



Higher Education and Access Programmes

Academic Appeals Guidance

Organisational
Quality Assurance

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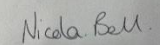
Document Location

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Signature:		Date:	19/09/2023

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Introduction

The College is committed to providing you with the right to appeal, in appropriate circumstances, against a decision of an examination board. The purpose of these guidelines is to explain to you the academic appeals procedures.

Aim and Scope

These guidelines apply to all current¹ full time, part time, associate students, higher level apprentices and access students registered for Higher Education² (HE) and Access programmes or modules at Belfast Metropolitan College (Belfast Met), who wish to appeal against an assessment, progression, withdrawal, repeat and/or retake decision made by the College's Examination Board.

The College's Academic Appeals process will be explained to all students at induction and is referred to within your programme handbook, if there is anything you do not understand please ask your Course Co-Ordinator or Course Director.

The College's Rights and Responsibilities

The College is responsible for dealing with a student's initial academic appeal in accordance with this document's guidelines and processes. The College will carry out this responsibility by:

- **Ensuring the Higher Education and Access Programmes Academic Appeals Guidelines are easily accessible to all students.**
- **Informing students of the outcome of their academic appeal in writing via email to your Belfast Met student email, this outcome email is important, as you will need it if you wish to request a review of your appeal to the relevant awarding organisation or partner university.**
- **Responding in an open and timely manner to any requests made by an awarding organisation or partner university in relation to an academic appeal review. Students will be informed of any delays in relation to the outcome of their academic appeal.**
- **Providing information on appeals to awarding organisation or the relevant partner university part of the College's obligations, these obligations are outlined in the awarding organisation or partner university terms of reference and validation agreements.**
- **Reviewing, monitoring, and evaluating its own academic appeal guidelines and processes annually. In doing so, the College will consider current good practices and changes in legislation awarding organisation or partner university regulations.**

¹ A current student includes HE/HLA or Access students enrolled on programmes or modules, those on an interruption of studies and those on a temporary suspension/exclusion from the College and those who have recently left the College and are within the time limit for making an academic appeal.

² Higher Education refers to programmes studied at level 4, level 5, Level 6, and Level 7.

- **Ensuring all persons involved in the academic appeal do so impartially and do not act in any matter in which they have a material interest or in which any potential conflict of interest might arise.**
- **Ensuring the Higher Education and Access Programmes Academic Appeals Guidelines are operated in accordance with the Colleges Equal Opportunity Policy for students.**

What are Academic Appeals?

The Examination Board determines the academic progress, or the academic decisions of a student based on their performance in examinations and other forms of assessment.

An academic appeal may be based either on:

- a. **On new information (SA1 appeal)** – a candidate may appeal against their academic progress decision based on extenuating circumstances **which was not known** to the Board at the time the decision was made.

N.B The academic judgement of the examiners is not open to appeal.

- b. **On procedural or other irregularities (SA2 appeal)** – in the conduct of the examinations, or in other forms of assessment, or in the decision-making process.

N.B The academic judgment of the examiners is not open to appeal. An appeal will not be allowed on the grounds of complaint about the delivery or management of a course after a student has presented themselves for examination/assessment.

Appeals are made to an Appeals Panel, the purpose of which is to establish the facts considering evidence. The academic appeals procedure requires the student to make their case on the Academic Appeal form (selecting SA1 or SA2), outlining their grounds for appeal and providing sufficient and adequate evidence in support of their appeal. An Appeals Panel cannot make academic judgments, that is, it cannot change your marks to enable an assessment to be passed or the classification of an award to be changed. Instead, if your appeal is upheld you will be permitted to complete, take, or repeat the assessment which, if you are successful, will enable you to proceed to the next stage of the course or to complete it.

It is important that students follow their programme of study's assessment and examination deadlines dates. If a student encounters periods of ill health, domestic or personal difficulties before their programme of study's assessment or examination deadlines, they should inform the appropriate academic staff within their School or Department and follow the College's Extenuating Circumstance (EC1) Process, located [here](#). Although you may have previously discussed your difficulties with staff in your School or Department, this does not in itself constitute the submission of extenuating circumstances.

Rights and Responsibilities

The College procedures give you the right to submit an appeal to an Appeals Panel and guarantee that you will not suffer a disadvantage where you do so in good faith.

The academic appeal process cannot be used to:

- a. Challenge a decision your academic examiners have made on your performance. i.e., grades awarded cannot be appealed; or
- b. Complain about the delivery or management of a course after you have presented yourself for examination or assessment; you should raise such concerns through the College's Compliments and Complaints procedure as soon as they arise.
- c. Challenge decisions on entry requirements and or admissions requirements, you should raise such concerns through the College's Admissions Policy which is located [here](#). Please note appeals or challenges to the College's Admissions policy are dealt with through the College's Compliments and Complaints policy.
- d. Challenge decisions on academic misconduct (academic malpractice), the appeals on these decisions should be raised through the College's Student Disciplinary Policy which is located [here](#).

Submitting an Appeal

The Academic Appeals procedure can only begin after an Examination Board has taken place and when you have received your formal Publication of Results from the College to your College email account.

You must submit your Academic Appeal Form (selecting SA1 or SA2) **within the deadline date and by the time as specified in your Publication of Results email**. Only in very exceptional circumstances will academic appeals submitted after the deadline be accepted for consideration. If your appeal is late, a representative of the Academic Appeals Panel will email you requesting a reason for lateness. You must provide evidence to support your academic appeal and should be submitted via Academic Appeal Form.

