

# Academic Appeals Policy

## 1. Introduction and scope

- 1.1 An academic appeal is a request for a review of a decision taken about a student by a Module Board, an Award and Status Board, or the Research Degrees Committee. The purpose of this policy is to set out what and how a student can appeal, how that appeal will be considered and support for students during the process.
- 1.2 A complaint relates to a specific concern about provision of a programme or study or a service. Only a successful academic appeal can lead to a change in a result or progression decision, and so a complaint may be directed to this policy if that is judged to be appropriate.
- 1.3 This Academic Appeals Policy applies to all University of Northampton students, whether they are studying on campus, remotely, or with a partner organisation.
- 1.4 This Policy is owned by the University Senate, and its operation is devolved to the Academic Registrar.
- 1.5 Throughout this Policy, where a particular role is named, it should be taken as referring to that role holder or their nominee.

## 2. Definitions

- 2.1 For the purposes of this Policy, an 'academic appeal' is defined as a request for a review of a decision of an academic body (Module Board, an Award and Status Board, or the Research Degrees Committee) charged with decisions on student progression, assessment and awards.
- 2.2 An academic complaint is any specific concern about the provision of a course of study or related academic service, covered by the University's [Student Complaints Procedure](#).
- 2.3 For the purposes of this Policy, 'termination' refers to the exclusion of students from further study due to academic failure or for postgraduate research students, due to unsatisfactory progress following Stage 3 of the PGR Satisfactory Progress Policy.

### 3. What a student can appeal

#### 3.1 A student can appeal against:

- a progression decision by an Award and Status Board or the Research Degrees Committee, such as not being permitted to progress to the next stage of study or to a higher level of qualification;
- a termination decision, where the student has been required to withdraw from study;
- an award decision, where a different award has been granted to that for which the student was enrolled;
- the outcome of a research student examination;
- an award classification, **only** where the classification has not been determined in line with the University's Academic Regulations;
- a module grade, **only** where there has been irregularity in the assessment process, or where the grade has not been determined in line with the Academic Regulations.

#### 3.2 A student cannot appeal against:

- the academic or professional judgement of markers or examiners;
- an award classification that has been calculated in line with the Academic Regulations.

#### 3.3 Where a student believes a grade or award classification has been calculated incorrectly, for example if an assessment grade has been missed, or if the grades have not been collated correctly, they should contact the appropriate Faculty or similar academic department where the student is studying at a Partner institution and ask for an Administrative Review of the calculation. Such cases do not need to go through the Academic Appeals process.

#### 3.4 Appeals against provisional grades will not be accepted. All grades are provisional until approved by the UG and PG Module Boards.

### 4. Grounds for appeal

#### 4.1 The acceptable grounds for appeal are:

- that it can be demonstrated that a module grade or award classification (award classification is not applicable for postgraduate research students) was not reached in line with the University's Academic Regulations (eg irregularity in the recording, aggregation, collation or weighting of grades);
- - that it can be demonstrated that irregularity in the conduct of assessment had a direct and detrimental effect on the student's performance;

- that there is evidence of serious personal mitigating circumstances that were not known to the Boards or the Research Degrees Committee, and it can be demonstrated that those circumstances could not have been brought forward at an earlier stage.

- in the case of research degree examinations only, that it can be demonstrated that there has been an irregularity in conduct of assessment of the thesis on the part of one or more of the examiners.

## 4. Submitting an appeal

- 4.1 An appeal can be submitted only when a decision has been formally confirmed by the University, i.e. when results have been confirmed and progression or award decisions has been communicated to students.
- 4.2 Appeals must be submitted within 10 working days of the publication or communication of the decision against which the student wishes to appeal. In the most exceptional circumstances, the Academic Registrar has authority to accept an appeal up to 3 months later.
- 4.3 The student must submit the appeal on the **Academic Appeal Form**, clearly stating the grounds for appeal, and attaching all relevant evidence. If any evidence is not yet available, the student should state that clearly on the form, and ensure that it is submitted within the following 10 working days.
- 4.4 Where the appeal is on the grounds of personal mitigating circumstances, it must be accompanied by contemporaneous independent evidence (such as a doctor's letter covering the time in question) and an explanation of why the circumstances were not disclosed earlier. If you choose to submit extenuating circumstances as part of an academic appeal once your results are published, you could be leaving it too late to receive suitable support and mitigation should your appeal be upheld. You may have missed the opportunity to resit, or continue on to the next level of your course because your academic appeal was unsuccessful or the outcome came too late.

## 5. Process

- 5.1 The Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals Team (SCCA) will review the appeal to determine whether it has been submitted in time and meets the grounds for appeal. This will be completed within 10 working days.
- 5.2 Where an appeal is submitted, but it is judged that the matter should be considered under a different policy (e.g. the Complaints Policy), SCCA will inform the student.
- 5.3 Where the appeal submitted does not meet the grounds for appeal, SCCA will inform the student within 10 working days and will issue a Completion of Procedures letter.

