

# Writing an Effective Appeal or Request Letter

## When to Write a Letter

Many university policies require the writing of a letter. Attaching a formal letter to an email is sometimes the best way to professionally make your case.

## Format

### Elements:

The elements found in typical business letters are:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. full mailing address of the sender</li><li>b. date on which letter is written</li><li>c. address of person to whom letter</li><li>d. subject line</li><li>e. salutation</li><li>f. body<br/>the main message including what you are appealing for and on what grounds</li><li>g. complimentary closing is addressed</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>h. signature line</li><li>i. enclosure<br/>if you are enclosing supporting documents be sure to say that somewhere, either in the text or at the bottom of the letter. Remember, if the documentation includes private medical information, you just need to refer to it and send the actual documentation to your home faculty academic advising office.</li></ul> |
|--|---|

### Model Letter:

The model below uses all the elements from the list. The overall layout is a matter of personal choice. The text of the model letter is exceptionally brief. Most appeal and request letters require more than a page.

Samuel Student  
123 ABC Street  
Samsville, ON SOS \_\_\_\_  
Email Address  
November 20, 202\_

Dr Jane Skool  
Associate Dean  
Faculty of \_\_\_\_\_  
Western University  
London, ON N6A \_\_\_\_

Subject: Request for Special Examination SN 0000456789

Dear Dr. Skool:

I am writing to request a special examination in Course 020 on compassionate grounds. My grandmother has passed away and the funeral is December 12, the date of the regularly scheduled exam. I enclose a copy of the obituary. A make-up exam in Course 020 has already been scheduled for January 5.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my request.

Yours sincerely,  
*Sam Student*  
Samuel Student  
SN 000456789

Encl.  
CC: Professor O. Twenty

## Content and Tone

While the appearance of a letter is important, the content and tone will determine whether the letter really does its job. Review any relevant policy and pay particular attention to what the decision maker needs to know to consider an appeal or request. That is the information which should be included in your letter. Remember, a detailed, professional appeal letter will help the decision maker see how seriously you take the issue and provide the information they need to decide.

### Opening Statement

The first sentence or two should state clearly what you are appealing and on what grounds (where applicable).

*I am writing to appeal my current disciplinary status, and to apologize for my involvement in the floor crawl which led to my being placed on notice. I realize that what seemed harmless fun to me was actually a danger to my health and the health of others. I sincerely regret my actions that night....*

*I am writing to request a course overload for 2020-21 ....*

## **Be Factual**

Include factual detail but avoid dramatizing the situation.

*In late October I was diagnosed with tonsillitis. I was sick for over a week, and missed most of my mid-term exams.*

NOT: *In late October after feeling really sick for a few days I finally dragged myself to Student Health....*

## **Be Specific**

If an appeal or request depends on particular facts which the decision maker will want to verify, be specific.

*I missed a test January 23, because I flew to Vancouver on January 19 for my grandfather's funeral and returned only January 26. I enclose the airline receipt and can provide further corroboration if that would be helpful.*

NOT: *I had to attend a funeral out of town so I missed the test on January 23.*

## **Documentation**

Include any documentation required by policy or needed to substantiate your claims. If documentation is being sent by a third party, state that with details.

*Dr. A., my father's physician, will be sending you a letter about this matter....*

## **Stick to the Point**

Don't clutter your letter with information or requests that have no essential connection to the main message.

## **Do Not Try to Manipulate the Reader**

Threatening, cajoling, begging, pleading, flattery and making extravagant promises are manipulative and usually ineffective methods.

*If you give me a chance to come back to residence next year, I promise to work really hard, get rich, and donate a million dollars to the University....*

## **How to Talk About Feelings**

It is tempting to overstate the case when something is important to us. When feelings are a legitimate part of a message, own the feeling, and state it as a fact.

*When I saw my grade, I was very disappointed.*

## **Keep Copies of all Documents Submitted**

Be sure to keep a copy of supporting documentation (as well as the letter) until the decision is made. Remember, decision makers don't need private medical documentation, nor should they have it due to privacy legislation; however, you do need to send that documentation to your home faculty's academic advising office.

## Letter about Harassment or Other Offensive Behaviour

*How Do I...Handle Harassing or Threatening Messages* is available from Information Technology Services

[http://www.uwo.ca/its/email/spam\\_phishing/handling\\_harassing\\_or\\_threatening\\_messages.html](http://www.uwo.ca/its/email/spam_phishing/handling_harassing_or_threatening_messages.html)

*This guide was produced by the Office of the Ombudsperson [www.uwo.ca/ombuds](http://www.uwo.ca/ombuds). It is not an official university document*

*and is not intended to replace university policy. Frances Bauer wrote the original text. Revised 05/2021*