



Higher Academic Appeals Policy

2023/2024

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that DN Colleges Group (DNCG) provides excellent customer service and continually improves the quality of the student experience. DNCG is committed to facilitating and responding appropriately to any academic appeal made relating to the academic service provided on any Higher Education programmes offered.
- 1.2 DNCG is committed to investigating and resolving academic appeals fairly, quickly and respectfully using this policy, which is based on the Office for the Independent Adjudicator's Good Practice Framework and the Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Concerns, Academic appeals and Appeals.
- 1.3 Many academic appeals can be resolved informally, and you are encouraged to raise concerns or give feedback as early as possible to support a successful early resolution. We encourage you to attempt informal early resolution, where possible, by speaking directly to your Programme Leader or Deputy Head of School in the first instance. Formal proceedings should then be initiated if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of this initial attempt at resolution.

2 Scope

- 2.1 This policy sets out the measures in place at DNCG for students to raise an academic appeal regarding their studies on a Higher Education programme. This policy outlines the formal procedure for raising an academic appeal and should be followed if early informal resolution (see 1.3) is unsuccessful or unsatisfactory.
- 2.2 An Academic Appeal is defined as "a request for a review of a decision of an academic body charged with decisions on student progression, assessment and awards."
- 2.3 This policy applies to the decisions of the Module or Programme Board of Examiners to which powers have been delegated by the awarding institution, decisions of Mitigating Circumstances Committees, Academic Misconduct decisions and any decisions made by the DNCG Student Cases Committee;
- 2.4 This policy applies to any student enrolled on a Higher Education programme of study at any DNCG campus.
- 2.5 Academic appeals may be made by completing the appropriate form (Appendix 1) and submitting it, with any evidence, in writing to the HE Quality Office at UCNL or University Campus Doncaster, or by email to qualityhe@dncolleges.ac.uk . In order for us to investigate your academic appeal properly, please provide any documents you have in support of your appeal/all relevant information to us at this stage.
- 2.6 Throughout the investigation of an academic appeal, the focus will be on resolution, rather than apportioning blame, and if the investigation identifies problems in our services, we will put in place measures to mitigate against future recurrence.
- 2.7 This document will apply only to academic appeals. Other matters of dispute involving a student and DNCG will be termed "complaints". A complaint is defined as the expression of a concern about the provision of a course or programme of study, or a related academic service and is subject to consideration in accordance with the DNCG Higher Education Complaints Policy.

3 Responsibilities

- 3.1 DNCG is committed to thoroughly investigating any academic appeals and will aim to:
- thoroughly investigate any academic appeals, and will provide a response and ensure that any outcomes are used to inform future quality improvements
 - treat all appellants fairly
 - communicate clearly and in a timely manner the outcomes of any investigation, including identification of next steps, where applicable
 - support colleagues to undertake investigations fairly, ethically and respectfully via staff training and regular communications
 - act on helpful and constructive comments made by our customers during the academic appeals process to improve our service
- 3.2 Normally, academic appeals should be raised within fifteen working days of the date on which the notice of recommendation or decision was served in writing, including by email. We may consider academic appeals made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

4 Definitions and/or Relevant Legislation

- 4.1 **Academic Appeal** - a request for a review of a decision of an academic body charged with decisions on student progression, assessment and awards.

Examiner - means anyone involved in the assessment process or awarding of marks. This includes placements mentors, tutors, supervisors etc.

Programme - means any academic activity undertaken by a student for the purpose of achieving the award of credits, a certificate, a diploma or degree, or for the purpose of achieving progression as prescribed in the relevant regulations.

- 4.2 Students studying on Higher Education programmes may be subject to regulations and policies belonging to the validating university, in relation to academic and quality assurance matters, available from:

University of Hull

<https://www.hull.ac.uk/choose-hull/university-and-region/key-documents/quality>

University of Lincoln

<https://secretariat.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk/university-regulations/>

Sheffield Hallam University

<https://students.shu.ac.uk/regulations/>

University of Huddersfield

<https://www.hud.ac.uk/policies/registry/regs-taught/>

Pearson

<https://hnglobal.ighernationals.com/login>

5 The Policy

- 5.1 Academic appeals may be made by completing the appropriate form (Appendix 1) and submitting it, with any evidence, in writing to the HE Quality Office at UCNL or University Campus Doncaster, or by email to qualityhe@dncolleges.ac.uk. In order for us to investigate your academic appeal properly, please provide any documents you have in support of your appeal/all relevant information to us at this stage. Normally, academic appeals should be raised within fifteen working days of the date on which the notice of recommendation or decision was served in writing, including by email. We may consider academic appeals made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

5.2 Subject to 2.3 above, a student may appeal against the following recommendations or decisions:

- Termination from a programme of study for non-compliance with the expected standards of academic integrity, conduct and/or submission requirements of the programme
- Termination of a programme of study on grounds of professional unsuitability of professional misconduct; including and Professional Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements
- Exclusion from the assessments for the module
- To award or refuse to award the student the qualification or classification of the qualification
- Any other academic decisions including decisions of the Module or Programme Board of Examiners to which powers have been delegated by awarding institutions, decisions of Mitigating Circumstances Committees, Repeat Year and Academic Misconduct decisions.

