

Sydney University Postgraduate Representative Association
www.supra.usyd.edu.au



Show Cause and Exclusion Survival Kit

for Postgraduate Coursework Students

Contents

Introduction	3
Responding to the Requirement to Show Cause: A Ten Step Guide	7
How to get Individual Casework Help From SUPRA	10
Outcomes of the Show Cause Process and Possible Academic Appeals Against Exclusion	11
Stage 4 Automatic Exclusions & Appeals against these Exclusions	16
Policy References	17
Appendices	19

Introduction

Disclaimer

This guide is general in nature and does not constitute legal advice. Our best efforts have been made to ensure its accuracy at the time of its most recent update in December 2008. Despite those efforts there may be errors in the information provided. SUPRA strongly advises that students supplement their use of this guide with individual advice which can be provided by a SUPRA Student Advice and Advocacy Officer (SAAO). Details on how to contact a SAAO are included in this guide.

Introduction

Who is this survival kit for?

If you are a postgraduate coursework student and because of lack of progress have received a letter and/or an email from the University requiring you to show cause as to why you should be allowed to re-enrol then this survival kit is for you. If you are a subscriber then you are eligible to have free consultations with SUPRA's Student Advice and Advocacy Officers (SAAOs) to individually work through your case. Subscription to SUPRA is free for postgraduate students of the University of Sydney and can be completed quickly and easily online at www.supra.usyd.edu.au/subscribe

As preparing your show cause case may take some time, please read through this kit as soon as you can and then call (02) 9351 3715, 1800 249 950, email help@supra.usyd.edu.au or fill out a web form at www.supra.usyd.edu.au/Adv/Contact_a_SAAO.html to make an appointment to see a SAAO. Using this survival kit is not a substitute for thoroughly reading the information given to you in the letter when you are required to show cause nor is it a replacement for getting individually tailored advice on your situation. However for coursework students this Kit should help to answer some of the most common questions asked about show cause procedures, as well as give you a practical set of general suggestions you can use when framing your response.

Problems with progression in candidature and termination because of lack of progress for postgraduate research students often turn around quite distinct and different issues, and they are dealt with using a different combination of resolutions and rules of the University than those mentioned in this Kit. *If you are a research student facing show cause proceedings or are otherwise facing termination of your candidature (for example because of failure to meet probation requirements) then please **DO NOT** use this guide.*

Research students should strongly consider becoming SUPRA subscribers and contact a SAAO for assistance. All postgraduate students of the University of Sydney are constituents of SUPRA, are eligible to become free SUPRA subscribers, and can use the Student Advice and Advocacy Officer (SAAO) service. SAAOs are employed by students to provide a professional and confidential casework service for students.

What should happen before I'm asked to Show Cause?

In 2007 a University wide policy of the Academic Board was introduced called *Identifying and Supporting Students at Risk*. Under this policy if your Faculty identifies you as being at risk of further failure because you have failed to meet academic progression requirements in the past, then you may receive notice from them requiring you to do things such as attend a Staying on Track Seminar, fill out a survey form, and see an Academic Adviser. Faculties are able to set the specific progression requirements for your course that will trigger a notice, but at a minimum if you fail to complete more than fifty percent of the credit points in which you were enrolled, fail to achieve a satisfactory average weighted mark, fail to complete a mandated unit, or fail to pass a unit twice, then you can be identified as at risk. If you have never been required to show cause as to why you should not be excluded from the University previously, then the transitional arrangements in the policy

mean that you will be identified as Stage 1 at risk. You will need to attend a Staying on Track information session, fill in a Staying on Track survey form, and see an Academic Adviser.

If you have been asked to show cause prior to the commencement of the policy in 2007 then you might jump straight to stage 3 under the policy, in which case you will be required to show cause as to why you should be allowed to re-enroll in your course. Also, if you are in a degree that is two years or less full time in duration (which is the majority of postgraduate coursework students), were identified as a Stage 1 at risk student previously, and you are identified as at risk again, then you will go straight to stage 3 of the policy and you may be asked to show cause. Please read SUPRA's fact sheet on the Students at Risk Policy for more information (online from <http://www.supra.usyd.edu.au/>) on how this all works and what these different stages mean. Despite concerns we have with details of the policy that we have fed back to the University as part of a 2008 review, it has been designed with the positive goal to support students who are vulnerable and at risk of failing. So if you get asked to go to a workshop or see an academic adviser, it would be a good idea to do this because it should help you. Even so, we occasionally come across cases where students have been identified as at risk or given show cause letters improperly, so we also strongly suggest you consult with a SAAO if you think there is something unusual about the way you have been identified as at risk. SAAOs can help you to check whether a Show Cause or At Risk notice was given to you appropriately.

What does it mean if I am asked to Show Cause?

