



University of  
Chester

## Assessment

### Academic Appeals Policy

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## Forms

Academic Appeal Form AA-01

Academic Appeal Form AA-02

Academic Appeal Form AA-03

## 1. Introduction

The Academic Appeals Procedure allows students of the University of Chester, and those undertaking a University of Chester award at another provider, to raise concerns about decisions affecting their academic progress, where there is evidence to suggest that it is reasonable to do so. This procedure ensures that these concerns are considered carefully, and that appropriate action is taken if needed.

This procedure does not allow students to challenge the marks that they have been awarded for a particular piece of assessment. The decisions made by the Examiners about the academic value of a piece of work are academic judgements and cannot be overturned.

The University is committed to providing a positive and fair academic experience for all students, and where concerns do arise, these should be directed to the correct channels. Concerns that do not related directly to one of the decisions listed in this policy, such as complaints about teaching quality, supervision, academic support, should be raised either at the time through student representation arrangements or via the University's Complaints Procedure. The University recognises that there may be times when a student is dissatisfied with their experience which has not had a direct impact on their academic achievement; again, the University operates a comprehensive complaints policy to deal with this.

### 1.1. This procedure applies to all students studying for an award of the University of Chester at Levels 3-8 ('taught') and Postgraduate Research (PGR), including:

1.1.1. **Undergraduate (UG)**. This includes awards such as BA, BSc, BN, LLB, etc. Appeals relating to these awards should be submitted via an **AA-01 form**.

1.1.2. **Postgraduate ('taught') (PGT)**. This includes awards such as MA, MSc, etc. Appeals relating to these awards should be submitted via an **AA-01 form**.

1.1.3. **Postgraduate Research (PGR)**. This includes awards such as PhD, MPhil, etc. Appeals relating to these awards should be submitted via an **AA-03 form**. Programmes defined as PGR are listed in the Academic Regulations.

1.2. Students registered for modules designated as 'taught' as part of their (PGR) programme of study (e.g. those registered for programmes leading to the award of a professional doctoral degree) who wish to appeal an outcome relating to such a module should complete an AA-01 form and follow the same route as UG/PGT. This also applies to students registered on the Master by Research.

1.3. In the event of a dispute about the designation of a module or whether the student is at either the taught or research stage of a programme, and therefore which procedure shall apply, the Academic Registrar shall make a determination. That decision shall be final.

1.4. Students are encouraged to raise concerns informally with their Faculty or Academic Division, and in the case of appeals at PGR level, with either their Principal Supervisor, or their Senior Faculty Postgraduate Tutor in the first instance. In many cases, for example, where a student believes there has been an administrative error, the issue can be resolved quickly and informally without the need to submit a formal appeal.

- 1.5. This procedure is designed to enable students to raise concerns relating to:
  - 1.5.1. An **Awards Assessment Board** or **Progression Assessment Board** decision
  - 1.5.2. A decision to terminate studies under the **Attendance Policy**
  - 1.5.3. The **Exceptional Circumstances Procedure**
  - 1.5.4. The Academic Conduct Review Panel or outcomes from Academic Services under the **Academic Conduct Procedure**
  - 1.5.5. Formal decisions with **Postgraduate Research (PGR)** processes, including:
    - 1.5.5.1. Decisions of the Independent Progress Assessment Panel;
    - 1.5.5.2. Decisions of the University PGR Progress Panel;
    - 1.5.5.3. Decisions of the Postgraduate Research Degrees and Progressions Board.
- 1.6. Once a student (or former student) submits an appeal, they are referred to as ‘the appellant’.
- 1.7. Throughout this procedure, where reference is made to specific post-holders, the line manager of that post-holder may nominate another person to act instead.
- 1.8. The Academic Appeals Procedure is primarily evidence based. **It is the appellant’s responsibility alone to provide sufficient independent documentary evidence to substantiate the contents of their appeal.** Appeals with little or no supporting evidence are unlikely to be successful. The University provides separate guidance on the types of evidence that may be useful.
- 1.9. Timescales in this procedure are given in calendar days. If a deadline falls on a weekend, English Bank Holiday, or a day where the University is closed, it will automatically move to 4pm on the next working day (Monday – Friday).