5.3 A student may appeal on one or more of the following grounds:

- There is evidence that was not brought to the attention of the relevant Committee, Board of Examiners or Panel at the time of their decision, that would have led them to a different decision; and there is good reason why the evidence was not presented at the appropriate time
- Demonstrable procedural irregularities in the conduct of the assessment process of such a nature as to cause reasonable doubt as to whether the result would have been different if they had not occurred
- Evidence of prejudice or bias on the part of one or more of the examiners and/or member of the relevant Committee, Board of Examiners or Panel.

5.4 The following are not normally considered to be legitimate grounds for appeal:

- Where a student questions the exercise of academic judgement, that is, the decision made by academic staff on the quality of the work itself
- Where a student disagrees with the conclusions reached by the panel which considered their mitigating circumstances, unless further evidence can be provided as in 5.3 above
- Lack of awareness or knowledge of the relevant regulatory framework
- Lack of awareness or knowledge of the requirements for the submission of mitigating circumstances and extensions.

5.5 Academic appeals must not be submitted to individual members of staff, as this may compromise the investigation process, and will not be processed according to the scope of this policy. Staff appointed as investigating officers must not have been involved in matters leading to the academic appeal and must be free of actual or perceived conflicts of interest.

5.6 The process for handling academic appeals is detailed below:

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

- We encourage you to firstly try and resolve the issue informally, either by speaking directly with those concerned, your programme leader or Deputy Head of School.
- Possible resolution could include;
 - *Giving more information or a more detailed explanation*
 - *Suggesting solutions*
 - *Providing an apology where appropriate*
 - *Recommending further assistance or support*
- Should informal resolution not settle the issue, then you should proceed to Stage 2: Making an academic appeal

Stage 2: Making an academic appeal

- Academic appeals must be raised using AA1 Higher Education Student Academic appeals form (Appendix 1), and any supporting evidence should also be included at this stage.

- Academic appeals will be received and logged by the HE Quality Office and an investigating officer will be appointed. This will normally be a Head of School (external to the school where academic appeal is associated with) or appropriate manager.
- You will be notified that the academic appeal form has been received and the investigation will commence.

Stage 3: Investigation of academic appeal

- The Investigating Officer will undertake an investigation into the academic appeal, and may, at their discretion, contact you and/or any individuals implicated within the academic appeal.
- You will normally be contacted by the Investigating Officer within 10 working days of receipt of the academic appeal. If this timescale is to be extended, you will be kept informed of progress.
- If you are required to attend a meeting as part of the investigation, you may be accompanied by a DNCG student or employee. However, any accompanying persons may not speak for the complainant or attend in place of the complainant. Legal representation will not be facilitated.
- The Investigating Officer will complete the form AA2 Initial Investigation Stage (Appendix 2) to record findings. This document will not be shared with you due to the possibility of recording sensitive or confidential information which may compromise the privacy of individuals concerned. This form is for office use only as evidence that an investigation has taken place.
- The investigating officer will decide, *based on the available evidence*, the outcome of the investigation into the academic appeal.
- The appeal will be rejected where it falls within those areas which do not constitute legitimate grounds for appeal or fall outside of the decisions which can be appealed in section 5.3 of this document. The Student will have the right to request a review of this decision.
- Where grounds for an appeal have been demonstrated, but where no informal resolution has been agreed, an Appeals Panel may be convened.
- The Appeals Panel will consist of the following members:
The Chair of the Appeal Panel, who will normally be the Head of Quality and Regulation (or their nominee) unless there is a conflict of interest, in which case an appropriate authorised representative will be appointed.
Two senior academic colleagues who must not be members of the School to which the student is enrolled to, or are responsible for delivery on the programme concerned.
A Quality Officer to take minutes.
- The panel meeting will be held as soon as is reasonably practicable, but normally within 25 working days of the decision that grounds for appeal have been demonstrated.
- The student will be informed in writing of the time, date and venue of the meeting with at least 5 working days' notice.
- The student must confirm their attendance at the appeals panel and also confirm if they will be accompanied by a supporter.
- The student will have the right to be heard in person by the Appeal Panel. They may be accompanied by a supporter. The student must notify the Officer of the Appeals Panel of the details of any supporter at least 5 working days prior to the panel meeting. The supporter is permitted to speak on the student's behalf but the student will be required to answer any questions put to them and to provide information directly as required by the Appeals Panel.
- The student may call any witness or other person whom they deem qualified to provide relevant evidence, which may include representatives from the Academic Unit against whose decision the appeal was lodged.
- The Appeal Panel may call any other witness or other person whom it deems qualified to provide expert advice.
- The duty of the Appeal Panel will be to consider all the evidence presented and determine whether the appeal should be upheld or rejected by deciding whether any or all of the grounds have been satisfied.

