



FURTHER EDUCATION APPEALS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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1 Principles and policy

1.1 The University has a duty to maintain and enhance the quality of provision for students and to provide an effective system for handling assessment appeals. The University upholds the principle that students should have a full opportunity to raise appeals against assessment decisions without fear of disadvantage and in the knowledge that confidentiality shall be respected. The University defines an assessment appeal as a “request for a review of a decision of an academic body charged with making decisions on assessment, student progression and awards”.

1.2 An appeal can only be made if the decision is related to:
(i) final award
(ii) progression from one stage of the course to the next
(iii) assessment on the course.

Appeals will only be accepted on the following grounds:

1. Reasonable adjustment decision
2. Special consideration decision
3. Outcome of an investigation into malpractice or maladministration
4. Assessment decision.

1.3 The Further Education Appeals policy can only be used by registered students. Students who have finished their studies, have been withdrawn or have chosen to withdraw must raise the issue no later than 3 months after they have withdrawn or their outcome of assessment communicated. A student may not have an award conferred which is the subject of an appeal until the appeals procedure has been concluded. An appeal cannot be initiated once the award has been conferred. Students who are considering whether or not to appeal are advised to seek advice immediately on receiving their result.

1.4 Assessment appeals should not be confused with any case of complaint which should be taken up in accordance with the University’s *Complaints Policy and Procedure for Further Education Students*.

1.5 Where a number of students wish to challenge decisions on the same or a similar basis, they may submit an appeal collectively.

1.6 Principles of this policy

a) Appeals are treated seriously and students will not suffer any disadvantage or recrimination as a result of making an appeal in good faith.

b) It is expected that students and their representatives will conduct themselves responsibly and treat the appeals process and those involved in the process with respect at all times.

1.7 Recording and Monitoring of Appeals

It is important that appeals are monitored in order to improve the student experience. Academic Registry will record and provide reports on the nature of appeals for the Further Education Committee and Academic Board and course teams.

2 Procedure

2.1 The FE Appeals Policy and Procedure aims to help to resolve such concerns in a manner which is as fair and expeditious as possible. The University has a number of ways that concerns of a general nature can be raised these include: through Student Representatives, meetings with Directors of Studies, course teams or service area etc, via the Students’ Union or in course meetings.

2.2 The procedure consists of up to three stages:

2.2.1 Stage 1 - Early resolution

The University aims to resolve most appeals at this stage normally via a face to face discussion with the student.

2.2.2 Stage 2 - Formal stage

Only when the steps taken under Stage 1 - Early Resolution have failed or when the student considers that their appeal has not been resolved can Stage 2 of the procedure be invoked. There may be occasions when the Early Resolution process is not appropriate or possible if there are serious or complex issues involved. In these rare circumstances an appeal can be raised at Stage 2 directly with the express agreement of the Academic Registrar.

2.2.3 Stage 3 - Referral to the Awarding Body

If a student (or group of students) is not satisfied with the outcome of the formal stage they can raise their appeal with the awarding body.

2.3 Stage 1 - Early Resolution

2.3.1 A student is advised to:

- (i) speak to their tutor informally to attempt to resolve the issue no later than 7 days after the formal publication of their results
- (ii) speak to a member of the Student Welfare Team and seek further advice
- (iii) speak to the Students' Union for advice and guidance.

2.3.2 The tutor may request relevant documentation in support of the appeal from the student in order to investigate the issue. This must be provided within 10 working days of the request. If the tutor is unable to resolve the issue they will refer it to the Course Leader.

2.3.3 The University aims to respond to appeals within 15 working days, but recognises there may be occasions when it is not feasible and a longer period of time may be required. In these cases students will be kept informed of the timescale for the appeal.

2.4 Stage 2 - Formal stage

2.4.1 If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of stage 1 they can submit a completed assessment appeal form to the Course Leader no later than 10 days after the notification of the stage 1 outcome.

2.4.2 The Course Leader will investigate the appeal and may ask the Internal Verifier to assess the work or the decision. The student will be kept informed of the timescale for the appeal.

2.4.3 At the conclusion of the investigation, the Course Leader will produce a report based on the investigation which outlines the process followed, information gathered, the conclusions drawn and any recommendations.

2.4.4 The outcome of the formal stage will be communicated to the student in writing, outlining the reason(s) for the decision and if the appeal is upheld how and when any remedy will be implemented. The letter will also give information about:

- the student's right to take the appeal to the awarding body
- the grounds on which the student can do this
- the time limit for escalating to stage 3 - referral
- the appropriate procedure
- where and how to access support.

2.4.5 The timescale for the outcome will depend on the complexity of the matter in question. A student can normally expect to receive the outcome within 30 working days of submitting the appeal. If this is exceeded, the student will be kept informed of the timescale for the appeal.

2.5 Stage 3 - Referral to the Awarding Body

2.5.1 If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of stage 2 they will be advised as to how to contact the awarding body. The awarding body will review whether the University has applied procedures consistently, properly and fairly in this instance.

3 Parental / Guardian / Carer Contact

3.1 At the Formal Procedure stage the parent/ guardian/ carer of students who are under 18 may be invited to attend any formal interview with the student, dependent on the case to answer and the likelihood of any further escalation.

4 Reports and Documentation

4.1 A summary of appeals is reported to the Further Education Committee and Academic Board for monitoring purposes.

4.2 All information which a student, or anyone else, provides to staff dealing with the matter in the course of an investigation of an appeal shall be treated as confidential, subject to the need to divulge information to investigate an appeal and any requirements of the Data Protection legislation. It is equally important that the student also respects the need for confidentiality throughout the appeals process. Where confidentiality is breached the University's Disciplinary procedures may be invoked.

4.3 Relevant members of staff involved in the appeal will be informed of the outcome. Senior members of staff may also receive a copy of the outcome in order for the University to learn/ act on issues identified from appeals.