Information on the Role and Powers of Courts of Appeal, and on Special Examinations

Courts of First Appeal – Calendar Entry

53 A student may appeal a decision of the court of examiners relating to academic progress to a Court of First Appeal. [5] Appeals should be made in writing by a student’s tutor or, if the tutor is unwilling or unable to act, by the Senior Tutor or his/her nominee who shall be another tutor. Students may request a representative of the Students’ Union to represent them as an alternative to their tutor or the Senior Tutor. Tutors or Students’ Union representatives who are filing an appeal must use the procedural form, must indicate the precise grounds upon which the appeal is being made (see Academic Appeals Committee §54 below for applicable grounds) and what the appeal is attempting to achieve on the student’s behalf, e.g. permission to repeat the year, special examination etc. The attention of those bringing an appeal is directed to the assistance offered by the school or course administrators and the undergraduate studies staff in Trinity Teaching and Learning in helping them to complete their records, provide copies of medical certificates and other appropriate documents. The Court of First Appeal shall not hear requests for re-checking/re-marking of examinations and assessments which should be processed according to the regulations as set out in §52 above. The recommendations of the Court of First Appeal are forwarded to the Senior Lecturer who may approve or reject or vary any such recommendations. As a consequence recommendations of a Court of First Appeal are not binding and shall not have a formal effect unless and until they have been considered and approved by the Senior Lecturer. In particular, pursuant to §37, the Senior Lecturer will approve a recommendation that a student be permitted to sit a special examination, outside of the annual and supplemental sessions, as set out in the Almanack, only in exceptional circumstances. (This power is exercised by the Senior Lecturer by delegation from the University Council, and the principles of delegation set out in Part 3 of the Introduction Chapter of the 2010 Statutes shall apply.) A student may appeal such decisions of the Senior Lecturer, whether approved or rejected or varied, to the Academic Appeals Committee.

What does an ad misericordiam Appeal mean?

An ad misericordiam appeal is an appeal usually taken by a student who presents extenuating or mitigating circumstances, appropriately evidenced (see Evidence in Support of an ad misericordiam Appeal), which they consider as having an impact (past or future) on their academic performance or progress.

Role of Courts of First Appeal

- The Court of First Appeal shall convene to consider appeals on matters of academic progress arising out of examinations or other academic circumstances where a student case
An appeal other than an ad misericordiam appeal cannot be heard against the normal application of College academic regulations approved by the University Council.

The type of appeals considered by the Faculty Courts of Appeal can be further described as follows:

- Appeals that the normal Faculty regulations applying to a student's progress be waived on ad misericordiam grounds. This could result in a number of courses of action being recommended, such as:
  - that a student be allowed to repeat a year, in full or 'off-books', where not otherwise entitled to do so;
  - that an exclusion on a student be lifted
- Appeals for permission to sit a special examination in accordance with Calendar regulations: such appeals are considered following the supplemental examination session and may be considered only in respect of non-final, non-degree examinations. Special examinations may be recommended in exceptional circumstances only.

Courts of First Appeal may also, where appropriate:

- Grant permission to submit outstanding course work during the Special Examination period. (The usual Special charge applies)
- Recommend the lifting of a cap imposed on Supplemental results
- Allow the removal of late-submission penalties
- Allow an assignment submitted late to be marked, with or without penalties
- Allow the recalculation of a mark for a module following the lifting of a penalty, the submission of outstanding course work or the taking into account of a previously unmarked piece of work.

It is important to note that Courts of First Appeals never make academic judgements regarding the quality or level of a piece of work or examination.

Appealants and their tutors should consult the relevant documentation on ‘Exceptional Circumstances’ in support of an ad misericordiam appeal and the requirements for supporting evidence when bringing an ad misericordiam appeal. This information is available at [https://www.tcd.ie/undergraduate-studies/assets/documents/ExceptionalCirc27-01-16.pdf](https://www.tcd.ie/undergraduate-studies/assets/documents/ExceptionalCirc27-01-16.pdf)

Appealing a decision of a Court of First Appeal

- Decisions of a Court of First Appeal may be appealed to the Academic Appeals Committee.
The regulations regarding the Academic Appeals Committee are set out in the General Regulations and Information section §54 http://www.tcd.ie/calendar/1516-2/part-ii/general-regulations-and-information/academic-progress/

Academic Appeals Committee – Calendar Entry

54 The Academic Appeals Committee meets to consider appeals arising out of examinations or other academic circumstances where a student case (i) is not adequately covered by the ordinary regulations of the College, or (ii) is based on a claim that the regulations of the College were not properly applied in the applicant’s case, or (iii) represents an ad misericordiam appeal. An appeal other than an ad misericordiam appeal, cannot be made against the normal application of College academic regulations approved by the University Council. Decisions of the Academic Appeals Committee are forwarded to the University Council. Pursuant to §37, the Academic Appeals Committee will decide that a student be permitted to sit a special examination outside of the University annual and supplemental examination sessions, as set out in the Almanack, only in exceptional circumstances. (This power is exercised by the Academic Appeals Committee by delegation from the University Council, and the principles of delegation set out in Part 3 of the Introduction Chapter of the 2010 Statutes shall apply.) The Academic Appeals Committee will consider appeals concerning events occurring more than eighteen months previously only in the most exceptional circumstances. Appellants must have exhausted the appropriate appeals mechanism in the first instance through the relevant Court of First Appeal prior to coming before the Academic Appeals Committee. Appeals should be made in writing by a student’s tutor or, if the tutor is unwilling or unable to act, by the Senior Tutor or his/her nominee who shall be another tutor. Students may request a representative of the Students’ Union to represent them as an alternative to their tutor or the Senior Tutor. Tutors or Students’ Union representatives who are filing an appeal must use the procedural form, must indicate the precise grounds upon which the appeal is being made and what the appeal is attempting to achieve on the student’s behalf, e.g. permission to repeat the year, special examination etc. They should also ensure that appropriate and full information and evidence are included. This information must include all results achieved by the student to-date in mark format, and must indicate if course work has been completed. If possible, an attendance record should be provided. The attention of those bringing an appeal is directed to the assistance offered by the school or course administrators and the undergraduate studies staff in Trinity Teaching and Learning in helping them to complete their records, provide copies of medical certificates and other appropriate documents. Appeal forms not completed properly will not be considered by the committee.

