

QUALITY ASSURANCE DOCUMENT QA 24 – ACADEMIC APPEALS PROCEDURE

INTRODUCTION

This procedure sets out the grounds and procedures through which students can make an academic appeal against the decision of the Subject Assessment Board or Progression and Award Board. It applies to all Arden University students including those undertaking an Arden University programme through a collaborative or partnership provider.

ACADEMIC APPEALS

An academic appeal is the process by which a student may request a review of the decision of the academic body charged with making decisions on student progress, assessment, and awards. The Subject Assessment Board the academic body is responsible for confirming assessment marks and the Progression and Awards Board is responsible for confirming progression and awards.

This procedure does not apply to complaints arising from a student's educational experience, academic and/or administrative support, or complaints relating to facilities or learning resources. In these instances, students should refer to *QA - 48 Student Complaints Procedure*.

In some instances, issues raised may fall into both the categories of appeals and complaints. Where this happens, students will be advised on which specific issues will be considered under which specific procedure.

GROUNDS FOR APPEAL

1. Arden University will only consider appeals on the following grounds:
 - 1.1 An assessment mark contains an arithmetical or other error of fact
 - 1.2 Defects or irregularities that were not known to the Subject Assessment Board or Progression and Award Board occurred in the assessment process, or the assessment, in whatever format, was not conducted in accordance with current regulation, or some other irregularity has occurred; and such defects or irregularities are shown to have adversely affected student performance
 - 1.3 There are significant exceptional personal circumstances that seriously affected a student's performance in assessment or studies, which were not known to the Subject Assessment Board or Progression and Award Board. The student must evidence good reason why circumstances could not be made known prior to the meeting of the relevant Board.
- 2 Appeals cannot be made based on disagreement with the academic judgement of the markers or because a student is unhappy with the mark awarded. Prior to confirmation by the Subject Assessment Board, assessments go through a robust system of marking, moderation, and where applicable external examination to check that marking schemes have been applied correctly and consistently and that the final marks awarded are fair.
- 3 Disagreement with the decision of the Progression and Award Board, in reaching a decision on a student's progression, or the final level of award based on the marks, grades and other information relating to a student's performance, cannot in itself constitute grounds for a request for reconsideration by a student.

- 4 The acceptance of an award does not limit the student's right to pursue an appeal within the provisions of these regulations.
- 5 The appeals process consists of an informal stage for early resolution, a formal stage, and a review stage.

INFORMAL STAGE FOR EARLY RESOLUTION

- 6 The informal stage may be implemented for students who wish to seek clarification on their grades or discuss concerns before submitting a formal appeal. Early resolution should be used where it is possible to quickly resolve issues that require minimal investigation such as clear errors of fact or irregularities that can be quickly and easily verified to avoid delays in submitting and processing formal appeals.
- 7 Students that wish to seek clarification on a grade, progression or award decision may submit the request to the Lecturer, Module Leader, Programme Team Leader, or a member of the Student Experience team. This should be done at the earliest opportunity and no later than 10 working days from receipt of a confirmed grade from the Subject Assessment Board or Progression and Award Board decision.
- 8 Where there is clear evidence of an error or irregularity in process that requires minimal investigation, a request will be made to the relevant departments to address and correct the issue. Where decisions have been confirmed by the Subject Assessment and/or Progression and Award Board, the Chair will be informed and asked to approve corrections and ensure that student records are updated accordingly.
- 9 Where it is not possible to resolve concerns through early resolution, students will be notified and may proceed to the formal appeal stage.

FORMAL APPEAL PROCESS

- 10 Students that wish to submit a formal appeal should complete the Academic Appeal Request, within 10 working days of receipt of a confirmed grade from the Subject Assessment Board or Progression and Award Board decision. Assessment marks are provisional until they have been ratified by the Subject Assessment Board, therefore formal appeals received prior to this will not be considered. Appeals submitted after the 10-working day deadline, will be deemed to be out of time and will not be considered, unless clear and substantial evidence is provided to demonstrate why the student was prevented from submitting the appeal by the deadline. The completed Academic Appeal Request, accessed, via the Arden University Student Portal, must clearly state the grounds for appeal and must be accompanied by relevant documentary evidence including any communication at the early resolution stage.
- 11 Once received, the appeal will be allocated to a designated member of the Quality Team who acknowledge receipt within 5 working days.
- 12 Exceptionally, a group of students may submit an appeal, for example, where it relates to a group assessment. To do so, the group should identify one student to act as a spokesperson who will then act on behalf of the group. The Quality nominee will contact each named student, to confirm that they wish to be part of the appeal.