- Where the Appeal Panel determines that the appeal should be rejected, the student will be informed of this decision in writing. This letter will advise the student of their right to request a review of that decision.
- Where the Appeal Panel determines that the Appeal should be upheld, it will declare the decision against which the appeal was lodged invalid and make one or more of the following decisions as appropriate:
 - That the relevant Board/Committee or panel be required to reconsider its decision in light of the evidence presented.
 - That in the case of a decision resulting from assessment of a piece of coursework, dissertation, project or similar, the student be permitted to submit a fresh piece of work within a deadline determined by the Appeal Panel and for a fresh decision to be made on the basis of its fair assessment
 - That in the case of a decision resulting from an examination mark, the student be entitled to sit a further examination as a first attempt (or second attempt if the appeal is against a resit mark)
 - That the student be reinstated and permitted to proceed with their programme of study
 - That another decision be made as the Appeal Panel deems appropriate
 - Any decision detailed above may be accompanied by guidance from the Appeal Panel to the relevant Board/Committee/Panel.
 - The Appeal Panel will not be empowered to award any credit or any other qualification (including achievement of progression requirements) or raise or lower a mark or degree classification.
 - The Appeal Panel will be empowered to make any additional recommendation relating to issues arising from the appeal as it deems appropriate, for example, advice for the future on the way any similar decision-making process is conducted.

Stage 4: Communication of outcome

- The HE Quality Office will formally communicate the outcome of the appeal, normally via email and/or letter, to the appellant within the timescale identified, clearly addressing all points raised in the original academic appeal and indicating the outcome of the appeal.
- The outcome of the academic appeal will be summarised and communicated to you, normally within 5 working days of the academic appeal panel. In some cases, it may take longer to conduct a thorough investigation, and in these cases the HE Quality Office will communicate any expected delays to you.
- The outcome of the investigation may be any of the following: Upheld, Partially Upheld or Not Upheld. If the outcome is upheld or partially upheld, there will be some resolution offered/described within the communication.
- If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation, you may appeal the decision within 10 working days of the response

Stage 5: Appeal process

- Appeals must be raised using the form RAS1 Review and Appeal Stage (Appendix 3), and must be raised within 10 working days of the date of the outcome letter. No further or new evidence may be introduced to the investigation at this stage, without good reason, as the appeal will be based on the original academic appeal and original evidence gathered by the investigating officer.
- Any appeals will normally be referred to the Assistant Principal (HE), who will review the evidence and investigating officers report against the original academic appeal and grounds for appeal.
- Appeals will normally be responded to within 10 working days of the appeal being received.

Stage 6: Completion of procedures

- Once you have exhausted the process covered in this policy (ie has gone through all above stage), an internal Completion of Procedures letter will be issued which will confirm this.
- If no appeal is made within 10 working days, an internal Completion of Procedures letter will be issued, which will confirm that the original academic appeal has been closed according to this policy.

Stage 7: Escalation to external agencies

- You have the right to escalate your academic appeal to your awarding institution, following academic appeal procedures available from:
 - **University of Hull**
<https://www.hull.ac.uk/choose-hull/university-and-region/key-documents/quality>
 - **University of Lincoln**
<https://secretariat.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk/university-regulations/>
 - **Sheffield Hallam University**
<https://students.shu.ac.uk/regulations/>
 - **University of Huddersfield**
<https://www.hud.ac.uk/policies/registry/regs-taught/>
 - **Pearson**
<https://hnglobal.highernationals.com/login>
- You have the right to escalate your academic appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). However, the right to escalate only exists where all internal procedures have been exhausted. You are only eligible to escalate an academic appeal once you have received a Completion of Procedures (COP) letter from the College.
- Information about submitting a academic appeal to the OIA is available on the [OIA website](#).

All stages of the above process are summarised in a flowchart in Appendix 5.