The Senior Tutor acts as secretary to the Academic Appeals Committee and attends the committee as a non-voting member. The Senior Lecturer attends for the presentation of the case and may provide comment if required. In cases concerning clinical placements (and in particular where the student is considered to be an employee of the institution providing the placement) the committee will be joined by an appropriate professional, nominated by
the chair of the Academic Appeals Committee, who shall be drawn from the discipline of the student.

Any student who has an appeal underway that could have implications for their degree result is advised not to proceed with degree conferral until the outcome of the appeal has been confirmed.

**Powers of Academic Appeals Committee**

The Academic Appeals Committee may recommend that the normal Faculty regulations applying to a student’s progress be waived on ad misericordiam grounds. This could result in a number of courses of action being recommended, such as:

- a student be allowed to repeat a year, in full or 'off-books', where not otherwise entitled to do so;
- an exclusion on a student be lifted;
- granting permission to sit a special examination in accordance with Calendar regulations. Special examinations may be recommended in exceptional circumstances only.
- granting permission to submit outstanding course work during the Special Examination period (usual Special charge applies);
- recommending the lifting of a cap imposed on Supplemental results;
- allowing the removal of late-submission penalties;
- allowing an assignment submitted late to be marked, with or without penalties;
- allowing the recalculation of a mark for a module following the lifting of a penalty, the submission of outstanding course work or the taking into account of a previously unmarked piece of work.

The Academic Appeals committee may change the consequences of mark, for example by lifting an exclusion, allowing a student to repeat their year for a third time, but it never makes academic judgements regarding the quality or level of a piece of work or examination. Similarly, the Academic Appeals Committee may not recommend a change of degree classification on the basis of ad misericordiam grounds having affected the student’s performance.

Appellants and their tutors should consult the relevant documentation on ‘Exceptional Circumstances’ in support of an ad misericordiam appeal and the requirements for supporting evidence when bringing an ad misericordiam appeal. This information is available at [https://www.tcd.ie/undergraduate-studies/assets/documents/ExceptionalCirc27-01-16.pdf](https://www.tcd.ie/undergraduate-studies/assets/documents/ExceptionalCirc27-01-16.pdf)

Minutes of the Academic Appeals Committee are approved by Council and subsequently by Board, through the approval of Council minutes. In limited circumstances, students may appeal the decision of Board to the Visitors. The Visitors have stated:
“Appeals to the Visitors must not be seen as the next step in the Appeals process as that is contrary to the intention of the Statutes. In all but the most exceptional cases, the decision of the Academic Appeals Committee should be considered final. The threshold for interference by the Visitors with an academic appeal must be high and should not involve a review of the final mark awarded. In effect, before considering reversal of any decision of the Academic Appeals Committee, the Visitors would have to be satisfied that one or both of two prerequisites are met: first that new substantive information has come to light that that was not, and could not, with reasonable diligence have been made available to the Appeals Committee at the time of its decision; and secondly that such information if received, could have affected the decision in favour of the student. The role of the Visitors in academic appeals is otherwise limited to those cases where it can be asserted that a procedural error in the Appeals procedures has created an injustice to the applicant.”
SPECIAL EXAMINATIONS

Calendar Entry:

37 Special examinations, outside of the University annual and supplemental examination sessions, as set out in the Almanack, will be permitted only in exceptional circumstances, either by (i) the Senior Lecturer, normally on the recommendation of a Court of First Appeal, pursuant to §53, or (ii) the Academic Appeals Committee, pursuant to §54. Such examinations commence in the third week of the Michaelmas teaching term. They will not be arranged after that date. In all cases a fee of €382 is charged for a special examination. Special examinations are not granted for all or any part of degree examinations though these may be permitted in certain professional courses.

Appeals for permission to sit a special examination, in accordance with Calendar regulations, are considered following the supplemental examination session and may be considered only in respect of non-final, non-degree examinations and in certain professional courses. Special examinations may be recommended in exceptional circumstances only.

Appellants and their tutors should consult the relevant documentation on ‘Exceptional Circumstances’ in support of an ad misericordiam appeal and the requirements for supporting evidence when bringing an ad misericordiam appeal. This information is available at https://www.tcd.ie/undergraduate-studies/assets/documents/ExceptionalCirc27-01-16.pdf

Further considerations:

- Special examinations are not an entitlement. There is no such examination as a ‘Super Supplemental’.
- Special Examinations are normally only granted through the Appeals process to students who were seriously ill or unable to sit supplemental exams for very serious reasons, i.e., exceptional circumstances (see Exceptional Circumstances Supporting an ad misericordiam Appeal).
- There is normally a limit of two papers. They take place in teaching week 3 of MT and can be quite disruptive as the student will not be able to register until the outcome is known: this means that they will not be included in class lists, will not have a timetable, will not be assigned to seminars, labs or tutorial groups and will not have access to the current year’s modules on Blackboard. Access to the Library is limited and they will not have borrowing rights. They will also have to prepare for their exams and try to keep in touch with what is going on in their course so that they do not to fall behind.
- Please note that there is a flat fee of €382 for Special examinations and that it is never waived.