



**Academic Appeals
Standard Operating Procedures
Academic Year: 2025/2026**

Curriculum Quality

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Document Approval/Planned Revision

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Introduction

Belfast Metropolitan College (The College) is committed to achieving the highest of professional standards based on impartial, reliable, and valid assessment judgements when assessing student work. Whilst we endeavour to execute our responsibilities with openness and fairness, the college is committed to providing you with the right to appeal, in appropriate circumstances, against a decision of an ¹examination board. This procedure has been informed by the advice and guidance from QAA Quality Code, Higher Education ²validation partners / and awarding organisation regulations.

Aim and Scope

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) applies to all current full time, part time, associate students, higher level apprentices and access students registered at the college, 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 that students' work is assessed by staff who have appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills, and that the relevant internal quality assurance processes and standardisation takes place.
- Ensuring the Academic Appeals Guidelines are easily accessible to all students, for example informing students at induction or via the use of a Student Handbook.
- Allowing sufficient time for the appeal to be carried out, and to make any necessary changes to assessment.
- 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.

¹ Examination Board in Belfast Met is the board/committee responsible for managing the assessment, progression, and awarding decisions for students. The Examination Board is made up of internal and external examiners (present or present an EE report) who ensure standards are maintained and determine student progression or award qualifications.

² The Open University, Queens University Belfast, Dundee University and Ulster University.

- Providing a clear deadline for students to submit a request for an appeal. Requests will not be accepted after this deadline.
- Providing information on appeals to an awarding organisation or the relevant partner university is part of the College's obligations, these obligations are outlined in the awarding organisation or partner university terms of reference and validation agreements.
- Keep appeal records for review as outlined by the retention schedule.
- Reviewing, monitoring, and evaluating its own academic appeal guidelines and processes annually to inform quality improvement. In doing so, the College will consider current good practices and changes in legislation awarding organisation or partner university regulations.
- 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 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.

Support and guidance for students - Evidence: Written medical evidence or evidence of compassionate circumstances, which were relevant to your performance, must be provided as part of the appeal. Note: Evidence of ill health must be authenticated by a medical certificate from a doctor or appropriate documentation from a registered counsellor - self-certification is not acceptable.

- 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. That there was a procedural or other irregularity. That the procedures were not used properly and fairly in arriving at judgements.

Support and guidance for students - Evidence: An example of a procedural irregularity could be a change to submission dates not communicated to students in advance or the internal verification processes were not implemented. A full explanation and documentation to support the appeal must be included.

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. The Appeals Panel will not consider an appeal if it is deemed to be vexatious (i.e causing or [tending](#) to cause [annoyance](#), [frustration](#), or worry) or frivolous (i.e not having any serious purpose or value), if the forms have not been completed, or if supporting evidence has not been supplied.

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 Standard Operating Procedure (EC1), 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.

The Student's 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](#).

The student also has a responsibility to:

- familiarise themselves with the centre's appeals policy.
- inform the centre of their intention to appeal at the earliest possible opportunity and raise an appeal before any centre appeal deadline has passed.
- make an appeal request in writing / online form as per the college process, students must explain on what grounds they wish to request an appeal.
- follow the staged process for appeals provided by the college.

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. 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 it should be submitted via [Academic Appeals SA1 and SA2 \(25-26\)](#).

Timescales for academic appeals are included in [Appendix 1](#).

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.

All Academic Appeal Forms and supporting evidence are submitted securely via MS form and handled in accordance with the College's Data Protection and Privacy Policies. If you have highly sensitive or personal information that you do not wish to be viewed only by the Appeal Panel Chair, you may submit it in a sealed envelope. This must be received by the appeal deadline as stated in the Publication of Results. Clearly mark the envelope with:

Strictly Confidential

For the attention of the Chairperson of the Academic Appeals Panel

Belfast Met Titanic Quarter Campus,

7 Queens Road, Belfast, BT3 9DT

Include your full name, student ID, and programme title inside the envelope. The Chairperson will determine whether the contents should be shared with the Panel or added to your student file.

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

Interview

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 be the Academic Appeal Panel. They act 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) and notification of the outcome:

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. Not Uphold 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 ten working days from the academic appeal deadline date. 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. Where timeframes may need to be extended, for example in the case of complex appeals with multiple strands to address, the academic appeals team will communicate with the student.

Stage 2 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 may have the right to submit a formal appeal to the relevant awarding organisation or partner university. Further details on your programmes awarding organisation or partner university academic appeals process can be found in your programme handbook, the awarding organisation's or partner university's website and Appendix 2 of this document.

Please note that external appeals are subject to strict deadlines, which vary by institution. It is the student's responsibility to check the website of their awarding organisation or partner university on a timely basis and submit all required documentation, including the original appeal and the College's outcome within the specified timelines. 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. Further information on NIPSO can be found Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman | NIPSO.

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.

Appendix 1- Timescales for academic appeals

At Belfast Met, the academic appeals process has a set timeline for submitting an academic appeal, this timeline depends on the Awarding organisation or validated partner. The below table outlines the timelines based on the validated partner or awarding organisation:

Validated Partner / Awarding Organisation	Timeline for submitting an appeal based on the day your results were published or the date on the official communication about the decision
The Open University	For progressing students: five ³ working days from the day your results were published or the date on the official communication about the decision For awarding students: ten working days from the day your results were published or the date on the official communication about the decision.
Ulster University Queens University Belfast including Stranmillis University	For progressing students: seven working days from the day your results were published or the date on the official communication about the decision For awarding students: seven working days from the day your results were published or the date on the official communication about the decision.
Queens University Belfast including Stranmillis University	For progressing students: ten working days from the day your results were published or the date on the official communication about the decision For awarding students: ten working days from the day your results were published or the date on the official communication about the decision.
All other Validated Partners Awarding organisations	For progressing students: five working days from the day your results were published or the date on the official communication about the decision For awarding students: five working days from the day your results were published or the date on the official communication about the decision.

³ Working days are those days on which the College is open. Weekends, statutory days, Bank Holidays and other College closures are classed as 'non-working' days.

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.

Appendix 2- Awarding body and Partner university information

If a student has exhausted all of the college's academic appeals procedures, they have the right to submit a review to the following partner university's / awarding organisation's. The below table signpost students to the relevant partner university's / awarding organisation's guidance.

Partner University / Awarding Organisation	Link to guidance on academic appeals	Further Guidance
The Open University	Validation Partnerships 	Student's guide to studying on a programme validated by The Open University Contact OUVV at OUVP-info@open.ac.uk
Ulster University	Academic appeals	SA3 form Revised copy
OCN	AP03/V3	
Queens University Belfast- Foundation degree	Academic Appeals Academic & Student Affairs Queen's University Belfast	BELFAST MET procedures apply in the first instance. Once exhausted students may appeal to QUEEN'S Central Student Appeals Committee.
Queens University- Access programme	Academic Appeal Regulations (Taught Programmes) Academic & Student Affairs Queen's University Belfast	The Further Education College's Regulations in relation to review of assessment decisions, academic offences and student complaints shall apply. There is no right to appeal to QUB
*CPCAB	Download Internal Assessment Appeals and Complaints Guidance for Centres - CPCAB	If you feel at the conclusion of the college process has not been properly handled in accordance with this policy, you may raise this for review with the awarding organisation CPCAB www.cpcab.co.uk
Pearson	appeals-overview.pdf	