If you have consulted with a SUPRA SAAO and you are sure that you have received a Show Cause letter properly under stage 3 of the above-mentioned policy, then that basically means your Faculty has made the interventions they needed to make to support you earlier in your candidature but seeing as you have failed to meet progression requirements again they have decided that your academic progress is still unsatisfactory. If your Faculty gets to this point then they can require you to show good cause as to why you should be allowed to re-enrol in your course. You will know you are being asked to show cause because you will receive a notice in the mail and/or an email directly from your Faculty requiring you to respond.

Reasons for being asked to show cause can vary depending on the degree in which you are enrolled, the individual course resolutions that apply, and other policy and procedures that might be in place in your faculty. However if you are enrolled in a postgraduate coursework degree of two years or less duration and you have never been asked to show cause before, you should expect to get one Stage 1 warning letter first, and only if you get identified as breaching progress requirements a second time should you get a Show Cause letter. If you are not sure as to why you are being asked to Show Cause then ask your faculty for more details.

In cases where mistakes have been made in asking a student to show cause all you might need to do is respond to the letter in writing and state that the faculty made an error in asking you to show cause in the first place. Please seek advice and assistance from a SAAO *before* you give this kind of response. In all cases the onus is on the student to provide satisfactory evidence to establish good cause as to why you should be allowed to re-enrol, so you should provide

all relevant documentation when you frame your response and not simply assume that the University has some or all of the information you believe supports your case.

If you do not successfully show cause then you will almost certainly be excluded from your course. Exclusions are usually for a period of four semesters after which time you can apply to the dean of your faculty to be readmitted. You can appeal the decision to exclude you from your course and we will discuss how you can do that a little later in the Kit.

What does good cause mean?

Good cause means circumstances beyond the reasonable control of a student, which may include serious ill health or misadventure but does not include demands of employers, pressure of employment or time devoted to non-University activities, unless these are relevant to serious ill health or misadventure. The University may take into account relevant aspects of your student record in other courses or units of study within the University and relevant aspects of academic studies at other institutions. If you have actively participated in stage 1 at risk activities such as going to the workshops or meeting an academic adviser then we strongly recommend you mention this in your response to the show cause letter because this might help to establish that you've done what you reasonably could to mitigate against the above circumstances. Faculties and the University in general are usually more impressed by students who can demonstrate they have tried to address issues and have a plan for how to improve their performance in future.

Should I still attempt to show cause if I don't want to re-enrol?

SUPRA strongly recommends you respond and attempt to show cause even if you do not want to continue in your current course. Failure to respond to a show cause letter would normally lead to exclusion from the course, which might in turn effect your chances at gaining entry back into the University of Sydney or other universities in future. In Australia when you apply for entry to a university course you will usually be required to declare whether you have been asked to show cause and/or excluded from a course of study previously.

So even if you do not think this will affect you at the present there is no harm in responding to the show cause requirement and quite a bit of benefit if you are successful and there is even a chance that you will want to do university level study again. For international students failure to show good cause can also lead to serious consequences for student visas because you will have failed to meet course requirements. Failure to meet course requirements can, in turn, constitute a breach of mandatory academic progress conditions of your student visa.

Student Advice and Advocacy Officers (SAAOs) can be contacted via:

Ph: (02) 9351 3715

Free Call: 1800249 950

Email: help@supra.usyd.edu.au

Web Form: www.supra.usyd.edu.au/Adv/Contact_a_SAAO.html

**Responding to the Requirement to Show Cause:
A Ten Step Guide**

Responding to the Requirement to Show Cause: A Ten Step Guide

Step 1

For a start try not to panic. If you carefully work through your options and methodically put together your show cause case you should increase your chances of getting through the process successfully. At postgraduate level you will already have had the experience of finishing a degree, or at the very least be doing postgraduate study on the basis of some or other equivalent experience. In all cases there are personal and academic strengths that you can draw upon from these earlier experiences, and they should help you to frame your response as to why you should be allowed to re-enrol and will make better progress in future.

Step 2

Read the letter provided to you by the Faculty very carefully. The letter and its attachments should contain lots of information that you will need in order to prepare your show cause response. It usually gives you lists of web sites where you can get more information, a list of support services at the University, and it should inform you of your right to consult with and receive assistance from SUPRA. Additionally, in some postgraduate course resolutions and faculty publications (most notably faculty handbooks) there are specific progress requirements that might apply. Consult with your Faculty and/or a SUPRA SAAO to help you to work out if there is anything that you specifically need to know about course-specific requirements that might be relevant to preparing your letter. You should take particular note of the date your show cause response is due and make sure you get your letter in by that date. *If you cannot submit by the due date you should contact a SAAO immediately for advice and assistance and certainly do so before the due date is passed.*

Step 3

International students should consult with International Office about the implications that being asked to Show Cause might have on student visas. In some circumstances the University may be required to report a failure to make good progress in your studies to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) and this can lead to cancellation of your visa. If you are in this position you should strongly consider contacting an International Office Student Adviser through the International Office main reception. Phone (02) 8627 8300 or email studentadvisers@io.usyd.edu.au

Step 4

Consider approaching one or more of the University's student support services. A list of commonly used services is provided in SUPRA's Survival Guide which can be downloaded at <http://www.usyd.edu.au/supra/survive.htm> and as mentioned it should also be provided in the letter you receive from your faculty. Some of these services include a Counselling Service, International Student Support Unit, Disability Services, Financial Assistance Office, Careers Centre, and the Learning Centre. In our Survival Guide we supplement the list of University support services with a selection of contacts in the broader community. We recognise that the show cause process can cause a great deal of stress for students, so you should consider using services if you need help. If you have particular needs but are not sure where you should turn for assistance then please ask a SAAO to help you find the right support for you.