- 13 The Quality nominee will undertake an initial investigation. Where the Appeal Request is incomplete, or where there appears to be missing information, the Quality nominee may contact the student and invite them to provide further information or evidence.
- 14 Where on initial investigation, an appeal appears to fall outside of the permitted timescales and grounds for appeal, a letter will be sent to the student to explain the reasons why the appeal does not meet the criteria. Students will have a further 10 working days if they wish to provide clarification and/or request that the appeal is reviewed formally.
- 15 Where appropriate, the Quality nominee may consult with the Chair of the relevant Subject Assessment Board or Progression and Award Board, or the relevant department head to obtain evidence of facts relating to the appeal.
- 16 The Quality nominee will assign the appeal to a senior academic staff member who has not been involved previously with the matter for consideration. This will normally be the relevant Head of School or their nominee. A meeting will be convened to review the appeal and determine the outcome.
- 17 The student will be notified in writing of the outcome of the appeal, including any decision to refer the matter to the relevant Subject Assessment Board or Progression and Award Board, within 20-working days of receipt of the appeal. Outcomes relating to group appeals will be issued to the group spokesperson, who is responsible for distributing the outcome to the other group members.
- 18 The outcome letter will set out the decision on whether there is a recommendation for the appeal to be upheld or rejected and will include a clear explanation for the decision and next steps. Notification of the final decision of the Subject Assessment Board or Progression and Award Board will be issued by the relevant board.
- 19 In exceptional cases, if it is not possible to meet these timescales, the student will be notified in writing of the reason for the delay and a revised timeframe for a response will be provided.
- 20 Where applicable, following a successful appeal the Chair or nominee of the Subject Assessment Board or Progression and Award Board, will take all necessary steps to ensure the student's record is amended to reflect the decision of the Subject Assessment Board or Progression and Award Board. If the outcome of the appeal permits the student to receive a different classification of degree or if the certificate has been issued, the student will be required to return the original award certificate before dispatch of the revised award certificate.

REQUEST FOR REVIEW

- 21 If a student is not satisfied with the outcome of the Formal Appeal, they may request a review of the outcome within 10 working days of the written appeal decision. Requests for review received after this deadline will not normally be considered.
- 22 A request for review may only be considered on the following grounds:
 - There is evidence of procedural irregularity at the Formal Appeal stage
 - There is new material information available which, for valid reasons, was not provided earlier in the process.

- 23 *A Stage Two Appeal Review Request*, available via the Arden University Student Portal should be completed and submitted within ten working days of dispatch of the Formal Appeal outcome letter.
- 24 Students should include full details on the grounds on which the review is being requested and indicate within their correspondence why the outcome of the Formal Appeal was not satisfactory.
- 25 The Quality nominee will acknowledge receipt of the request within five working days.
- 26 The Quality nominee will undertake an initial evaluation to check that the request has been submitted within the appropriate timescales, meets the criteria and is in the required format with includes supporting evidence where applicable.
- 27 The Quality nominee will convene a review panel to consider the concerns raised. This will be two senior academic staff members who were not involved in the consideration of the original academic appeal. Reviewers will be supported by the Head of Quality or nominee.
- 28 The reviewer may request additional information or evidence from the student, in which case the student will be notified in writing and given at least five working days to respond.
- 29 The outcomes available are as follows:
- That the appeal be upheld in whole or in part and a resolution offered
 - That the appeal be rejected
- 30 The student will be notified in writing of the outcome of the review within 20 working days of receipt of the original review request. The decision of the Stage 2 Review outcome is final, and a Completion of Procedures letter will be issued including details of the students right to appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) (see section 24).
- 31 In the event of an appeal being upheld whole or in part, recommendations should be made in respect of remedial action required. A report on the matter and any actions arising will be referred to the next meeting of the Students, Quality and Standards Committee.

INDEPENDENT ADJUDICATION

- 32 Students who have been issued with a Completion of Procedures letter may seek review by the Office for the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) if they remain dissatisfied with the University's final decision, providing the complaint is eligible under the OIA's rules of the complaints scheme as detailed on their website <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>. Complaints must be made within 12 months of the date of the Completion of Procedures letter.

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