To submit an Academic Appeal, form please complete and submit the electronic form. [HE/Access Academic Appeals SA1 and SA2 \(23/24\) \(office.com\)](#)

Confidentiality

While privacy and confidentiality will be maintained, you should be aware that the evidence that you submit will normally be made available to staff involved in considering your Academic Appeal and will be held on your student file at the conclusion of the process. Please note submitted Academic Appeal Forms and the upload of any supporting evidence is secure will be treated in confidence and in line with [College's Data Protection Policy](#) and the [College's Privacy Policy](#). However, if you have information about highly sensitive or personal circumstances that you do not wish to be seen by members of the Appeals Panel, you may submit it in a sealed envelope to the College. You should write on the outside of the

envelope your full name, your Belfast Met Student ID, the full title of your course and the words “For the attention of the Chairperson of the Academic Appeals Panel” and mark “Strictly Confidential.” The Chairperson may decide that the contents should not be disclosed to members of the Academic Appeals Panel and or to place this information on your student file. Please note if you are submitting evidence in a sealed envelope this evidence must be made available to the College at the date/time of the deadline of your appeal as outlined in the Publication of Results email.

It is important that you complete all relevant sections of the HE/ Access Academic Appeal form, including supporting evidence as your appeal may be rejected if you have not provided all the information requested.

Interview Process

If you are called for interview/meeting, you may choose to be accompanied. The accompanied person **must be** a member of the College, for example a student or a Students’ Union officer or a member of staff, subject to there being no conflict of interest, i.e., the person **must not** be related to the student making the academic appeal. It is your responsibility to arrange for this person to attend the interview with you. If, for very good reason, you are unable to attend for interview at the original date, the College will try to reschedule the interview. You are not entitled to be represented by a proxy in your absence. The interview will be either online or will take place on your campus of study. The interview will be arranged by a representative of the Academic Appeals Panel.

Appeals Panel

The completed form will be considered by Academic Appeals Panel, this will normally comprise the Quality Assurance Manager, accompanied by the Curriculum Area Manager, the Course Director, and a minute taker. The Academic Appeal Panel acts on behalf of the Examination Board which made the original decision. A representative of the Academic Appeals Panel may need to contact you to discuss your submitted Academic Appeal Form, you will be contacted using the contact details stated within the completed form.

Academic Appeal Outcome(s):

The Academic Appeals Panel can make one of the following decisions:

a. Uphold the Academic Appeal, the Academic Appeals Panel determines:

- I. The original decision may be amended.
- II. the original decision may remain unchanged if, for example, a student was already retaking a module/unit and appealed to have a second retake considered as a first take. Therefore, whilst the appeal has been upheld in such instances the new decision will be the same as the original decision with an indication that the student now has a first sit of a retake. A first sit may indicate that the module/unit retake will not automatically be capped at a pass. All retakes will be time bound.

b. Decline the Academic Appeal, if this was the outcome of your appeal this would mean that the outcome or assessed mark you were appealing would remain in place. The appeal is not successful if the Academic Appeals Panel determines:

- I. there are no grounds for an appeal.
- II. you have failed to complete the Academic Appeals Form.
- III. it is determined that you have not submitted any new information or that you have not provided a satisfactory explanation for your failure to supply the information by the date(s) prescribed in the process as set out above. If this is the case, the original decision of the Examination Board will be confirmed.
- IV. there is no new, independent, medical, or other evidence to support the appeal.
- V. it is late, and you have not provided an acceptable reason.
- VI. the appeal is deemed to lack substance.

c. Partially uphold the Academic Appeal:

- I. This outcome means that the Academic Appeals Panel have accepted some of your appeal but not all of it. The student would be informed of the exact details of this outcome possible examples could include a student may be given the opportunity of a retake, resubmission and or repeat on some aspects of the module/programme.

The Academic Appeals Panel aims to process your Academic Appeal within 10 working days. Students will be notified of the outcome of their submitted academic appeal via an email from the College's Academic Appeals email address to the student's Belfast Met email address.

Awarding Organisation or Partner University

If your appeal has been declined and you have exhausted all the College's relevant procedures, and you are still not satisfied with this outcome, you may then pursue any further appeal with the relevant awarding organisation or partner university. Students have the right to submit a formal appeal to the relevant awarding organisation or partner university. Details of how to further appeal to your awarding organisation or partner university can be found in your programme handbook and the awarding organisation's or partner university's website. Students are advised to visit the website of their awarding organisation or partner university on a timely basis when pursuing an appeal as all appeals procedures will be time bound with specific timelines, these timelines will differ depending on the awarding organisation or partner university. Each awarding organisation or partner university will require you to submit relevant information, which may include the initial information you submitted to the College as part of your Academic Appeal and the College's outcome of your submitted academic appeal. The onus is on the student to submit the relevant information to their awarding organisation or partner university.

Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO)

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your SA2 appeal, you may refer your complaint to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO). The Ombudsman can investigate complaints about public service providers in Northern Ireland.

NIPSO's contact details are: Progressive House, 33 Wellington Place, Belfast, BT1 6HN or Freepost NIPSO. The Freephone number is 0800 342424 or you can email to nipso@nipso.org.uk.

Please note you must normally make your complaint to the Ombudsman within 6 months of the date of the communication from the College advising you of the outcome of your appeal.