Step 5

Prepare thoroughly before you start writing your response. You should try to be as thorough as possible in preparing to set out the whole response. Before you begin to write think about reasons that might explain why you have not made as much progress as was needed. Jot down notes as thoughts come to mind. Some reasons that students have cited in the past include: poor physical health; mental health difficulties; financial difficulties; work commitments (where these are relevant to ill health and/or misadventure); relationship and family problems; accommodation problems; transport difficulties; harassment and discrimination issues; language and study difficulties; lack of support; lack of suitable study space; pregnancy; and family/carer commitments. Try to make notes about how different happenings in your life affected your progress. Having identified different factors that affected your study then try to think about how you might be able to overcome or mitigate against these in coming semesters, and make some rough notes on your ideas.

Step 6

Gather Documentation. Once you have established a clear list of factors that you think affected your progress and have identified some strategies that might allow you to address these, start to think about what evidence you can get to support your case. Supporting letters and documentation from medical practitioners, counsellors, community and religious leaders, your employer, community organisations with which you are involved, and Disability Services are just some of the ways that you might be able to document your case. You need to think about how this supporting documentation is going to help establish that certain happenings had an affect on your studies. When you mention the supporting documentation in your letter you need to clearly explain the relevance of the material. You should *not* simply attach a collection of supporting documents without explaining their relevance in a covering letter. If you don't explain how these demonstrate particular impacts on your progress, then there is every chance your Faculty will not understand what these documents are meant to show.

Part of the process of collecting documentation should also include looking for different services that might help you to achieve your plan to overcome or at least mitigate against problems that had previously affected your progress. For example, if you had difficulties in planing and writing essays then making arrangements to do a relevant course with the University's Learning Centre might be an appropriate strategy to commit to in your letter, or if caring responsibilities were a problem making arrangements for respite relief during key parts of forthcoming semesters' might be appropriate. Demonstrating a positive plan for what you would do if you were allowed to re-enrol can sometimes help sway faculties into allowing students to re-enrol.

Step 7

Begin writing your show cause response. Use SUPRA's Template Show Cause Letter (appendix 1) to help guide you as you as you draft your response. If you feel confident in your ability to write the letter with the help of our kit and the template we have provided then by all means finalise and submit the letter yourself. However we do recommend that you at least have someone else proof read the letter for you before you submit it, and also strongly consider making an appointment to see a SAAO for confidential assistance in the drafting process.

Step 8

Have a one-on-one consultation with a SUPRA SAAO. The SAAOs offer tailored one-on-one assistance for postgraduate students who need to write Show Cause letters. SAAOs will gladly give consultations at any stage of the process though we do recommend that as far as possible you try to work through steps one through seven above first. It will help to make the consultation all the more effective for you and will maximise the amount of assistance SAAOs can give. SAAOs can help you in the process of drafting the letter and may be able to offer suggestions where you are stuck. SAAOs often find that students who have excellent cases struggle to make a clear link between their own personal circumstances and the impact on their studies. Issues that seem clear to you may not seem clear to your faculty. SAAOs can help to identify strengths and weaknesses in your argument and assist you to build the strongest and clearest case you possibly can.

Step 9

Submit your show cause response. Send a properly formatted, proof read, and signed letter by the due date. Some faculties will accept responses via email or fax, but please check with them first before you submit your response in this way. You should expect confirmation (usually via email) to let you know they have received your letter and are considering it. If you do not receive such a contact you should follow the matter up with the faculty to confirm receipt and/or contact a SAAO again.

Step 10

End of process. You should make sure you keep a copy of all documentation. Once you have confirmed that your letter has been received by the due date you have completed your part of the process and you need to wait for a result.

GOOD LUCK!

How to get Individual Casework Help From SUPRA

Need more help?

Not sure what you should do next?

Don't know how this kit applies to your Show Cause Case?

Have some other questions?

Help is on the way...

Make an appointment to see one of SUPRA's Student Advice and Advocacy Officers (SAAOs). The SAAOs offer a free, confidential, independent and professional casework service, available to all postgraduate students of the University of Sydney.

SAAOs are employed by students to help students.

To make an appointment with a SAAO...

