

## HIGHER EDUCATION ACADEMIC APPEALS PROCEDURE

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## 1. Introduction

The Hugh Baird University Centre (HBUC) academic appeals procedure is informed by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA); the Academic Registrars Council and QAA Quality Code **Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) UK Quality Code for Higher Education: Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints (April 2013)**.

- 1.1 Robust mechanisms exist at HBUC to ensure that assessment is fair and appropriate. Marking is conducted carefully and is subject to internal moderation and samples are checked by External Examiners who oversee the assessment process. However, the HBUC academic appeals procedure may be instigated if a student wishes to make an appeal against an assessment decision based upon their academic achievement or progress.
- 1.2 In line with the QAA Quality Code, an academic appeal may be defined as: *'A request for a review of a decision of an academic body charged with making decisions on student progress, assessment and awards'*.
- 1.3 Grounds for academic appeal may include:
  - Irregularities in the assessment process;
  - Perception of bias;
  - Error in the recording of marked work.
- 1.4 Grounds for academic appeal are not normally considered in relation to:
  - <sup>1</sup>Academic judgment or decisions made on the quality of work or the criteria being applied to mark work.
- 1.5 Other matters of dispute shall be termed "complaint" and are subject to the HBUC Complaints Procedure<sup>2</sup>.

In line with the QAA Quality Code, a complaint may be defined as:

*'The expression of a specific concern about matters that affect the quality of a student's learning opportunities'*.

## 2. Hugh Baird University Centre academic appeal aim

- 2.1 The aim will be to always deal with any academic appeal as quickly as possible and that the student/s are supported in this process with decisions made being clearly communicated.

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<sup>1</sup> An academic judgment is an opinion that can only be given by an academic expert.

<sup>2</sup> The HBUC complaints procedure is available in both paper and digital formats and may be viewed on the HBUC home page, located in the Wider Information Set (WIS) Policies and Procedures.

### 3. Introduction and promotion of the procedure

- 3.1 The academic appeals procedure will be communicated to all HBUC students as part of their induction process.
- 3.2 In the first instance if a student feels they may have grounds for academic appeal, they should contact their Personal Tutor or Course Leader for professional advice.
- 3.3 HBUC works in partnership with the Universities of Central Lancashire (UCLan) and Edge Hill University (EHU), as such students must be informed of their right to access the partner universities respective academic appeals procedures. These procedures are available for download from the HBUC home page, located in the Wider Information Set (WIS) Policies and Procedures. In this instance, it is a requirement to send a notification to the Secretary to the Executive Management Team (EMT), with responsibility for compliments, complaints, appeals and disciplinaries.

[UCLan Procedure for Appeals against Assessment Board Decisions.](#)  
[Edgehill University Appeals Procedure.pdf](#)

- 3.4 In the event of justifiable grounds for both appeal and complaint, the HBUC Higher Education Academic Leads (HEALs) shall jointly concur. In consultation with the appellant/complainant, it will be agreed the method by which both the appeal and complaint shall be resolved.

*In the case of handling both complaint and appeal it may be that one procedure is suspended, pending the completion of the other.*

- 3.5 Academic appeal is referred for investigation to the Higher Education Academic Lead (HEAL) responsible for Quality Assurance (QA). If the academic appeal actually involves the HEAL (S) another HEAL staff will initiate the investigation into the appeal.
- 3.6 Moderation for compliance with the HBUC academic appeals procedure, is through the Higher Education Leadership Meeting (HELM), who seek to uphold that the principles of transparency, fairness, consistency, equity and equal opportunities have been applied in the investigation and decision making of each academic appeal.
- 3.7 Academic Appeals will consider at each stage whether:
- the original decision was procedurally correct;
  - the original decision was taken on the basis of the correct information;
  - there is new, additional information to be considered;
  - there is valid reasons for this information not being presented for consideration previously;
  - the appellant has been treated fairly.
- 3.8 Where the HEALs finds there are no grounds for academic appeal, the HEAL (S) will provide the justification for this decision in writing. In this case, the student can implement the complaints procedures if dissatisfied with the reasons for the decision. Grounds for academic appeal not normally considered are stated in 1.4.

### 4. Academic appeals procedure

#### 4.1 The academic appeals procedure involves three stages:

- the informal resolution stage,
- the formal stage, and
- the review stage.

##### 4.1.1 **Informal resolution stage (stage 1)** The informal resolution stage seeks to resolve straightforward concerns swiftly.