## 2. Rights and Responsibilities

- 2.1. Any decision that is subject of an academic appeal remains in force while the appeal is being considered. The appellant must abide by that decision until the Academic Appeals Procedure is completed. Where a student has completed their programme of study, they must not attend an awards ceremony until the Academic Appeal Procedure is completed. Attendance at a ceremony will be taken as acceptance of the outcome; this will invalidate the appeal and all decisions will stand.
- 2.2. The University undertakes that any student who submits an appeal under this procedure will not be academically disadvantaged for having done so. If a student believes they have been

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treated unfairly as a result of making an appeal, they should contact the Head of Academic Standards and Governance (or nominee) immediately.

- 2.3. The University accepts that any student who submits an appeal under this procedure will do so in good faith, and expects any information provided, whether written or verbal, to be truthful. The University reserves the right to verify the authenticity of any documentation submitted. Deliberate attempts to deceive, manipulate, or interfere with the appeals process will be treated as a serious matter and may result in disciplinary action.
- 2.4. All staff involved in the management, administration, or investigation of appeals will observe confidentiality. Appellants may request that parts of their appeal submission are not shared outside of Academic Services or the Academic Appeals Board. However, appellants exercising this right must be aware that doing so may impair the full investigation of the case.
- 2.5. As long as the appellant has not had their studies terminated, or completed their programme, they retain full rights of access to University resources and support services. After submitting an appeal, communication which directly relates to the substance of that appeal must be channelled through the Student Casework Team in Academic Services.
- 2.6. The University will make every effort to deal with appeals in a timely manner. Where the appellant meets all of the deadlines outlined in this procedure, a decision by the Academic Appeals Board should normally be made within 60 days of the date of submission. Where any delay is caused by the University, the appellant will be kept informed and reasons will be provided.
- 2.7. Communication during the appeal will be sent to the appellant's University of Chester email address and may also be copied to one alternate email address specified by the appellant. It is the appellant's responsibility to check their email regularly during the appeals process. Emails sent by the University by 4pm (Monday to Friday) will be treated as having been received on the same day.
- 2.8. If, during the appeal process, it becomes clear that other students may also have been affected by an identified error or irregularity, this will be reported to the Head of Academic Standards and Governance (or nominee) and the Academic Registrar (or nominee), who shall be empowered to instruct that appeals are considered on behalf of all students believed to have been affected.
- 2.9. In most cases, the outcome of a successful appeal will be to allow the appellant a further opportunity to be assessed. Therefore, the academic judgements made by the Examiners and the marks agreed by them will not be altered unless an administrative error has been identified which warrants such a course of action.
- 2.10. Appellants may be referred to an alternative procedure (e.g., Complaints Procedure, Professional Suitability Procedure, Disciplinary Procedure, etc.), where their appeal submission or supporting evidence suggests that it would be prudent to do so. Such a decision may be made by the Head of Academic Standards and Governance (or nominee), the Academic Appeals Board, or the Assessment Review Board.

- 2.11. The University will not be liable for expenses or costs that an appellant might incur arising out of an academic appeal, whether the appeal is successful or not.
- 2.12. The appellant is permitted to withdraw their appeal at any point until **5pm on the day before** it is due to be heard by the Academic Appeals Board. After that time, the appeal cannot be withdrawn. In the event of the appeal being upheld, the appellant must abide by the decision of the Examiners which shall be determined by the Assessment Review Board.

### 3. Grounds for Appeal

#### Undergraduate and Postgraduate ('taught') ONLY

***The following grounds are applicable to appeals which relate to Undergraduate (Levels 3-6) and Postgraduate (Levels 7-8) ('taught') programmes of study ONLY, as defined in 1.1.1. and 1.1.2.:***

- 3.1. A student may appeal against a decision of the **Awards Assessment Board** or the **Progression Assessment Board** on the following grounds only:
  - 3.1.1. That there were procedural or administrative irregularities in the conduct of the assessment process;
  - 3.1.2. That there were factors which materially affected the appellant's performance, provided that these circumstances were not known by the Examiners and there are compelling reasons why the appellant failed to follow the procedures for requesting an extension or deferral or for submitting an application for Exceptional Circumstances;
  - 3.1.3. That the appellant had been assessed as having a specific learning difference during the current academic session, provided that the provisions of Section 6 of this procedure have been adhered to.
- 3.2. A student may appeal against an outcome of the **Exceptional Circumstances** procedure in relation to decisions regarding deferrals and registration extension requests, on the following grounds only:
  - 3.2.1. That there is evidence of procedural or administrative irregularity in the conduct of the Exceptional Circumstances procedure;
  - 3.2.2. That there exists some new evidence which, for compelling reasons, could not be made available prior to an application for Exceptional Circumstances.
- 3.3. A student may appeal against a decision of the **Attendance Policy**, which has resulted in the termination of their studies due to unsatisfactory attendance, on the following grounds only:

- 3.3.1. That there is evidence of a procedural or administrative irregularity in the operation of the Attendance Policy;
- 3.3.2. That the appellant, for compelling reasons that can be substantiated, was unable to maintain a satisfactory level of attendance as per the requirements set out in the Attendance Policy, and could not appropriately engage with the Connect Engagement Team.