6 Relevant Policies and Procedures

- 6.1 Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA): www.oiahe.org.uk

7 Who to Contact with Queries

- 7.1 Academic appeals may be made by contacting the HE Quality Office at UCNL or University Campus Doncaster, or by email to qualityhe@dncolleges.ac.uk. In order for us to investigate your academic appeal properly, please provide any documents you have in support of your academic appeal/all relevant information to us at this stage.

8 Communication

- 8.1 This policy will undergo scrutiny and approval at the Higher Education Academic Board, and will be communicated via publication on the websites and student intranet.

9 Authorisation

Policy Holder:	Rob Brown, Head of Quality and Regulation (Higher Education)
Approval Committee:	Higher Education Academic Board
Approval Date:	13 September 2023
Next Review Date:	June 2027

Appendix 1

AA1 Higher Education Student Academic appeals Pro-Forma

The Student Academic appeals Procedure provides a formal means through which students can pursue an academic appeal. This form should be completed as clearly and succinctly as possible.

A student may appeal against the following recommendations or decisions:

- Termination from a programme of study for non-compliance with the expected standards of academic integrity, conduct and/or submission requirements of the programme;
- Termination of a programme of study on grounds of professional unsuitability of professional misconduct; including and Professional Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements;
- Exclusion from the assessments for the module;
- To award or refuse to award the student the qualification or classification of the qualification;
- Any other academic decisions including decisions of the Module or Programme Board of Examiners to which powers have been delegated by awarding institutions, decisions of Mitigating Circumstances Committees, Repeat Year and Academic Misconduct decisions.

A student may appeal on one or more of the following grounds:

- There is evidence that was not brought to the attention of the relevant Committee, Board of Examiners or Panel at the time of their decision, that would have led them to a different decision; and there is good reason why the evidence was not presented at the appropriate time;
- Demonstrable procedural irregularities in the conduct of the assessment process of such a nature as to cause reasonable doubt as to whether the result would have been different if they had not occurred;
- Evidence of prejudice or bias on the part of one or more of the examiners and/or member of the relevant Committee, Board of Examiners or Panel.

The following are not normally considered to be legitimate grounds for appeal:

- Where a student questions the exercise of academic judgement, that is, the decision made by academic staff on the quality of the work itself;
 - Where a student disagrees with the conclusions reached by the panel which considered their mitigating circumstances, unless further evidence can be provided as in 5.3 above;
 - Lack of awareness or knowledge of the relevant regulatory framework;
 - Lack of awareness or knowledge of the requirements for the submission of mitigating circumstances and extensions.
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Before completing this form: Please remember that most issues are most effectively resolved through early resolution

You are advised to attempt to resolve any concerns either directly with those concerned or with your Programme Leader, Academic Advocate or personal tutor. You are then strongly advised to follow the early resolution phase through the relevant Higher Education Directorate Leadership Team.

Part A – PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Name:	
2. Student Number: Campus:	
3. Programme:	

4. Level of Study:	
5. Address for Correspondence:	
6. Email Address:	
7. Phone Number:	

Part B – DETAILS OF THE ACADEMIC APPEAL

<p>1. Please describe how you have pursued the early resolution options as described in the Academic appeals Procedure document. Please include details with all those you have spoken to/communicated with</p> <p>If you have not sought to resolve your concerns informally, please state why not</p>	
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<p>2. Please summarise the precise details of your academic appeal. It is <u>your</u> responsibility to identify, clearly, all the points of your academic appeal</p> <p>Your statement should include (as appropriate) details of the events to whom or what your academic appeal relates, relevant dates and an explanation of the negative impact on you</p> <p>You must provide documentary evidence to support your academic appeal (as appropriate) and append it to this form</p>	
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<p>Please note that any senior person conducting an investigation may conduct an interview with you and tak detailed notes</p>	
<p>3. Without prejudice, please indicate what you hope the result will be</p>	

Student Declaration

I can confirm that I have read the Student Academic Appeals Procedure and that all information given on this form and documentary evidence attached is a true statement of facts to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signed:

Date:

IMPORTANT: PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF THIS FORM AND ANY EVIDENCE YOU SUBMIT AS YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO PRODUCE IT IF YOUR ACADEMIC APPEAL PROGRESSES TO FURTHER STAGES IN THE PROCEDURE

Office Use Only

<p>Date Received:</p>		<p>Date forwarded and name of Senior Manager to investigate:</p>	
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Appendix 2

AAIR Academic appeal Investigation Report

The senior manager assigned to the academic appeal must carry out a thorough, robust and impartial investigation, ensuring that all of the evidence relating to the academic appeal is examined.