- (i) At informal resolution stage, an academic appeal application form should be completed. The appeal application form is available in different formats allowing students to choose the most appropriate version to view. Electronically, the form may be downloaded from the Hugh Baird website; selecting the '**About Us**' Information tab, then '**Feedback**' option. Paper copies of the appeal form are available at each campus reception. The form should be submitted with any supporting evidence for consideration, to the Secretary to the EMT. The student must state all grounds on which he/she considers the decision should be changed and the remedy the student is seeking.
- (ii) The form must be submitted and received by the Secretary to the EMT within the specified time limit of **10 working days** from the initial receipt of the decision/issue, related to the academic appeal.
- (iii) The Secretary to the EMT will log all received appeals, monitor progress and outcomes, and provide the HEAL (S) with appeals data for compliance reports.
- (iv) In order to manage the progression of the appeal, the Secretary to the SMT / HEAL (QA) can ask the group to nominate one student to act as appellant for the group. Acknowledgement of the appeal, will be forwarded to all members of the appellant group from the Secretary to the SMT.
- (v) The academic appeal is referred to the HEAL (S) for consideration and investigation of supporting evidence presented. At any investigation interview the student has the right to be accompanied.
- (vi) A decision on the validity of the academic appeal, upheld or not, will be made within **10 working days** from the receipt of the appellant's initial academic appeal.
- (vii) In certain circumstances the decision outcome will not be possible within the 10 day time frame. Examples include, when the appeal is complex; if the appeal was submitted during a period of HBUC closure, or when key staff are temporarily absent. It may also be that the appellant is not available, as a result of necessary absence. When this is the case, evidence will need to be provided as to why the appellant's response is not possible. In all circumstances, the student will be informed in writing of the progress made towards the consideration of their appeal.
- (viii) The appellant will be notified of the decision of the HEAL (S) in writing within a specified time limit of **15 working days**, from the initial submission of the academic appeal.
- (ix) The informal resolution stage of the academic appeal procedure is normally completed within **15 working days**.

- (x) Where an academic appeal has not been resolved to the appellant's satisfaction, they may request their academic appeal to be further reviewed. This will lead to the **formal stage 2**, of the appeals procedure, via the HELM. An appellant has 10 working days from the notification of the academic appeal outcome to give notice in writing to the Secretary to the SMT of their intention to appeal, stating the grounds for appeal and providing appropriate documentary evidence to support the grounds for appeal.

#### 4.1.2 The formal stage (stage 2) The appropriate first stage for academic appeals.

- (i) This academic appeal stage is applied when the appellant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the informal resolution stage, or where informal resolution is not possible or appropriate due to the complexity or seriousness of the case. This should be recorded with the Secretary to the SMT.
- (ii) The formal stage will be dealt with by the Study Programme Co-ordinator, who is not involved at the informal resolution stage. The formal stage may include mediation or conciliation where appropriate. A decision can be made based upon the evidence submitted or it may be necessary to interview the appellant. At any investigation interview the appellant has the right to be accompanied.
- (iii) A Formal Stage academic appeal application form should be completed and submitted, supported with any additional evidence for consideration to the Secretary to the SMT who register it and then pass to the Study Programme Co-ordinator.
- (iv) A decision on the validity of the academic appeal, upheld or not, will be made within **10 working days** from the receipt of the appellant's initial academic appeal.
- (v) The appellant will be notified of decision of the Study Programme Co-ordinator in writing within a specified time limit of **15 working days** from the initial submission of the formal academic appeal.
- (vi) The formal stage of the academic appeal procedure is normally completed within **15 working days**.

#### 4.1.3 The review stage (stage 3) Instigated when a student is dissatisfied with the conclusion of the formal stage.

- (i) Where an academic appeal has not been resolved to the appellant's satisfaction, they may request their academic appeal to be further reviewed. This will lead to the final stage the **review stage 3**, of the academic appeals procedure. An appellant has **10 working days** from the notification of the appeal outcome to give notice in writing to the Secretary to the SMT of their intention to appeal, stating the grounds for appeal and providing appropriate documentary evidence to support the grounds for appeal.
- (ii) The review stage will be dealt with by the Dean of Higher Education and Access, whose involvement will only take place at the review stage.
- (iii) Assessment of the formal stage evidence submitted will be investigated. Consideration will be taken if the outcome of the formal stage was justified. This stage also allows the opportunity for the appellant to provide evidence not supplied at the previous formal stage. A decision can be made based upon the evidence submitted or it may be necessary to interview the appellant. At any investigation interview the appellant has the right to be accompanied.

- (iv) The appellant will be notified of the decision of the Dean of Higher Education and Access in writing within a specified time limit of 15 working days, from the initial submission of the academic appeal review stage.
- (x) The review stage of the academic appeal procedure is normally completed **within 15 working days**. A Completion of Procedures letter should be received by the student **within 21 working days**.
- (xi) Where an academic appeal has not been resolved to the appellant's satisfaction, they may request their academic appeal to receive an independent external review. The appellant should always be made aware of their right for further review through HBUC partner university appeals procedure or the OIA, the independent ombudsman service, following the academic appeal review stage. Guidance will be provided on rejection of the decision outcome at the Review Academic Appeal stage.