## All Students

***The following grounds are applicable to appeals from all students of the University; namely appeals at Undergraduate (Levels 3-6), Postgraduate (Levels 7-8) ('taught'), and Postgraduate Research programmes of study, as defined in 1.1. of this procedure:***

- 3.4. A student may appeal against a decision of the **Academic Conduct Policy** on the following grounds only:
  - 3.4.1. That there is evidence of procedural or administrative irregularity in the conduct of the published procedure relating to breaches of the Academic Conduct Policy;
  - 3.4.2. That the appellant, for compelling reasons that can be substantiated, was unable to engage with the Academic Conduct process and present a defence to the allegation, and/or provide any points of mitigation prior to a penalty being confirmed.

## Postgraduate Research ONLY

***The following grounds are applicable to appeals which relate to Postgraduate Research programmes of study ONLY, as defined in 1.1.3.:***

- 3.5. A student may appeal against a decision of the **Independent Progress Assessment Panel** to decline to upgrade their registration to PhD or to downgrade their registration from PhD to MPhil or of the **University PGR Progress Panel** to terminate studies (only once that decision has been reported to the Postgraduate Research Degrees Awards & Progression Board) on the following grounds only:
  - 3.5.1. That there were procedural or administrative irregularities in the conduct of the Annual Progress Monitoring process generally or the Independent Progress Assessment Panel or University PGR Progress Panel specifically;
  - 3.5.2. That there is evidence of bias or unlawful discrimination on the part of one or more of the members of the Independent Progress Assessment Panel or University PGR Progress Panel;
  - 3.5.3. That there is some new evidence of satisfactory progress which, for compelling reasons, could not have been made available to the Independent Progress Review Panel at an earlier stage;

- 3.5.4. That there were factors which materially affected the appellant's performance, provided that these circumstances were not known to the Independent Progress Review Panel and there are compelling reasons why the appellant failed to notify the Independent Progress Review Panel or University PGR Progress Panel in advance.
- 3.6. A Student may appeal against a decision of the **Postgraduate Research Degrees Awards & Progression Board** on the following grounds only:
- 3.6.1. That there is evidence of procedural or administrative irregularity in the conduct of the examination process;
- 3.6.2. That there is evidence of bias or unlawful discrimination on part of one or more of the Examiners;
- 3.6.3. That there were factors which materially affected the appellant's performance, provided that these circumstances were not known to the Examiners and there are compelling reasons why the appellant failed to notify the Examiners in advance.

## 4. Exclusions from Appeal

- 4.1. PGR students may not appeal on the basis of unsatisfactory or poor-quality supervision unless there is clear and compelling independent evidence which suggests that the negligence of one or more members of the Supervisory Team may have had a material impact on the student's performance. In the normal course of events, the University expects that students will raise concerns about supervision at the point that these arise using one of the confidential mechanisms for doing so.
- 4.2. PGR students may not appeal a decision of the Independent Progress Assessment Panel to require a further review within a specified period of time. Such a decision is regarded solely as an academic judgement.
- 4.3. Students may not appeal on the basis of circumstances which they might reasonably have foreseen and taken steps to avoid. For example, the University will not normally consider an appeal where the student encountered IT problems.

## 5. Submission of an Academic Appeal

- 5.1. A student may only submit an appeal after formal notification of the decision they are appealing against.
- 5.2. In all cases, appeal submissions must be made using the appropriate Microsoft Form (**AA-01** for appeals relating to **undergraduate and postgraduate 'taught' programmes** and **AA-03** for appeals relating to **postgraduate research programmes**) and be received by the University no later than **10 days** after the date of publication of results or notification of outcome. It is the appellant's responsibility to seek advice from Academic Services if they are unsure on how to access the relevant form. The form can be completed by the student

signing into Microsoft 365 with their university log-in details. Where the appellant is unable to access the online form, refer to 5.4.

