

HE Academic Appeals Process

1.0 Introduction

This procedure has been informed by the advice and guidance within Concerns, Complaints and Appeals in the UK Quality Code, Awarding Organisation regulations and the office of the NI Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO). It aims to improve the student experience by making appropriate and consistent judgements. The student will be guaranteed confidentiality and will not be disadvantaged for using the process. The College acknowledges that the process aids in developing the student experience.

2.0 What this procedure covers

This Appeals Procedure does not cover Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) programmes as this is not delegated to the College. Students working towards an award made by LJMU should use the University's own appeal process which is available at: [Student Appeals | Liverpool John Moores University \(ljmu.ac.uk\)](http://www.ljmu.ac.uk).

All other awarding organisations fall under these regulations which cover all Higher Education students or those on a leave of absence.

An Academic Appeal is a request within the grounds itemised below to review decisions made by the Higher Education Assessment and Examination Board on progression, assessment and awards. An Academic Appeal can only be made after an Examination Board has sat and you have been advised of your marks/grades.

An Academic Appeal differs from a complaint and therefore appeals and complaints are considered under different processes. A complaint is defined as a formal expression of dissatisfaction made by either a student or group of students about the provision of their programme of study, related academic service or facility, or any other service provision provided by the College. Details of the Complaints and Compliments Policy can be found at the link [Complaints and Compliments Policy](http://www.serc.ac.uk) at www.serc.ac.uk. Should an issue fall under more than one process the College will work flexibly to maintain the rights of the student.

The Academic Appeals Procedure embodies the principles of natural justice, fairness, confidentiality, equity, objectivity and equality of opportunity. Students will be informed about the process in the student handbook, on the Higher Education SOP and policy page on the intranet and as part of induction and tutorial processes.

3.0 Grounds for Academic Appeal

The purpose of this procedure is to establish the facts and come to a reasonable and just resolution, which is timely, relevant, and proportionate. The grounds on which an Academic Appeal will be considered are:

- i. That the Higher Education Examination and Progress Board was unaware of **new information about an extenuating circumstance** which might have affected their decision concerning an individual student.

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.

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

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

An Academic Appeal will only be considered where there is deemed to be evidence to support one of the above grounds for appeal.

Disagreement with the academic judgement of assessors or a Board of Examiners cannot constitute grounds for an appeal.

The Appeals Panel will not consider an appeal if it is deemed to be vexatious or frivolous, if the forms have not been completed, or if supporting evidence has not been supplied.

4.0 Procedure for Academic Appeals

4.1 Stage 1 – Informal

Academic Appeals should be addressed to the Senior Customer Services Officer (SCSO) of the College using the Academic Appeals Forms (Appendices 2-3 below) within 10 working days* (or 7 working days for Ulster University Programmes) of the student being notified in writing of the decision they wish to appeal. Submissions can be emailed to academicappeals@serc.ac.uk or handed in to any main campus reception area.

** 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.*

It is the responsibility of the appellant to clearly state the grounds for their appeal and to produce evidence in support of either extenuating circumstances or procedural irregularities.

The appeal will be rejected if:

- i. There are no grounds for an appeal
- ii. The student has failed to substantially complete the form
- iii. The appeal is received outside the submission timeframe

The SCSO will forward the appeal to the Head of School who will determine if the appeal is valid i.e., meets one of the conditions of Grounds for Appeal.

The Head of School, Principal Lecturer, or nominated Deputy Head of School will meet (in person, by phone or email) with the student to try to resolve or provide support. This meeting should occur within 5 working days following receipt of the appeal. A student can bring someone to support them but there is no right to have legal representation. As a consequence of this meeting one of the following outcomes should be agreed;

- i. The student is content not to continue with their appeal
- ii. The student should proceed to the formal appeal stage

Students will in all cases be informed of the outcome of the informal stage in writing by the Head of School, Principal Lecturer, or nominated Deputy Head of School. Any student wishing to proceed to Stage 2 should inform the Senior Customer Services Officer in writing or by email to academicappeals@serc.ac.uk within 5 days of receiving the outcome letter of Stage 1.