- 5.4 Where the appeal does meet the grounds for appeal, the Academic Registrar will then appoint an Academic Appeals Panel to consider the appeal. The Panel will comprise a Chair, two panel members and an officer from SCCA to advise on regulation and protocol. All members will have received appropriate and regular training for their role in the Panel. Where a panel is considering an appeal for a research student, training includes an understanding of research degrees, research students, and how their programmes differ from undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes.
- 5.5 A meeting of the Academic Appeals panel will be arranged to discuss the allegations to which the student will be invited. All parties required to attend will be given reasonable notice of the meeting, normally at least ten working days. The meeting will usually be held online unless the student specifically requests to attend in person
- 5.6 All attendees will be sent the papers relevant to the hearing, including:
- A full agenda to include the date, time and link to the meeting.
  - Names and job titles of all attending.
  - Details of the allegations to be examined.
  - An outline of the process of the meeting.
  - Notification that the student is entitled to be accompanied by a companion and/or SU colleague.
- 5.7 If the student is unavailable at the time of the hearing they may submit a written statement which will be considered in the student's absence.
- 5.8 The student may choose to have a companion or a Student Union representative accompany them to the meeting (see 6.2 below).
- 5.9 The Academic Appeals Panel will reach a decision within 20 further working days, i.e. within 30 days of the appeal being submitted. The Panel will make a recommendation to the Academic Registrar, which could be:
- appeal upheld
  - appeal partially upheld (specifying which aspects have/have not been upheld)
  - appeal not upheld
- 5.10 Students will be notified of the outcome of the appeal within 35 working days of the appeal being submitted. In cases where it is not possible to do so, SCCA will inform the student of the reason for the delay and indicate when a decision should be expected.
- 5.11 Where an appeal is upheld, the Panel will recommend to the Academic Registrar the action that should be taken. The Academic Registrar will determine whether the recommended action complies with the Academic Regulations; if it does not, but is still deemed to be an appropriate course of action, the Academic Registrar will seek approval for a waiver of the Academic Regulations.

- 5.12 A successful Academic Appeal will not change a grade or classification, except where an error has been identified and corrected. It may provide the student with the opportunity to undertake further study in order to qualify, to progress or gain an award. A successful Academic Appeal by a research student may provide the student with a further opportunity for Transfer of Registration, a fresh examination of the thesis or the opportunity to undertake further study to gain an award.
- 5.13 If the appeal is considered by a Panel and not upheld, that decision marks the end of the University's procedure, and the student will be sent a 'Completion of Procedure' letter containing information about their right to apply for review to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.
- 5.14 Records will be kept of the nature and outcome of appeals, as well as the protected characteristics of appellants, so that recurring issues or issues related to equality and diversity are identified and addressed. All records will be managed in line with current data protection legislation.

## 6. Support for students

- 6.1 Throughout the various stages of the Academic Appeal process students can seek help and guidance from:  
the Student Support and Advice Team [studentsupportofficers@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:studentsupportofficers@northampton.ac.uk)  
the Students' Union [su.advice@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:su.advice@northampton.ac.uk)  
and the SCCA team for policy and process guidance [scca@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:scca@northampton.ac.uk)
- 6.2 Where a student is invited to meet with the Appeal Panel, they may choose to have a Student Union representative or companion accompany them to the meetings. This could be a friend on their course or a friend from outside of the University, whose role is to provide moral support for the student. They cannot answer questions on behalf of the student or ask questions, but the student may confer with them during the course of the interview or meeting, for example, before responding to any question from the Panel.
- 6.3 Where a student is invited to meet with the Appeal Panel, they may not be represented in their absence by a third party. In such cases the Panel will normally consider the case in their absence. Where, through reasons of disability, the student making the appeal is unable to represent themselves, appropriate adjustments will be made by the Academic Registrar (or nominee).
- 6.4 As the Appeal Panel is part of University's internal arrangements, and is not a legal process, formal legal representation is not appropriate.

## 7. Links to related Policies/Guidance/Regulations

- Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes

- Academic Regulations for Research Students [hyperlinks to be added]

## 8. Policy governance

8.1 The table shows who is responsible for updating this policy, and the timeline for doing so.

Policy Owner	Academic Registrar
Principal Contact	Academic Registrar
Date of initial committee approval	June 2014 (SEC)
Date of Senate approval	July 2014
Date of last annual update	June 2021
<b>Proposed date of next annual update</b>	<b>June 2023</b>
Date of last full review	March 2023
<b>Proposed date of next full review</b>	<b>March 2025</b>
Version number and date	4.0 March 2023

## 9. Process diagram