This form is to be completed as the formal record of meetings held and the summary for recommendations.

PART A – ACADEMIC APPEAL OUTCOME

1. Name of Appellant	
2. Please state if the academic appeal is substantiated, in whole or in part in your view	
3. If the academic appeal is wholly or partially upheld, please state the remedy (ies) recommended to the student together with any actions which need to be taken (immediately or for the future)	

Part B – SUMMARY OF THE INVESTIGATION

4. Please summarise the main points arising from your investigation, your assessment of the evidence submitted, the meetings you have conducted which have led you to the formal decision	
5. Please list the documentation and evidence presented; any additional evidence you gathered and from whom; dates and times of all meetings held/ visits made 6. NB all of the above must be formally documented and evidence submitted with this report.	

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 3

Student Academic appeals Pro-Forma

Review and Appeal Stage – RAS1

This form is designed for students requesting a review of a academic appeal which has already been considered by a designated senior manager as part of the formal procedure stage.

Before completing this form:

You should have received a letter following investigation of your academic appeal through the formal procedure stage. This form must be completed and submitted to the **Executive Secretary to the Principal of North Lindsey College or the Executive Assistant to the Chief Executive at Doncaster College** within 10 working days from receipt of your letter.

Please ensure that you append a copy of your original AA1 form together with any documentary evidence. Please note that you cannot, at this stage, add any further concerns or issues to your academic appeal.

Part A – PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Name of Student:	
2. Enrolment Number: Campus location:	
3. Address for Correspondence:	
4. Email Address:	
5. Phone Number:	

Part B – REASONS FOR REQUESTING A REVIEW

6. Please provide a statement as to why the decision of the senior manager who investigated your academic appeal was not satisfactory (your reasons must be clearly stated and relate to an objective factor such as a procedural issue, failure to consider the evidence presented or over the reasonableness of the outcome).	
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<p>7 Please cite the evidence you are submitting to support your review request.</p> <p><u>Note:</u> you may not introduce at the Review and Appeal stage any evidence which was available to you but had not been submitted at the earlier stage.</p>	
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Student Declaration

I can confirm that I have read the Student Academic appeals Procedure and that all information given on this form and documentary evidence attached is a true statement of facts to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signed:

Date:

IMPORTANT: PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF THIS FORM AND ANY EVIDENCE YOU SUBMIT AS YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO PRODUCE IT IF YOUR ACADEMIC APPEAL PROGRESSES TO FURTHER STAGES IN THE PROCEDURE

Office Use Only

Date Received:		Principal Review Scheduled:		Principal's Decision:	
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Appendix 4 Completion of Procedures Letter Template

Please note - the format may be adjusted to meet the individual circumstances of a academic appeal provided that the key points below are included.

Dear [*Name of complainant*]

Completion of Procedures Letter

This letter confirms that the internal procedures of this, the DN Colleges Group, in relation to your Academic appeal have now been completed.

The issue(s) that you raised were: [*brief details*]

The issue(s) that were considered in relation to your academic appeal was / were*: [*brief summary of the academic appeal etc*].

The final decision of is* [*detail*] because [*reasons*].

The procedure applied was as required in the DN Colleges Group for academic appeals relating to Higher Education.

The DN Colleges Group subscribe to the independent scheme for the review of student academic appeals. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome you may be able to apply for a review of your academic appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) provided that the academic appeal you take to the OIA is eligible under its Rules.

Should you decide to make a academic appeal to the OIA, your OIA Academic appeal Form **must be received by the OIA** within **12 months** of the date of this letter, that is, it must be received by the OIA **on or before** [*insert date - e.g. if the Completion of Procedures Letter is dated 9 July 2024, this date should be 9 July 2025*].

[Include here any factors of which the provider is aware which mean that it is particularly important for the student to bring the academic appeal promptly.]

You can fill in the OIA's academic appeal form online or download a copy from the OIA website. <http://oiahe.org.uk/making-a-academic-appeal-to-the-oia/oia-academic-appeal-form.aspx>. The OIA also has information and guidance for students on their website and this can be found at <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students/>. Alternatively, you can telephone or write to the OIA for a form. **You should send a copy of this letter to the OIA with your OIA Academic appeal Form.**

Guidance on submitting a academic appeal to the OIA and the OIA Academic appeal Form can also be found on the OIA's website <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students/how-to-complain-to-us/>.

Please note that the OIA will normally only review issues that have been dealt with through the provider's internal procedures.

Yours sincerely

[Authorised signatory]

Appendix 5 Summary of Academic appeals Procedure

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

Once informal resolution has concluded, you should then proceed to Stage 2 of the process.