4.2 Stage 2 – Formal

Where a student wishes to continue with their appeal the SCSO will notify the Head of Higher Education (QED) who will convene an Appeal Panel to hear the formal stage of the appeal. The Panel will be convened within 10 working days of receipt of a request by the student to continue the process. The College will try to convene a panel as swiftly as possible to expedite necessary actions, to ensure that the student is not disadvantaged.

To ensure independence and fairness, the Chair of the Appeals Panel and members must not have been party to any preceding decision that may have initiated the appeal. The Panel should be made up of at least two members of staff who have not been involved previously, one of whom must be a Deputy Principal, Head of the Quality Excellence and Development Unit, Head of Higher Education, or Head of School. (see Terms of Reference below).

Students have a right to be accompanied. Any person accompanying a student is present to support a student and as such should not contribute to the meeting unless at the behest of the student and only when invited to do so by the Chair. There is no right for a student to have legal representation at an Academic Appeals Panel. Each party will be given an equal opportunity to present their case.

If the student does not attend the Academic Appeals Panel, the Panel may continue to consider the appeal in the student's absence. The Panel may, if it wishes, adjourn the meeting if reasonable grounds for non-attendance have been provided (e.g., sickness absence). The outcome of the appeal may be:

- i. To uphold the appeal based on the evidence presented
- ii. To partially uphold the appeal based on the evidence presented
- iii. To dismiss the appeal

The Chair of the Appeals Panel will notify the student of the outcome in writing within 5 days of hearing the appeal. Copies of the outcome will be returned to the Senior Customer Services Officer via email to academicappeals@serc.ac.uk.

If the appeal is upheld or partially upheld the issue is referred back to the Board of Examinations to amend the record of the student accordingly in line with Awarding Organisation regulations.

The Appeals Process is summarised in Appendix 1 below and the relevant appeal forms are accessed in Appendices 2 and 3 below and in the [Assessment Regulations and Key Forms](#) section of the website.

5.0 Appeals to Awarding Organisation or the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman

If all internal procedures have been exhausted and the student remains dissatisfied they have the right to refer the appeal to the Awarding Organisation and then to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO). Further information about these processes can be found at www.nipso.org.uk

Please follow the link below for further information on how we treat your private data.

<https://www.serc.ac.uk/PrivacyNotice/HigherEducation>

6.0 Terms of Reference Academic Appeals Panel

Membership	Deputy Principal Curriculum Deputy Principal Student Support Services Head of Quality, Excellence and Development Head of Higher Education Heads of School Principal Lecturers Deputy Heads of School Student Representative
Chair	A Deputy Principal, Head of QED , Head of HE or Head of School may Chair
Conflict of Interest	No member may sit on the Appeals Panel if they have been associated with the original decision.
Quorum	A minimum of two members.
Frequency	As required.
Purpose	To implement the Academic Appeals Procedure and to ensure fairness and reliability of all judgements of formal decisions relating to the outcomes of College assessments and to, where appropriate, make recommendations of remedial action. The Academic Appeals Panel will be responsible to the College Management Team and report to the Higher Education Review Board.
Terms of Reference	1 To implement the College Academic Appeals Procedure to provide an opportunity for any individual student to appeal against an academic decision within the stated grounds. 2 To make decisions using the Academic Appeals Procedure. 3 To provide information on trends and outcomes to the College Management Team and the Higher Education Review Board as appropriate.

Appendix 1:

Appeals Process Summary

Step 1. Student receives result.

Step 2. Student has 10 working days in which to submit an appeal (or 7 working days for Ulster University Programmes).

Step 3. If the student submits an appeal and the Head of School confirms the grounds for appeal are valid, the Head of School, Principal Lecturer, or nominated Deputy Head of School will meet (in person, by phone or email) with the student to try to resolve or provide support. This Stage 1 meeting should occur within 5 working days following receipt of the appeal.

Step 4. Student is issued an outcome letter and has 5 working days to respond to the outcome letter.

Step 5. The student has the right to appeal the outcome letter and proceed to the formal Stage 2 of the appeals process.