5.3. Where an appellant submits an appeal by digital means, it must meet the following requirements:

5.3.1. Documentary evidence provided in support of an appeal (e.g. medical certificates, letters, records, etc.), must be attached to the form as full colour scans and preferably as PDF files. Where a student is unable to attach the evidence to the form, it must be emailed to [academicappeals@chester.ac.uk](mailto:academicappeals@chester.ac.uk) and reported on the form. The submission of this evidence must be received no later than **10 days** after the publication of results or notification of outcome.

5.3.2. It is the appellant's responsibility to be able to produce the original documents submitted in support of an academic appeal if requested to do so by the University. Failure to produce such original documents will invalidate the appeal.

5.4. If the appellant is unable to submit an appeal by submission of the Microsoft Form, they should contact Academic Services for guidance and to discuss provision of alternative arrangements. Alternative arrangements may include an open access online form or a PDF form.

5.5. Irrespective of the method chosen to submit, it is the appellant's responsibility to ensure safe receipt of an appeal submission and all evidence.

5.5.1. If emailed or submitted via Microsoft Forms, the appellant should expect to receive an acknowledgement from Academic Services within 7 days.

5.5.2. If alternative provision has been made for submission of an appeal, such as postal submission, the appellant is strongly advised to use a suitable tracking service. The appellant should expect to receive an acknowledgement from Academic Services within a reasonable amount of time depending on where the documents were posted from and, in every case, should make contact if no acknowledgement is received within 14 days of submission.

5.5.3. If the appeal is submitted in person at the University and the appellant has not received an acknowledgement within 14 days, they should email [academicappeals@chester.ac.uk](mailto:academicappeals@chester.ac.uk) to confirm the status of their appeal.

5.6. Where it is not possible to provide all of the supporting documentation with the appeal submission, the appellant must clearly indicate this and undertake to provide it separately, normally within no more than 10 days.

5.7. The Student Casework Team in Academic Services will receive all undergraduate and postgraduate 'taught' programme appeal submissions.

5.8. The Assistant Manager (Student Casework) will receive all PGR appeal submissions.

- 5.9. Where an appeal is submitted late, it will be considered only if the Assistant Manager (Student Casework) determines that not doing so would be unreasonable in the circumstances. An appellant who submits a late appeal must clearly demonstrate why it was not possible to adhere to the relevant deadline.
- 5.10. The appellant may give consent for their appeal to be discussed with a nominated third-party by indicating this on the Academic Appeal Form.
- 5.11. Where the appellant supplies supporting evidence that is not in English, it is their responsibility to arrange for translation by a qualified, certified translator, with copies appropriately marked.

## 6. Appeals Relating to Specific Learning Differences

- 6.1. If a student wishes to appeal a decision of the Awards Assessment Board or the Progression Assessment Board on ground 3.1.3. (diagnosis of a Specific Learning Difference in the current academic session and not being in receipt of the reasonable adjustments for assessment indicated on the student's Inclusion Plan), the student must contact the Disability & Inclusion Team.
- 6.2. The Disability & Inclusion Team will notify Academic Services of any student wishing to submit an appeal on ground 3.1.3. and the deadline for receipt of the appeal shall automatically be extended to **21 days**.
- 6.3. The Disability & Inclusion Team will, in consultation with the appellant, determine whether all of the following hold:
  - 6.3.1. The student had been diagnosed in the current academic session, and before the meeting of the relevant Awards Assessment Board or Progression Assessment Board; and
  - 6.3.2. The Disability & Inclusion Team is in receipt of a report compiled by an Educational Psychologist or other person qualified to diagnose Specific Learning Differences; and
  - 6.3.3. The student had not been afforded all opportunities agreed in a full Inclusion Plan to support the assessment or examination in question.
- 6.4. If the Disability & Inclusion Team is unable to verify that all of the provisions of 6.3 hold, the appellant will be notified and advised of their right to submit an appeal on any of the other grounds listed at 3.1.
- 6.5. If the Disability & Inclusion Team verifies that all of the provisions of 6.3 hold, the Academic Appeals Form should be completed in consultation with the appellant and sent to Academic Services with the following:
  - 6.5.1. Confirmation that the appellant had been diagnosed in accordance with the requirement of 6.3.1. in the current academic session;

- 6.5.2. A copy of the report compiled by an Education Psychologist or other person qualified to diagnose Specific Learning Differences;
  - 6.5.3. A copy of the appellant's full Inclusion Plan; and
  - 6.5.4. Confirmation that the appellant had not been afforded all opportunities agreed in a full Inclusion Plan in accordance with the requirement of 6.3.2.
- 6.6. On receipt of the Academic Appeals Form and other documentation outlined in 6.5, the Head of Academic Standards and Governance (or nominee) is empowered to grant a deferral of assessment without the need to convene a meeting of the Academic Appeals Board.
- 6.7. In no circumstances will a deferral of assessment be granted in respect of assessments taken in a previous academic session.
- 6.8. Where the Head of Academic Standards and Governance (or nominee) determines that there is doubt about whether the requirements of 6.3. or 6.5. have been fulfilled, the matter shall be sent to the Academic Appeals Board for consideration. Where this happens, both the appellant and the Disability & Inclusion Team will be notified.