Phone (02) 9351 3715

Freecall (within Australia but outside the Sydney metropolitan area) 1800 249 950

Email: help@supra.usyd.edu.au

Web form: www.supra.usyd.edu.au/Adv/Contact_a_SAAO

Outcomes of the Show Cause Process and Possible Academic Appeals Against Exclusion

Outcomes of the Show Cause Process and Possible Academic Appeals Against Exclusion – Some Common Questions and Answers

Q. So I've followed your ten-step guide and submitted my show cause response. What do I do now?

A. You should expect to be notified of the result of your attempt to show cause by mail (nb. in some cases faculties have advised that they will use *both* email and posted letter to contact students so keep checking your university email address *and* your mail box). If you do not have a response within a few weeks you should contact your faculty to enquire as to when you might receive a response and/or contact a SAAO. Whilst you are waiting for an outcome if you have to complete enrolment you should do so as per normal. Completing enrolment does not mean that you will be allowed to continue study if you are excluded by the faculty and either don't lodge a timely appeal or fail in that appeal against the faculty. It does mean that you can keep on studying as per normal until your case is resolved. If you have to pay fees or build up a HELP debt as a result of enrolling it will be re-credited to you in the event that you are ultimately excluded.

Q. What are the possible outcomes?

A. The dean of your faculty or their nominee/s basically has to decide whether or not you have shown good cause. If you have shown good cause then you will be allowed to re-enrol (or remain enrolled if you have already completed the enrolment process) in which case you can continue your studies and will be back on the path to future success! If you have not shown good cause then you will either be excluded from your course or be permitted to re-enrol subject to restrictions on particular units of study. This can include requirements to complete a unit or units within a specified time or exclusion only from a unit or units of study without exclusion from the whole course.

Q. What are my appeal options if I am excluded and I want to appeal the decision?

A. You are able to appeal against the decision of your faculty to the Student Appeals Body. You need to write to the Student Appeals Body care of the Registrar and make a case that the faculty has *breached due academic process* in deciding not to allow you to re-enrol. Due academic process includes "matters pertaining to special consideration". So if you feel that you have had illness or misadventure that would normally allow you to apply for special consideration and you don't think it was properly taken into account in the Faculty decision, then you will need to explain why you think the Faculty failed to properly consider these factors. There is no clear definition of due academic process in the *University of Sydney (Student Appeals against Academic Decisions) Rule 2006* which sets out the procedures for receiving and hearing appeal cases, but on the Secretariat website it defines due academic process as "adhering to Faculty and University policy in a fair and consistent way and ensuring that said policy is well communicated and easily accessible to staff and students of the University". SUPRA was concerned that under older procedures due academic process tended to be interpreted in an unduly narrow way, so given this newer definition we continue to monitor cases to try and determine whether similar problems arise under the new procedures.

The procedures for the Student Appeals Body hearing cases were first used in 2007, and SUPRA supported a number of students in appeal cases. Without suggesting that we know how the Student Appeals Body will decide on what might constitute a breach of due academic process in each individual case, we can say decent cases include ones where you are able to argue that a faculty has not sufficiently nor rigorously considered all of the reasons you put forward in defence of your case. Other examples of faculties breaching due academic process might include where you can argue for real or apprehended bias on the part of relevant decision makers, or where specific resolutions and procedures on assessing and determining progress have not been followed. Inevitably each and every case needs to be investigated closely to try to work out if there are grounds you can use to put together an appeals case.

Q. So how do I go about appealing to the Student Appeals Body?

A. You will find a template letter that you can use to help you frame an appeal at appendix 2. You need to lodge your appeal letter with the Registrar within 20 working days of the decision of the Faculty to exclude you from your course. You should prepare your letter using much the same process as suggested above for writing your show cause letter, except that your appeal should be framed in terms of why your faculty *breached due academic process*. We strongly recommend that you get the assistance of a SAAO as early as possible to help you to work out whether you have grounds for appeal, and wherever relevant to then help you to frame your appeal letter. SAAOs can assist in the drafting process and make suggestions on framing your letter. Once you have lodged your appeal the Registrar has to confirm that the basis for your appeal has been previously considered by the Faculty, and that you have set out in writing, including any written evidence and written submissions, your reasons as to why you believe the Faculty has breached due academic process including matters pertaining to special consideration. Presuming that you satisfy these requirements your appeal will be referred for a hearing.

Q. Can I still study while I wait for a response?

A. You are allowed to remain enrolled in your course whilst waiting to hear back as to whether you will get a hearing from the Student Appeals Body. If you get a hearing then you will be allowed to remain enrolled until your case is heard and you receive an outcome. If you are in this position you should attempt to continue studying as per normal. It can sometimes help to be able to talk about how well your studies have been going when you attend a hearing.

Q. What happens after I lodge my appeal to the Student Appeals Body?

A. You should receive at least 10 days notice of the date of an appeal hearing. The Faculty must provide written evidence and submissions that give reasons for their decision at least 8 days before the hearing. In their submission the Faculty can address whether they believe they have observed due academic process. The Faculty's submission will be provided to you by the Registrar at least 5 days before the hearing date. At the hearing three people will constitute the Student Appeals Body, and these will normally be the Chair or the Deputy Chair of the Academic Board (who will normally Chair the hearing), a member of staff with "academic qualifications", and a student. There might also be a member of the University Counselling Service and/or the University Health Service on hand to advise the Student Appeals Body on

interpretation of health and personal issues. You can invite a representative to be with you at the hearing. SUPRA strongly recommends you invite a SAAO to be with you. A representative from the Faculty will also be invited to appear in person.

