worked, but which cannot confirm the specific facts of the claim
 - Self-certificates for missed assessments
 - Retrospective notes/letters where (eg) a doctor simply reports what you have told them – evidence such as doctors' notes must have been written at the time you had the medical condition and confirm their diagnosis
 - Medical certificates originating overseas, unless pertaining to an incident that happened overseas. If UK-based medical certification cannot be provided for good reasons, then the Board will consider a letter of confirmation from an independent third party (not a relative or friend) or other evidence as appropriate
 - Bank statements
 - Long-term ill-health, specific requirements, disabilities which have been disclosed and assessed by the Academy. Such conditions can only be considered as mitigating circumstances if there is demonstrable evidence the condition deteriorated during the specific period relating to the assessment period and this is independently confirmed as having likely affected your performance/attendance

Acceptance/refusal of appeal

24. The Deputy Registrar may decline to forward an appeal to the KCL Faculty Assessment Board if the appeal:
- is not made on the correct form, or the form is incomplete
 - has been submitted late
 - has no independent third party evidence of the mitigating circumstances
 - includes evidence that is not a certified translation
 - does not include any evidence that grounds for appeal have been met
 - is frivolous or vexatious
 - does not fall within the scope of this policy/procedure and should be considered under an alternative process
25. If your appeal is declined for any of the above reasons you will be informed within five working days of receipt of your submission. You will have the opportunity to review your submission and address any referred issues such as insufficient evidence, or contest in writing the reasons for the appeal not being taken forward.
26. If the appeal meets the necessary criteria it will be forwarded to the KCL Faculty Assessment Board within five working days of receipt of your submission and you will be informed of this action within 10 working days of your submission.

27. Upon receipt of an appeal, the KCL Faculty Assessment Board will determine whether the criteria for an appeal have been met. Where they have, the Board will decide whether to modify or confirm its original decision. They will normally meet and communicate their decision to the Deputy Registrar within 15 working days of receipt of the appeal paperwork. You will be informed of the outcome within five working days of the Board's decision being received by RADA.

Stage Two

28. Following the completion of a Stage One Appeal, you may submit a Stage Two Appeal if you are dissatisfied with the Stage One outcome. Stage Two Appeals must be submitted on the Stage Two Appeal Form to the Deputy Registrar within 10 working days of the date of the Stage One Appeal outcome letter. Appeals received after this deadline will only be accepted at the discretion of the Deputy Registrar.

29. A Stage One decision may be reviewed if at least one of the following grounds are met:

- there is new evidence that could not have been, or for good reason was not, made available at the time of the Stage One submission and that sufficient evidence remains that the appeal warrants further consideration
- evidence can be produced of significant procedural error on the part of the Academy or KCL in considering the appeal, and that sufficient evidence remains that the appeal warrants further consideration
- based on the evidence previously provided, the decision of the Board was unreasonable

30. The Deputy Registrar (or nominee) will determine whether the criteria for an appeal have been met. Where they have, the KCL Board will be notified within 10 working days of receipt of your appeal, and an Appeal Committee will be convened. If the criteria are not met the appeal will be dismissed. This decision will normally be communicated within 30 working days of receipt of the Stage Two Appeal.

31. Where an Appeal Committee is convened, you will normally receive at least 10 working days' notice of the hearing and will be invited to present your case to the Committee – you can be accompanied by a friend, fellow student or relative for support, but not to speak on your behalf. The Chair of the Faculty Assessment Board (or nominee) will also be invited to give evidence. The Committee will determine whether there is sufficient reason to challenge the decision of the Board. Where it concludes there is such reason it can set aside the original decision and replace it with one of its own, or refer the case back to the Board, with commentary, for re-consideration. The decision of the Committee will normally be communicated to you and the Chair of the Board within five working days of the decision.

32. Further guidance about Committee procedures can be found here:

<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/aboutkings/orgstructure/ps/acservices/conduct/201920-documents/student-guidance-on-attending-committee-hearings.pdf>

Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)

33. The OIA is the external independent body which reviews unresolved complaints and disputes between students and their institutions. Once we have completed our internal procedures, and you have no further action which you could take under these procedures to seek to address any concerns you may have, we will issue to you a *Completion of Procedures* letter. This is the confirmation which is needed by the OIA before they will consider a complaint.

34. This means that we will issue you with a completion of procedures letter when either:

- You have sought to appeal against the outcome of an assessment board, but your appeal has not been considered because it did not meet our grounds for appeal
- You have appealed against the outcomes of an assessment board and/or the KCL Appeal Committee and these bodies have completed their procedures.

You can see further information about the OIA at its website: www.oiahe.org.uk

Your wellbeing

35. We recognise that finding yourself in the situation of making an academic appeal may be stressful. The Student Wellbeing team are available to discuss your circumstances if you wish to do so – not to directly advise on the appeals process itself, but to talk about the circumstances of the appeal and any mitigating issues that have led to it.

Monitoring and review

36. It is important for us that we learn what we can from student appeals. The Deputy Registrar's team will maintain a record of all academic appeals and annually report on them to the Academic Board. Through this process we aim to:
- a. review the academic appeals process to ensure it remains effective
 - b. identify emerging trends, themes and issues that we should address
 - c. ensure our procedures remain aligned with key external reference points
 - d. feed the outcomes of this monitoring and review into our operation so we can improve the student experience wherever possible

We also undertake to make the results of this process known to the RADA community.

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