## 7. Preliminary Stage

- 7.1. The Assistant Manager (Student Casework) will nominate an Officer to initially consider appeal submissions at all levels. The Assistant Manager (Student Casework) may also act as an Officer to consider appeal submissions at the preliminary stage.
- 7.2. The Officer and/or the Assistant Manager (Student Casework) will review the submission and may make some limited investigations, only to the extent of verifying information contained in the appeal.
- 7.3. Where an Officer has initially considered an appeal submission, they will make recommendations to the Assistant Manager (Student Casework) regarding the outcome of the preliminary stage. Following review of the submission, the Assistant Manager (Academic Services) will determine that either:
  - 7.3.1. There are sufficient reasons to accept the submission for further investigation; or
  - 7.3.2. The appeal should be rejected.
- 7.4. A decision to reject the appeal at this stage may be based on any of the following:
  - 7.4.1. The appeal has been submitted outside of the stipulated deadline, the appellant has not given a sufficient explanation for the delay and nothing in the submission gives cause to suspect that it would be unreasonable to declare it ineligible;

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- 7.4.2. The appeal is based wholly on disagreement with academic judgement;
- 7.4.3. The appeal is not accompanied by appropriate or relevant independent documentary evidence, the appellant has not indicated that this is to follow and/or the appellant has failed to provide documentary evidence requested by the Officer or the Assistant Manager (Student Casework) by the stipulated deadline;
- 7.4.4. The appeal is based wholly on factors which were outside of the University's control and which the appellant might reasonably have been expected to foresee and/or taken reasonable steps to avoid.
- 7.5. If the appellant has indicated that further documentary evidence is to follow, it will normally be expected within 10 days of the appeal submission deadline. Where the appellant cannot meet this deadline, it is their responsibility to notify the Assistant Manager (Student Casework) and suggest a reasonable deadline.
- 7.6. The appellant alone is responsible for the content of their appeal submission and any accompanying documentary evidence. However, where it is reasonable to do so based on the full submission received, the Officer or the Assistant Manager (Student Casework) may delay the decision and invite the appellant to provide further documentary evidence. Where this happens, the appellant will normally be invited to supply evidence within a reasonable amount of time (normally no less than 10 and no more than 28 days).
- 7.7. The decision of the Assistant Manager (Student Casework) will be communicated to the appellant by the Officer, normally within 7 days of the deadline for the appeal submission. If the appeal had been submitted late, or if the appellant was asked to provide further evidence, the decision will be communicated within 14 days of the date of the submission or receipt of evidence.
- 7.8. If the decision is to reject the appeal at this stage, the Officer of the Assistant Manager (Student Casework) will:
- 7.8.1. Write to the appellant giving reasons for the decision to reject the appeal;
- 7.8.2. Explain any additional information that was requested of the Faculty/service which was the subject of the appeal at the preliminary stage;
- 7.8.3. Explain whether there might be a different procedure that the appellant can use to pursue the case (for example, the Complaints Procedure);
- 7.8.4. Explain the review procedure and the grounds upon which an appellant whose appeal has been rejected at the preliminary stage can request a review of that decision;
- 7.8.5. Explain the procedure for requesting a Completion of Procedures Statement if the appellant does not believe that they have grounds to request a review; and
- 7.8.6. Offer the opportunity of a telephone conversation or, in some circumstances, a meeting with the appellant within 28 days. Any such conversation or meeting will be to

clarify the reasons why the appeal was rejected and is not an opportunity to have the decision reviewed or overturned.

7.9. If the decision is to accept the appeal for further investigation, the Officer or the Assistant Manager (Student Casework) will:

7.9.1. Write to the appellant to explain that the appeal is to be investigated further and give an estimated date when the case might be heard by the Academic Appeals Board (however, appellants should note that this date is subject to change to accommodate the prioritisation of cases according to 11.3.);

7.9.2. Explain the possible outcomes if the Academic Appeals Board was to uphold the appeal, where it seems that the appellant's expectations go beyond what the Academic Appeals Board might reasonably be expected to do.