If you and your representative do not attend the hearing then the Student Appeals Body has the discretion to either defer the appeal or hear and determine the matter in your and your representative's absence. Presuming you and/or your representative do attend the hearing you need to be aware that its purpose is for you and the faculty to address questions that the Student Appeals Body might have. It is possible that new evidence will be accepted at the hearing but you should *not* rely on this as the Student Appeals Body has discretion regarding whether it will hear or otherwise accept such evidence. As far as is possible you should make sure that you submit everything you want the Student Appeals Body to consider when you initially lodge your appeal.

Q. How Should I Prepare for an Appeal Hearing?

A. Before the hearing make notes of what you want to say and think about your responses to possible questions. You can consult a SUPRA SAAO for ideas on potential questions, and then practice answering them clearly and concisely. You should arrange to have a representative with you on the day and we strongly suggest you ask a SAAO. On the day of the hearing arrive in plenty of time. Dress neatly and try to stay calm and relaxed. Student Appeal Body members will have read your letter as well as any submissions from the Faculty. If you are nervous and don't hear a question or they are not clear, ask them to repeat it. It is also ok to turn to a SAAO for advice. Answer clearly and concisely. Don't rush. You may have the opportunity to make a final comment. You should emphasise why you think due academic process was breached, why you will pass in the future and address any outstanding issues raised by the Faculty and the Student Appeals Body.

Q. What are the possible outcomes of the appeal?

A. The Student Appeals Body can either uphold or dismiss a student appeal. They can then refer the matter back to the faculty for further consideration, or make a new or amended decision, or determine that no further action be taken. We are not in a position to know precisely how these options will be exercised by the Student Appeals Body in each case, but *expect* that an upheld appeal will lead to a student being able to re-enrol and continue studies. A dismissed appeal will almost certainly mean that the exclusion will stand.

Q. Are there any other free means of raising a complaint or concern if I don't feel my case has been dealt with fairly by the University?

A. For international students and in order to comply with a National Code of Practice that all providers of higher education services for overseas students have to follow, the University has to have in place an independent and external person or body to hear complaints or appeals. At the time of publication of this updated version of our Survival Kit we have been advised that the NSW Ombudsman will be providing this service. If an international student lodges a complaint to the ombudsman under this provision then the University is obliged to maintain the students' enrolment whilst this appeal or complaint is ongoing, and they are obliged to implement any decision and/or corrective and preventative action. The Ombudsman will usually only consider complaints once internal processes have been exhausted, so you should wait until you know the outcome of your appeal.

For local students you are also able to make a complaint to the ombudsman though it will not

be made under the same provisions. Rather, seeing as the NSW Ombudsman is empowered to receive and investigate complaints about NSW public sector agencies including public universities you would be exercising this particular right to complaint. In this case the University is under no obligation to maintain your enrolment whilst the appeal or complaint is ongoing. We would expect that any decision and/or recommendation would be followed, though you should know that for local students the University is under no obligation to do so. For more information on the NSW Ombudsman and details on how to make a complaint see the following web site:

<http://www.nswombudsman.nsw.gov.au/>

Q. Once an exclusion has been effected can I apply for readmission to my course?

A. If you are excluded under the *University of Sydney (Coursework) Rule 2000 (As Amended)* and either don't appeal or are unsuccessful in your appeal then you do have the right to apply for readmission. Normally you would be excluded for four semesters after which time you can write to the Dean of Faculty to request readmission to your course. If you are unsuccessful in your attempt to gain readmission then you have the option to lodge an academic appeal against this decision. Once again such an appeal would need to be addressed to the Student Appeals Body care of the Registrar and be lodged within 20 working days of the decision of the Faculty to reject your readmission attempt.

Q. Are there any other issues that I need to consider?

A. One issue that sometimes arises is the problem of maximum allowable times to complete award courses. The *University of Sydney (Coursework) Rule 2000 (As Amended)* says that a student must complete all requirements for an award course within ten calendar years or any lesser period if specified by resolutions of the Senate or the Faculty. Many postgraduate award courses *do* have lesser periods of candidature specified as maximum time limits. This can sometimes be a problem for students who are attempting to apply for readmission after a period of exclusion. If you are close to or have exceeded a lesser time limit then your dean does have the discretion to vary that limit.

You should consult with a SAAO who can help you to work out whether you need to request that your dean vary the time limit requirement and may also be able to help you frame an approach. Other issues will inevitably arise in the course of working through individual cases. It is impossible to anticipate all these possibilities in a generic Kit such as this one, but we once again encourage students to get individually tailored advice on particular circumstances to supplement the general information provided herein. From here we wish you all the best in approaching the requirement to show cause and (if necessary) appealing adverse decisions, and hope this Kit helps to make the whole process a little easier to negotiate.

