

Writing an Effective Appeal Or Request Letter

When to Write a Letter

Many university policies require the writing of a letter. A letter is sometimes the most effective way to send a particular message. When talking to someone, using email or filling out a form haven't worked or aren't practical, try a letter.

Format

Elements:

The elements found in typical business letters are:

- a. full mailing address of the sender
- b. date on which letter is written
- c. address of person to whom letter is addressed
- d. subject line
- e. salutation
- f. body (the main message)
- g. complimentary closing
- h. signature line (be sure to sign the letter)
- j. enclosure and copy notations

Model Letter:

The model below uses all the elements from the list. The overall layout is a matter of personal choice, as is the decision to include a phone number and email address. NB: the text of the model letter is exceptionally brief. Most appeal and request letters require a page or two.

a.		Samuel Student 123 ABC Street Samsville, ON SOS ____ Email address, fax and/or phone number November 20, 201_
b.		
c.	Dr. Jane Skool Associate Dean Faculty of _____ Western University London, ON N6A ____	
d.	Subject: <u>Request for Special Examination</u>	
e.	Dear Dr. Skool:	
f.	I am writing to request a special examination in Course 020. On December 12, the date of the regularly scheduled exam, I have to appear in court as a witness. I enclose a copy of the court summons. A make-up exam in Course 020 has already been scheduled for January 5.	
f.	Thank you for taking the time to consider my request. Please contact me by Email or phone if you have any questions.	
g.		Yours sincerely,
h.		<i>Sam Student</i>
j.		Samuel Student SN 0000456789
	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.

Opening Statement

The first sentence or two should state the purpose of the letter clearly.

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 2013-14....

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, has agreed to write to you 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.

Be Brief

It is more work to write a good short letter than a long one. Busy decision makers appreciate the extra effort.

Avoid Errors

A letter will make a better impression if it is typed; free of spelling and grammar mistakes; free of slang; and placed in the right sized envelope. BUT it is much more important to meet deadlines and state the purpose clearly than to submit a letter which is completely error-free.

Keep Copies

Until a matter is settled, keep copies of all letters sent or received, as well as relevant documents and forms.

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

NOTE: This guide was produced by the Office of the Ombudsperson 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.
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