7.10. If in the opinion of the Assistant Manager (Student Casework) there is clear evidence of an administrative error, the Faculty(ies) concerned will be invited to correct the error in accordance with the procedure outlined in Section 10.

## 8. Review of the Preliminary Stage

8.1. If an appeal is dismissed at the preliminary stage, the appellant may request a review of that decision by the Head of Academic Standards and Governance (or nominee).

8.2. A request for a review of the decision at the preliminary stage may only be made on the following grounds:

8.2.1. That the preliminary stage was not conducted in accordance with the procedures outlined in Section 7; and/or

8.2.2. That new evidence has come to light which could not have been disclosed in time to be considered at the preliminary stage.

8.3. An appellant wishing to request a review of the decision at the preliminary stage must do so in writing to the Head of Academic Standards and Governance (or nominee) within **10 days** of receiving the letter outlining the reasons why the appeal was dismissed. Such a request can be made via email to [academicappeals@chester.ac.uk](mailto:academicappeals@chester.ac.uk), marked for the attention of the Head of Academic Standards and Governance.

8.4. If, on receipt of the request for a review, the Head of Academic Standards and Governance (or nominee) identifies any potential conflict of interest, a nominee will be asked to undertake the review.

8.5. The Head of Academic Standards and Governance (or nominee) will consider the request and determine either:

8.5.1. The decision to reject the appeal at the preliminary stage should stand and that a Completion of Procedures Statement should be issued; or

- 8.5.2. The decision to reject the appeal at the preliminary stage should be overturned and that the case should be accepted for further investigation.
- 8.6. When considering the request, the Head of Academic Standards and Governance (or nominee) will have due regard to whether the decision to dismiss the appeal at the preliminary stage was reasonable in all of the circumstances.
- 8.7. The decision of the Head of Academic Standards and Governance (or nominee) will be communicated to the appellant, normally within **21 days** of the date that the request was received.

## 9. Investigatory Stage

- 9.1. The Assistant Manager (Student Casework) will nominate an Investigating Officer to handle an appeal that has been accepted for investigation. The appellant will receive the name and contact details of the Investigating Officer. The Assistant Manager (Student Casework) may also act as an Investigating Officer.
- 9.2. The Assistant Manager (Student Casework) may also act as an Investigating Officer.
- 9.3. Where necessary, the Investigating Officer will contact the appellant to clarify any aspect of the appeal submission at any point during the investigatory stage.
- 9.4. Where the appeal relates to an outcome of the Attendance Policy, the Exceptional Circumstances Procedure, the Academic Conduct Review Panel or an academic conduct outcome received from Academic Services, the Investigating Officer will normally request details of the relevant outcome and/or information from the Secretary of the relevant Board or Panel.
- 9.5. In all other cases the Investigating Officer will, subject to the provisions of 2.4., forward the submission to the Faculty(ies) referred to in the appeal with a request for information. The nature of the investigation will depend on the contents of the appeal submission. However, the following may be regarded as indicative of what might be requested (this list is not exhaustive):
- 9.5.1. Provide a response addressing the central issues of the appeal, including the reasons and justifications that the appellant advances;
- 9.5.2. Provide details of any additional factors which might have a bearing on the case;
- 9.5.3. Provide details of any actions undertaken in relation to the appellant and the case;
- 9.5.4. Provide details of any constraints imposed by any Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body;

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- 9.5.5. Respond to any specific questions which the Investigating Officer feels are pertinent to the appeal.
- 9.6. Additionally, the following may be regarded as indicative of what might be requested, specifically in the case of PGR appeals (this list is not exhaustive):
- 9.6.1. Copies of letters outlining the decision of the Independent Progress Assessment Panel or the Postgraduate Research Degrees Awards & Progression Board;
  - 9.6.2. Copies of reports compiled by the Independent Progress Assessment Panel or the Examiners;
  - 9.6.3. Statements from the Chair of the Independent Progress Assessment Panel or Examination Panel;
  - 9.6.4. Evidence of correspondence between the appellant and their supervisors;
  - 9.6.5. Evidence of supervisory meetings;
  - 9.6.6. Copies of reports produced during the annual progress monitoring cycle;
  - 9.6.7. Reports from the Academic Conduct Review Panel.
- 9.7. If the appellant has indicated that some part of their appeal or supporting evidence should not be disclosed, they may opt to provide a summary instead. The Assistant Manager (Student Casework) or Investigating Officer may consult with the appellant to determine what may be disclosed.
- 9.8. The Faculty, Division, School, or individuals asked to provide evidence or otherwise respond to the appeal submission will be asked to do so within a reasonable amount of time which shall not normally exceed **21 days**. Where additional time is requested, reasons for this will be communicated to the appellant.
- 9.8.1. If a Faculty, Division, School, or individual asked to provide evidence or otherwise respond to the appeal submission fails to do so within a reasonable amount of time, the Academic Appeals Board will be notified. The Academic Appeals Board may draw whatever conclusion it wishes from a failure to respond or it may compel members of the University to respond under powers delegated to it by Senate.
- 9.9. On receipt of the responses from the Faculty, Division, School, or individual asked to provide evidence or otherwise respond to the appeal submission, the Investigating Officer will review and decide one of the following:
- 9.9.1. The Faculty, Division, School, or individual asked to provide evidence or otherwise respond to the appeal submission have accepted that the appeal submission is with merit and there would be no detriment to the appellant or other students by seeking an expediated decision to the case prior to its hearing by the Academic Appeals Board as per Section 10; or