ONCE AGAIN GOOD LUCK!

Stage 4 Automatic Exclusions & Appeals against these Exclusions

Under the *Identifying and Supporting Students at Risk* policy and procedures there are stage 4 provisions for excluding students without giving them the opportunity to show good cause. This part of the policy can be used if you have already been asked to show cause in the past under stage 3. For SUPRA it is one of the most problematic parts of these procedures, because it means that students can be excluded without having an opportunity to raise any new exceptional circumstances that might have arisen since they were allowed to continue study following the previous show cause case. It also means that any failures on the part of faculties to provide appropriate support cannot be raised before the exclusion takes effect.

SUPRA raised these concerns as part of a 2008 review of policies and procedures that is continuing as we write this part of the update to our Survival Kit. We are hopeful that one of the outcomes of the review will be the restoration of the right for students to present a show cause case *before* any exclusion for failure to make academic progress. It could some time before this change gets implemented even if the review recommendations are favourable, so in the meantime if you get a letter stating that you have been automatically excluded under stage 4 of the processes come to make an appointment with a SUPRA SAAO immediately. We will help you to prepare a case.

You have a right to appeal the exclusion to the Student Appeals Body by writing a letter care of the Registrar within 20 working days of the faculty decision. SUPRA recommends you give strong consideration to appealing. You will find a template letter that you can use to help you frame your appeal at appendix 3. You should prepare your letter using much the same process as suggested in our ten step guide for writing a show cause letter, except that your letter should be framed as an appeal and should be framed in terms of why your faculty *breached due academic process*. We strongly recommend that you get the assistance of a SAAO to help you to work through possible grounds for appeal, and to then help you to frame your appeal letter.

Once you have lodged your appeal the Registrar has to confirm that the basis for your appeal has been previously considered by the Faculty, and that you have set out in writing, including any written evidence and submissions, your reasons as to why you believe the Faculty has breached due academic process including matters pertaining to special consideration. Fulfilling this requirement can sometimes be a little more challenging for stage 4 appeals, however a SAAO can help to make suggestions on how you should frame your case to give you the best chance of getting it heard. Presuming you can satisfy the requirements your appeal will be referred for a hearing.

The process followed after you lodge your appeal to the Student Appeals Body is basically the same as described on pages 12 to 15.

Policy References

Where do I go to get more policy information and the actual rules on which the Survival Kit is partly based?

University of Sydney (Coursework) Rule 2000 (As Amended)

Division 6 includes provisions that allow faculties to ask students to show cause as to why they should be allowed to re-enrol because of failure to make good progress:

<http://www.usyd.edu.au/calendar/>

University of Sydney (Student Appeals against Academic Decisions) Rule 2006

Sets out procedures for appealing against academic decisions of faculties including the decision to exclude a student from candidature. The following website includes a link to the rule along with information about how it works:

http://www.usyd.edu.au/secretariat/students/AcAppeals_index.shtml

Faculty Handbooks

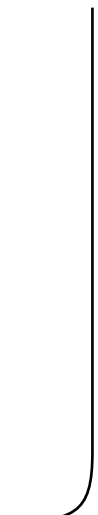
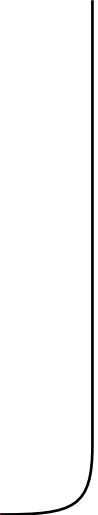
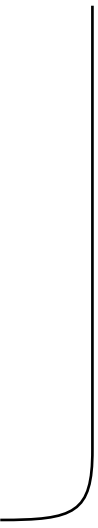
Some postgraduate programs have further progress rules spelt out in faculty handbooks and in the specific course resolutions. Handbooks can be found online at:

<http://www.usyd.edu.au/handbooks/>

Policy and Procedure: Identifying and Supporting Students at Risk

This policy and procedure sets out some University wide guidelines on identifying students who are at risk of failing to complete their degrees because of academic performance, as well as the kinds of interventions you should expect before being asked to show cause:

<http://www.usyd.edu.au/policy>



Appendices

Appendix 1: Template Show Cause Letter – University of Sydney Postgraduate Coursework Students¹

[Your Name]

[Address]

[Contact Phone number]

[University Email Address]

[Name of Your Course]

[Student I.D Number]

[Date]

[Your Faculty]

[Faculty Address]

University of Sydney

NSW 2006

Australia

¹Note that this template is meant to provide a general guide only. You may wish to raise more or less points than suggested here depending on your case. You should get advice from a SAAO on your individual situation.

To Whom It May Concern:

Re: Requirement to “Show Cause”

[STEP 1. Introductory paragraph – state that you are showing cause]

e.g. I write in response to your letter of [date] requiring that I show good cause as to why I should be permitted to re-enrol in the [name of course] in [year]...

[STEP 2. State your understanding as to why the Faculty has asked you to “show cause”]

e.g. I understand that I have been required to show cause because this is the second time I have been identified as at risk because of concerns with my academic progress...

[STEP 3. Emphasise strengths in your academic background]

e.g. I have previously had a very good academic record having achieved ...