Step 6. An Appeal Panel will be convened to discuss the appeal within 10 working days of the appeal being received.

Step 7. The student is informed of the Panel decision by letter within 5 working days.

Outcome of Appeal:

Option 1. If the appeal is upheld, the decision is referred back to the Head of Higher Education and the Board of Examinations to amend the student record accordingly.

Option 2. If the appeal is not upheld and the original decision is confirmed by the Panel, and the student accepts the decision, the appeal is now closed.

Option 3. If the appeal is not upheld and the student contests the decision, the student has the right to refer the appeal to the Awarding Organisation and then to NIPSO.

Appendix 2:

Academic Appeal Form 1: Appeal on the Basis of New Information

SOUTH EASTERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

PRIVACY NOTICE: Information gathered on this form will be processed within the provisions of the Data Protection Act (2018) and the UK GDPR and used for the purpose of recording and managing academic appeals. The College is permitted to process personal data where there is a 'lawful basis' to do so. This processing is necessary for the performance of your contract. Your information may be shared with relevant College staff for the purpose of recording and managing academic appeals.

Further information on data protection and your rights are available on our website <https://www.serc.ac.uk/customer-privacy>

Academic Appeal Form 1: Appeal on the Basis of New Information

NOTES
<p>A student may appeal against a decision on his or her academic progress on the basis of evidence of extenuating circumstances not known to the Board when the decision was made. N.B. The academic judgement of examiners is not open to appeal.</p> <p>The regulations require that relevant written medical evidence, or evidence of compassionate circumstances must be presented. Evidence of ill-health must be authenticated by the student's medical adviser. Self-certification is not acceptable.</p> <p>The completed form will be considered by an Appeals Panel acting on behalf of the examinations board which made the original decision. The student will be interviewed if he/she wishes and may be accompanied. Legal representation is not permissible.</p> <p>An explanation on student appeals is available in the HE Student Handbook, Programme Moodle Site, and Higher Education Programmes SOP on the SERC Website.</p>
PLEASE COMPLETE ALL SECTIONS OF THIS FORM
SECTION A: TO BE COMPLETED BY STUDENT (please complete legibly suitable for copying)
1. Name (in full):
2. Student ID No:
3. Address (for all correspondence):
Email:
4. Contact Telephone No:
5. Programme Title and Code:

6. Academic Year of Study:

7. Campus:

8. Presentation of new evidence of illness or other extenuating circumstances

Failure to complete this section may result in your appeal being rejected.

- a. Specify factors relevant to your academic performance which were not known when the original decision was taken (attach copies of medical certificates or other supporting material); this **must** be new information (see Section 9 below);

- b. Explain why the information now being supplied was not made available sooner;

N.B. The original decision of the Board will be confirmed without the opportunity for interview if:

- a. it is determined that you have not submitted any new information or you have not provided a satisfactory explanation for your failure to supply the information by the date(s) prescribed in the regulations in the HE Appeals section of the HE Programmes SOP;

or

- b. there is no contemporaneous, independent, medical or other evidence to support the appeal.

9. Previous presentation of evidence of illness or other extenuating circumstances

If you have already submitted to the College, at any time during the current academic session, evidence of illness or other extenuating circumstances relevant to your academic performance, please indicate below:

- i. the approximate date on which you forwarded these to the College:

- ii. the person or office to which they were addressed:

- iii. the nature of the illness or other extenuating circumstances and the period over which they could have affected your academic performance:

N.B. The above information is for advice of Appeals Panel only and is not for the purpose of reconsideration.

10. Decision on your academic progress against which you wish to appeal

11. Interview

You may not be called to interview if the evidence you have submitted is deemed to be sufficient for upholding your appeal.

i. Do you wish to be interviewed by the Appeals Panel? Yes/No

ii. Do you wish to be accompanied at interview? Yes/No

iii. If Yes, give the name and position of this person.

N.B. The person accompanying you **cannot** be a legal representative. It is your responsibility to arrange for this person to attend.