9.9.2. Where the Investigating Officer finds that there is clear and unambiguous documentary evidence that demonstrates that the student was not fit to undertake the assessment AND unable to engage with the University to seek use of supporting services, they shall inform the Assistant Manager (Student Casework) who will refer to Section 10; or

9.9.3. The case should be heard by the Academic Appeals Board.

9.10. Appeals which relate to an outcome of the Attendance Policy, the Exceptional Circumstances procedure, decisions of the Academic Conduct Review Panel or an academic conduct outcome received from Academic Services, will normally only be resolved by a hearing of the Academic Appeals Board.

9.11. Where the Investigating Officer decides in accordance with 9.9.1. or 9.9.2., the decision must be ratified by the Assistant Manager (Student Casework) and the procedure at Section 10 must be followed.

9.12. Where the Investigating Officer decides in accordance with 9.8., the response(s) received will be summarised and forwarded to the appellant. The appellant will also be advised of the date that the Academic Appeals Board will hear the case.

9.13. Appellants who wish to exercise their right to see the full case file before it is presented to the Academic Appeals Board will be notified that this may cause a delay to the hearing. This is to allow additional time for the file to be checked in order that the confidentiality of others is not inadvertently breached.

9.14. If they wish, the appellant may comment in writing on the response received from the Faculty, Division, School, or individual asked to provide evidence or otherwise respond to the appeal submission and this will be presented to the Academic Appeals Board. However, the appellant may not introduce new evidence which, in the opinion of the Academic Appeals Board, could have been disclosed with the original submission.

9.14.1. Where new evidence is introduced is accepted for consideration, the appellant accepts that this may cause a delay to the hearing. This is so that the Academic Appeals Board has sufficient time to review and properly consider the new evidence alongside all other documentation already provided.

## 10. Expedited Academic Appeals Decision

10.1. It might be possible to resolve an appeal without it being heard by the Appeals Board if, during the course of the investigation, either of the following are determined;

10.1.1. The Investigating Officer finds, as per 9.9.1 or 9.9.2, clear evidence that the case has unambiguous merit; or

- 10.1.2. It becomes clear that the Faculty, Division, School, or individual asked to provide evidence or otherwise respond to the appeal submission accept that they have been the cause of a procedural or administrative irregularity that has had a material and negative impact on the assessment (for example, an incorrect mark having been entered).
- 10.2. In cases where 10.1.1. and/or 10.1.2. apply, the Investigating Officer will present the case to the Head of Academic Standards and Governance (or nominee) who will decide whether to recommend a decision to the Chair of the Academic Appeals Board. A decision to allow such an attempt may only be made where the Head of Academic Standards and Governance (or nominee) is satisfied that there would be no detriment to the appellant or other students by concluding the case without it being heard by the Academic Appeals Board.
- 10.3. On behalf of the Head of Academic Standards and Governance (or nominee), the Investigating Officer will recommend an appropriate outcome to the Chair of the Academic Appeals Board. This will normally be the correction of a mark or the deferral of an assessment.
- 10.4. The Chair of the Academic Appeals Board can act on behalf of the Academic Appeals Board to uphold the appeal and agree an outcome in line with its powers as outlined in Section 13.
- 10.5. Where the Chair of the Academic Appeals Board does not agree with the recommendation of Academic Services, the appeal will be considered by the Academic Appeals Board at the earliest opportunity.
- 10.6. Where the appeal is upheld, the Investigating Officer will communicate the outcome as per 12.2.1. and 12.2.2.
- 10.7. When the appellant has received an outcome via the Expedited Decision process, and not of the Academic Appeals Board, they will not normally meet the criteria to request a review of the decision as per Section 24. In such cases where the appellant is dissatisfied with an upheld appeal, they are entitled to request a completion of procedures letter.