[STEP 4. Outline circumstances that affected your previous academic performance]

e.g. I request that the Faculty consider the explanation outlined below which details the factors I believe have affected my recent academic performance...

[List the reasons why your academic performance has not been as good as you would hope.

Make one point per paragraph

Establish the link between your experiences and the effects on your studies.

If you have supporting documentation attach it and make sure you refer to it in your letter.]

[STEP 5. Outline any benefit you got out of “at risk” interventions of your Faculty]

e.g. After attending a “Staying on Track” workshop for students at risk and meeting with an academic adviser I was helped by... [insert a description of anything helpful you found about the process: perhaps you learnt about services or you made contact with a Counsellor, or attended useful Learning Centre workshops, etc...] Despite these interventions my more recent performance was still effected by extraordinary circumstances because...

[STEP 6. Write a paragraph which ties all of your arguments together]

e.g. When taken together the above-mentioned exceptional circumstances help to show that I have been a good student in the past and am capable of achieving to a high level again in future...

[STEP 7. List what you have done or are going to do to change your circumstances so that you can study more effectively in the future] – optional but highly recommended!

e.g. I have taken the following steps to overcome the problems I experienced previously...

[STEP 8. State your commitment to the course – why you wish to continue]

[STEP 9. Conclusion]

e.g. I believe I have taken the steps necessary to overcome the problems I have experienced, and am confident that if I am permitted to re-enrol I will demonstrate that I am a capable student.

I request that the Faculty consider the circumstances outlined above, and allow me the opportunity to re-enrol in my course. I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

[Your Name]

Attachments:

[List your supporting evidence in the order they are referred to in your letter]

e.g.

- Letter of support – (name of writer)
- Medical Certificate
- Statutory Declaration (name of writer)
- Copy of bank statement]

REMEMBER

KEEP A COPY OF YOUR LETTER AND ALL DOCUMENTATION

**IF THE RESPONSE TO YOUR LETTER SAYS THAT YOU
HAVE NOT SHOWN GOOD CAUSE AND ARE EXCLUDED FROM YOUR
COURSE PLEASE NOTE THAT YOU HAVE THE OPTION OF APPEALING
TO THE UNIVERSITY’S STUDENT APPEALS BODY
WITHIN 20 WORKING DAYS**

Appendix 2: Template Stage 3 Appeal Against Exclusion Letter – University of Sydney Postgraduate Coursework Students¹

[Your Name]

[Address]

[Contact Phone number]

[University Email Address]

[Name of Your Course]

[Student I.D Number]

[Date]

The Student Appeals Body C/o Registrar

Records Management Services

A14 – Main Quadrangle

University of Sydney

NSW 2006

Australia

¹ **Nb.** You should affix a covering form to this letter. The form is available at www.usyd.edu.au/secretariat/students/AcAppeals_Form.shtml

Also, note that this template is meant to provide a general guide only. You may wish to raise more or less points than suggested here depending on your case. You should get advice from a SAAO on your individual situation.

To The Student Appeals Body:

Re: Academic Appeal Against Exclusion

[STEP 1. Introductory paragraph – state that you are appealing against a Faculty decision]

e.g. I write to appeal against the decision of the Faculty of [insert Faculty name] to reject my attempt to show cause as to why they should not exclude me from the [insert name of your course].

[STEP 2. State your understanding of why the Faculty rejected your original 'show cause' letter]

eg. I understand that the Faculty rejected my attempt to show cause because...

[STEP 3. Reinforce whatever points you made in your show cause letter that you would like to bring to the attention of the Student Appeals Body]

eg. In my show cause letter to the Faculty I made it clear that I have previously had a strong academic record. I want to highlight to the Student Appeals Body that my performance only began to wane because...

[STEP 4. Explain why you think the Faculty has made the wrong decision]

eg. In considering the exceptional circumstances that were affecting me I believe the Faculty did not properly consider my situation for the following reasons...

[STEP 5. State why you think the Faculty has breached due academic process and should have allowed you to re-enrol in your course. This might well be the most important step of all because in the end you have to establish that there was a breach of due academic process if your appeal is to be upheld. Remember that the definition currently being used says that due academic process means “adhering to Faculty and University policy in a fair and consistent way and ensuring that said policy is well communicated and easily accessible to staff and students of the University”. Breaches can include matters pertaining to special consideration (i.e. illness and misadventure). You need to show how there has been a breach of due academic process in your case.]

eg. I believe the Faculty has breached due academic process in considering my case because...

[STEP 6. Restate your commitment to the course]

[STEP 7. Conclusion]

e.g. I believe I have taken the steps necessary to overcome the problems I have experienced previously, and I believe if due academic process had have been followed I should have been allowed to re-enrol by my Faculty. I am confident that if I am permitted to re-enrol I will demonstrate that I am a capable student. I therefore request that the Student Appeals Body uphold my appeal and replace the decision of the Faculty to exclude me with a new decision allowing me to re-enrol in my course.