## **5. Annual review and publication of academic appeals**

- 5.1 The academic appeal procedure is reviewed annually, each May. The aim being to ensure the academic appeal procedure continues to meet developments in the HE environment and addresses any issues identified in the academic appeals summary report. The academic appeal report positively contributes to and complements other quality assurance systems informing, where relevant, any improvements required to enhance the student experience.
- 5.2 The HE Student Governor is invited to attend the annual review and contribute to any decision making in relation to changes to the procedure.
- 5.3 Anonymised appeals summary reports will be published and made available to Governors, staff and students with a view to improving awareness of the procedures themselves; but also to enhance the confidence of students and staff in the transparency and effectiveness of the academic appeals procedures.

## Appendix 1

<b>ACADEMIC APPEAL APPLICATION FORM</b>			
Self-referred to	Stage 1 – Informal resolution HEAL	Stage 2 – Formal Study Programme Co-ordinator	Stage 3 – Review Dean of HE
Date received/recorded by Secretary to the EMT			
Date received / actioned on all three stages as above	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Date Completion of Procedures letter issued. (Applies to academic appeal stage 3 ONLY).			Date:
1. Personal Details			
Student Name:			
Address for Correspondence:			
Telephone Number:			
Please provide the best number to contact you on			
2. Course Information			
Programme of Study:			
Year of Study: <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <sup>st</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <sup>nd</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <sup>rd</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> Other			
3. Assessment Review information			
Date of receipt of assessment outcome, related to this academic appeal:			
4. Name of assessor			
Name of academic Staff related to academic appeal :			
5. Grounds for Academic Appeal			
Reason why you do not agree with a previous decision made under this procedure (if applicable).			
Please list the grounds for academic appeal:			

## 6. Evidence for consideration

State any documentary evidence to be considered and enclose product evidence where available with this form.

## 7. Remedy suggested

## 8. Investigation outcome:

## 9. Declaration

I declare that the information provided on this form and accompanying documentation is valid.

I give consent that the information provided in this application form be disclosed to the relevant parties involved with the investigation of my academic appeal.

I understand that the anonymised data provided in this form will be used for review and made available in publicised reports in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

I confirm that I have read the Academic Appeals Procedure and associated Code of Practice.

Student signature:

Date:

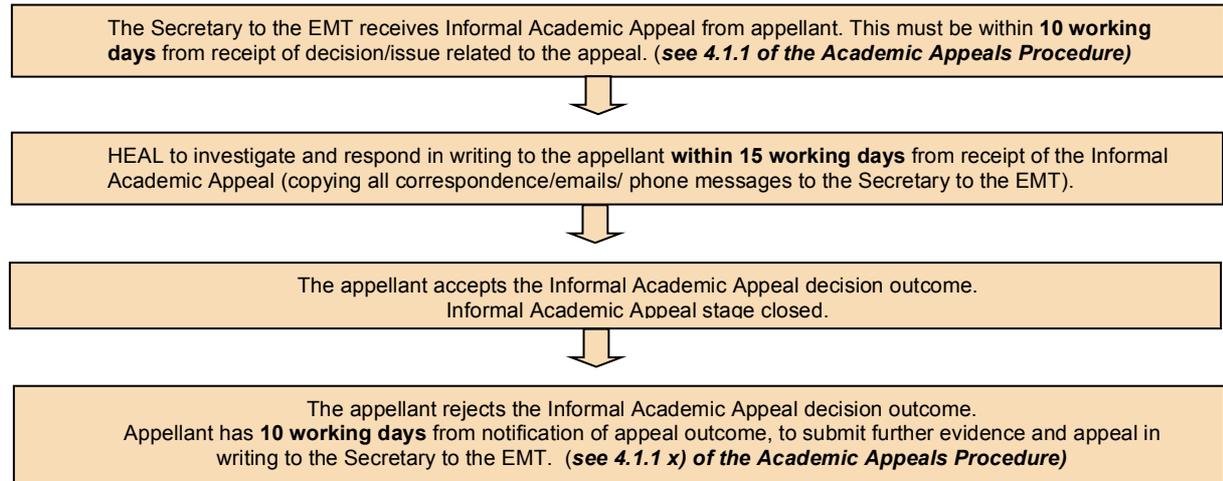
HEAL / Study Programme Co-ordinator/ Dean of Higher Education signature:

Date:

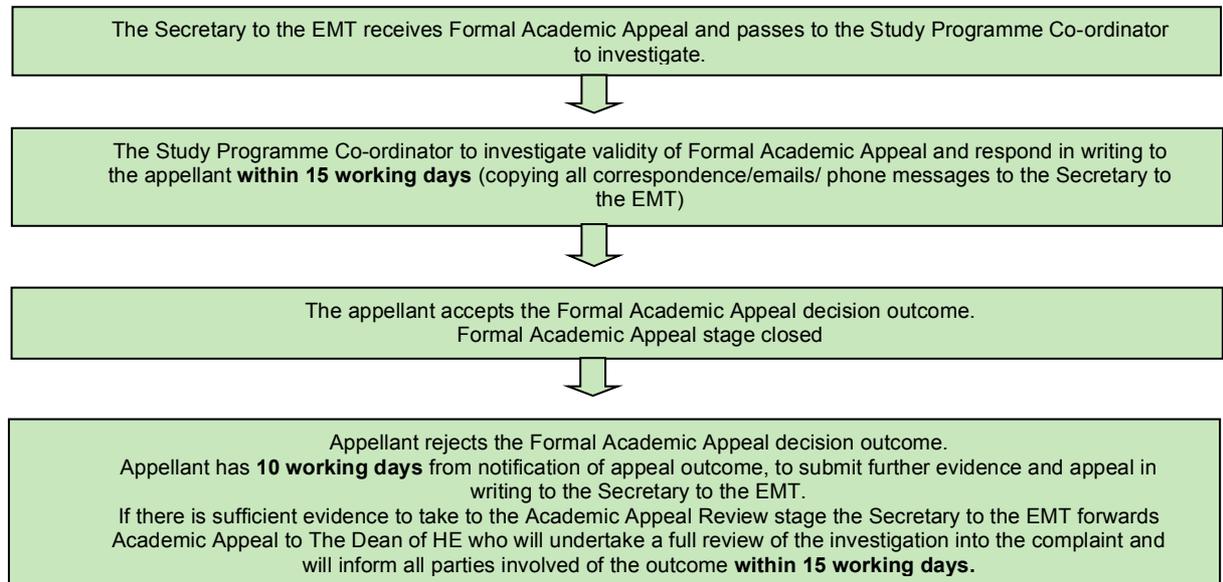
## Appendix 2

### ACADEMIC APPEALS PROCEDURE

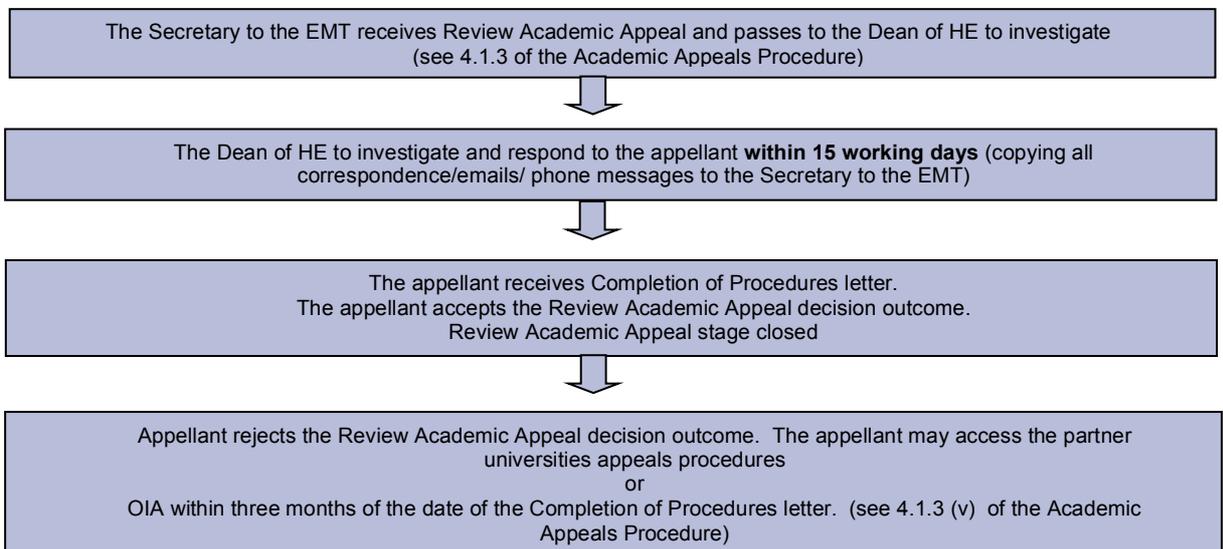
#### Summary of the Informal Stage



#### Summary of the Formal Stage



#### Summary of the Review Stage





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*To inspire, challenge and transform lives.*