

## Academic Appeals Policy

### General Principles

**The policy follows “The Good Practice Framework for handling complaints and academic appeals – December 2014”.**

Academic appeals may not be readily amenable to early resolution because of the sovereignty of academic judgment. Nevertheless many colleges have developed good practice in giving students an opportunity to seek clarification of an assessment or examination board’s decision, or discuss their concerns with a nominated member of staff, following the publication of results. This can provide an opportunity to manage the student’s expectations before he or she decides whether to submit a formal appeal. Where appropriate and proportionate the student should be provided with a written outcome.

Appeals should be submitted in writing no later than 21 days from receipt of the assessment result. This time limit will be extended only in exceptional circumstances.

### Stages of Appeal

#### The Formal Stage

On receipt of a formal academic appeal the College needs to be undertake an initial evaluation to check that the student’s academic appeal is submitted under the correct procedures, falls within the ground upon which an appeal may be made, is submitted within any deadline, and is in the required format. This process may result in:

- The student being referred to a different procedure
- The academic appeal being rejected because it is not made under the permissible grounds. Where some parts of the student’s academic appeal fall outside the permissible grounds, this should be explained to the student. The appropriate member of staff should consider meeting with the student to do this.

Key questions to ask at this state are:

- Is this a complaint or academic appeal?
- Has the student set out clearly what the academic appeal is about?
- Has the student provided evidence in support of the academic appeal?
- What outcome is the student hoping for and can it be achieved?
- What assistance or support can be provided to the student in taking this forward?

Special attention needs to be given to identifying academic appeals that may require swift action eg where there may be an impact on mental health or for example where there are time limits for completion to meet the regulatory requirements of a professional course.

The outcome of the formal stage, including any decision to reject the appeal because it is not made under the permissible grounds, should be communicated to the student in writing, giving a clear explanation and outlining the reasons for each decision in straightforward language. This will help the student decide whether or not to pursue the matter further.

The decision should also give information about:

- the student's right to take the academic appeal to the review stage
- the ground on which the student can do so
- the time limit for escalating to the review stage
- the appropriate procedure
- where and how to access support.

Appeals at this stage will be heard by a panel consisting of the HE Lead and two other senior members of staff. The student should be provided with a written outcome at the conclusion of this stage.

### **The Review Stage**

If a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal stage, he or she may be able to request a review. A request for a review may be on limited grounds, including but not confined to:

- a review of the procedures followed at the formal stage
- a consideration of whether the outcome was reasonable in all circumstances
- new material evidence which the student was unable, for valid reasons, to provide earlier in the process.

The review stage will not usually consider the issues afresh or involve a further investigation. An academic appeal must have been considered at the formal stage before it can be escalated to the review stage.

### **What the college will do when it receives a request for review**

The College will allocate the request for review to a designated senior member of staff not involved at any previous stage. It is important to be clear from the start of the review stage exactly what is being reviewed, and to ensure that both the reviewer and the student understand the purpose and scope of the review. If the student's expectations appear to exceed the scope of the review stage, the student should be advised of this as soon as possible in writing in order to manage expectations about possible outcomes.

Key questions to consider could include:

- were the relevant procedures followed during the formal stage?
- was the outcome reasonable in all the circumstances?
- has the student received clear reasons why the academic appeal was rejected at the formal stage?
- if new material evidence has been provided has the student given valid reasons for not supplying this earlier?

If the academic appeal is not upheld, the outcome of the review stage should be communicated to the student in writing by issuing a Completion of Procedures letter as soon as possible and within 28 days. This should include a clear explanation and outline the reasons for the decision in straightforward language. This will help the student decide whether or not to pursue the matter further.

The decision should also advise the student about:

- Their right to submit a complaint to the OIA for review
- The time limit for doing so
- Where and how to access advice and support.

Where an academic appeal is upheld the student will be provided with a written outcome and explanation.

Once the review stage has been completed, the student is entitled to ask the OIA, (the independent ombudsman service) to review his or her complaint about the outcome of the College's academic appeals process. The complaint should normally be submitted to the OIA within three months of the date of the Completion of Procedures letter.

### **Related Documents**

Assessment Policy