Yours sincerely,

[Your Name]

Attachments:

[List supporting evidence in the order it is referred to in your letter. You can include additional supporting documentation on top of what was presented in the original letter, though to make sure it gets considered you should explain why it was not presented previously and how it helps to demonstrate that the initial Faculty decision was wrong.

e.g.

- *Original Faculty letter asking you to show cause*
- *Your response to the Faculty*
- *The Faculty letter excluding you from candidature*
- *Letter of support or character reference – (name of writer)*
- *Medical Certificate*
- *Statutory Declaration - (name of writer)*
- *Copy of bank statement]*

REMEMBER

KEEP A COPY OF YOUR LETTER AND ALL DOCUMENTATION

MAKE SURE YOU LODGE YOUR ACADEMIC APPEAL TO THE STUDENT APPEALS BODY WITH THE REGISTRAR AND WITHIN TWENTY WORKING DAYS OF THE FACULTY DECISION. IF YOU MISS THE DEADLINE OR NEED AN EXTENSION CONTACT SUPRA FOR ADVICE IMMEDIATELY

Appendix 3: Template Stage 4 Appeal Against Exclusion Letter – University of Sydney Postgraduate Coursework Students¹

[Your Name]
[Address]
[Contact Phone number]
[University Email Address]
[Name of Your Course]
[Student I.D Number]

[Date]

The Student Appeals Body C/o Registrar
The Appeals Office
A14 – Main Quadrangle
University of Sydney
NSW 2006
Australia

¹ **Nb.** You should affix a covering form to this letter. The form is available at www.usyd.edu.au/secretariat/students/AcAppeals_Form.shtml

Also, note that this template is meant to provide a general guide only. You may wish to raise more or less points than suggested here depending on your case. You should get advice from a SAAO on your individual situation.

To The Student Appeals Body:

Re: Academic Appeal Against Exclusion

[STEP 1. Introductory paragraph – state that you are appealing against a Faculty decision]

e.g. I write to appeal against the decision of the Faculty of [insert Faculty name] to exclude me from the [insert name of your course].

[STEP 2. State your understanding of why the Faculty excluded you]

eg. I understand that the Faculty excluded me because...

[STEP 3. State whatever points you would have liked to have made if you had been given the opportunity to show cause again]

eg. Even though I have not had an opportunity to show cause this semester, when I previously did so I made it clear that I had a strong academic record. I want to highlight that my performance only began to wane then because...

[STEP 4. Explain why you think the Faculty has made the wrong decision]

eg. I have new circumstances that affected my study which the Faculty have not taken into account, and I have not received enough University support to overcome. For example...

[STEP 5. State why you think the Faculty has breached due academic process and should have allowed you to re-enrol in your course. This might well be the most important step of all because in the end you have to establish that there was a breach of due academic process if your appeal is to be upheld. Remember that the definition currently being used says that due academic process means “adhering to Faculty and University policy in a fair and consistent way and ensuring that said policy is well communicated and easily accessible

to staff and students of the University". Breaches can include matters pertaining to special consideration (i.e. illness and misadventure). You need to show how there has been a breach of due academic process in your case. It can be challenging to work out how to frame concerns about breaches at stage 4 of the process, so SUPRA strongly recommends you get SAAO help with this step]

eg. I believe the Faculty has breached due academic process in considering my case because...

[STEP 6. Restate your commitment to the course]

[STEP 7. Conclusion]

e.g. I believe I have taken the steps necessary to overcome the problems I have experienced previously, and I believe if due academic process had have been followed I should not have been automatically excluded by my Faculty. I am confident that if I am permitted to re-enrol I will demonstrate that I am a capable student. I therefore request that the Student Appeals Body uphold my appeal and replace the decision of the Faculty to exclude me with a new decision allowing me to re-enrol in my course.

Yours sincerely

[Your Name]

Attachments:

[List supporting evidence in the order it is referred to in your letter. You can include additional supporting documentation on top of what was presented in the original letter, though to make sure it gets considered you should explain why it was not presented previously and how it helps to demonstrate that the initial Faculty decision was wrong.

e.g.

- *Original Faculty letter asking you to show cause*
- *Your response to the Faculty & the Faculty response allowing you to re-enrol*
- *The Faculty letter automatically excluding you from candidature*
- *Letter of support or character reference – (name of writer)*
- *Medical Certificate*
- *Statutory Declaration - (name of writer)*
- *Copy of bank statement]*

REMEMBER

KEEP A COPY OF YOUR LETTER AND ALL DOCUMENTATION

**MAKE SURE YOU LODGE YOUR ACADEMIC APPEAL
TO THE STUDENT APPEALS BODY WITH THE REGISTRAR AND
WITHIN TWENTY BUSINESS DAYS OF THE FACULTY DECISION.
IF YOU MISS THE DEADLINE OR NEED AN EXTENSION CONTACT
SUPRA FOR ADVICE IMMEDIATELY**

Notes:



The University of Sydney

Our operational costs, space and administrative support are financed by the University of Sydney



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