Signature:

Date:

On completion of this form the student should return form as follows:

TO: Senior Customer Services Officer at any main campus reception point

or via email to academicappeals@serc.ac.uk

BY: Within 10 working days of receiving results (7 working days for Ulster University programmes)

Appendix 3:

Academic Appeal Form 2: Appeal on Basis of Procedural or Other Irregularities

SOUTH EASTERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

PRIVACY NOTICE: Information gathered on this form will be processed within the provisions of the Data Protection Act (2018) and the UK GDPR and used for the purpose of recording and managing academic appeals. The College is permitted to process personal data where there is a 'lawful basis' to do so. This processing is necessary for the performance of your contract. Your information may be shared with relevant College staff for the purpose of recording and managing academic appeals.

Further information on data protection and your rights are available on our website <https://www.serc.ac.uk/customer-privacy>

Academic Appeal Form 2: Appeal on Basis of Procedural or Other Irregularities

NOTES

A student may appeal against a decision on his or her academic progress on the basis of procedural or other irregularities in the conduct of the examinations, or in other forms of assessment, or in the decision-making process.

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

An explanation on student appeals is available in the HE Student Handbook, Programme Moodle Site, and Higher Education Programmes SOP on the SERC Website.

PLEASE COMPLETE ALL SECTIONS OF THIS FORM

SECTION A: TO BE COMPLETED BY STUDENT

(please complete legibly suitable for copying)

1. Name (in full):

2. Student ID No:

3. Address (for all correspondence):

Email:

4. Contact Telephone No:

5. Programme Title and Code:

6. Academic Year of Study:

7. Campus:

8. Statement by Student

Please provide details of the procedural or other irregularities relating to coursework or examinations, or in the decision-making process associated with your academic progress.

9. Decision on your academic progress against which you wish to appeal**10. Interview**

If it is established that there is a case for an appeal:

- | | | |
|------|---|--------|
| i. | Do you wish to be interviewed by the Appeals Panel? | Yes/No |
| ii. | Do you wish to be accompanied at interview? | Yes/No |
| iii. | If Yes, give the name and position of this person. | |

N.B. The person accompanying you **cannot** be a legal representative. It is your responsibility to arrange for this person to attend.

Signature:

Date:

On completion of this form the student should return form as follows:

TO: Senior Customer Services Officer at any main campus reception point
or via email to academicappeals@serc.ac.uk

BY: Within 10 working days of receiving results (7 working days for Ulster University programmes).

Appendix 4:

Record of Outcome of Stage 1 Informal Appeal

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE HOS/DHOS
NAME:
1. Name of Student and Programme of Study:
2. Nature of Appeal: i. New Evidence Yes/No ii. Procedural Irregularities Yes/No
3. Where new evidence has been presented, please comment on outcome of Stage 1 clarifying if the issue is valid or not and the resolution reached:
4. Date and Nature of Communication with Student: (Please attach copies of written communication)
Signature by HOS/DHOS: Date:
NB: This form must be returned immediately to the Head of Higher Education Stuart Rankin srankin@serc.ac.uk and copied to the Senior Customer Services Officer via academicappeals@serc.ac.uk

**Appendix 5:
Academic Appeals Panel Outcome Form**

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE APPEALS PANEL
1. Date of Appeals Panel:
2. Membership of Appeals Panel:
3. Name of Chairperson:
4. Nature of Appeal: i. New Evidence Yes/No ii. Procedural Irregularities Yes/No
5. Where new evidence has been presented, please comment on: i. this evidence, and whether or not the student has provided a satisfactory explanation for failure to supply the evidence by the date prescribed in the Regulations.
6. Indicate whether the initial decision of the board is: i. Unchanged Yes/No ii. Amended Yes/No
7. If the decision is to be amended please specify the nature of the amendment: New Decision:

8. Modules to be taken/retaken:
Module Name: Outcome:
Module Name: Outcome:
Module Name: Outcome:
Module Name: Outcome:
Module Name: Outcome:
Module Name: Outcome:
Signature: Date:
NB: This form must be returned immediately to the Head of Higher Education Stuart Rankin srankin@serc.ac.uk and copied to the Senior Customer Services Officer via academicappeals@serc.ac.uk