## 11. Hearings of the Academic Appeals Board

- 11.1. The Academic Appeals Board operates with the full delegated authority of Senate. This means that it has the power to require staff and students of the University to make written submissions, give evidence and answer any questions.
- 11.2. The Academic Appeals Board will meet as frequently as necessary to deal with cases referred to it in a timely way.
- 11.3. Cases will be referred to the Academic Appeals Board for consideration, prioritised according to the following:
- 11.3.1. Appeals against decisions which have led to the appellant's programme of study being terminated;

- 11.3.2. Appeals against decisions which have led to the appellant being prevented from progressing to the next level of study;
- 11.3.3. Appeals that relate to Postgraduate Research study;
- 11.3.4. Appeals against decisions which have resulted in the appellant's ability to commence (or continue) employment is affected, where this can be confirmed independently by the employer concerned in writing;
- 11.3.5. Appeals against decisions not covered by 11.3.1., 11.3.2. or 11.3.3., but where the appellant has not yet completed their programme of study;
- 11.3.6. Appeals where the effect of a decision to uphold would result in the appellant needing to undertake further assessment;
- 11.3.7. Appeals which do not fall into one of the previous categories;
- 11.3.8. Appeals received late, but which were accepted for investigation.
- 11.4. The members of the Academic Appeals Board will be appointed by Senate for a two-year term. Retiring members may be re-nominated.
- 11.5. Each Academic Appeals Board will be composed as follows:
- 11.5.1. A Chair, who will normally be a Dean, Associate Dean, or a Director of School; and
- 11.5.2. Normally two members of academic staff.
- 11.5.2.1. Where the Academic Appeals Board is considering an appeal at Postgraduate Appeal level, at least one of these members of academic staff will appeal on the Accredited PGR Supervisor List.
- 11.6. The Board shall be deemed quorate when 66% of the membership (including the Chair) is present.
- 11.7. Wherever possible, no member of the Academic Appeals Board should work in the division(s) within the appellant's programme of study resides and, in the case of PGR appeals, in the same department as the appellant's Principal Supervisor. Any member from the appellant's and/or their Principal Supervisor's division(s) will be asked to declare any perceived interest which could give rise to a conflict at the beginning of the meeting and this will be recorded. If deemed appropriate by the Chair, the member will absent themselves from any relevant areas of discussion.
- 11.8. The Assistant Manager (Student Casework), or other nominee of the Head of Academic Standards and Governance (or nominee) will attend the Academic Appeals Board to give regulatory advice and make a record of the hearing, but will not be a member of the Board.

- 11.9. The appellant is not normally permitted to attend the hearing, unless requested by the Chair of the Academic Appeals Board.
- 11.10. Other than through the presentation of their case via the means explained in the procedure, appellants must not seek to influence the Chair or members of the Academic Appeals Board or in any other way seek to sway the operation of the Academic Appeals Procedure. Any attempt to do so may invalidate the appeal and constitute a disciplinary matter.
- 11.11. For each case, the relevant Investigating Officer will be present to answer any questions about the investigatory stage and will hear the full deliberations and decisions of the Board in order to communicate them to the appellant. The Investigating Officer will not offer an opinion on the validity or otherwise of the appeal submission and the academic members of the Board alone will make the decision on whether to uphold or reject the appeal.
- 11.12. Neither the University nor the appellant may be legally represented at meetings of the Academic Appeals Board. However, the Academic Appeals Board may take advice from a member (or members) of staff of the University with appropriate clinical expertise or from others with such expertise relating solely to the interpretation of medical or other evidence supplied in support of an academic appeal. Any such advice is to be requested and received in writing and made available to the appellant.
- 11.13. The Academic Appeals Board will consider each case individually and on its own merits.
- 11.14. The Academic Appeals Board will not be bound by legal rules of evidence nor by previous decisions and in all cases will have due regard to whether a decision that is the subject of an appeal was reasonable in all the circumstances.
- 11.15. For each case, the Academic Appeals Board will receive a file containing the following:
- 11.15.1. A copy of the appellant's original submission with all supporting evidence provided;
  - 11.15.2. A copy of the report and investigative responses received during the investigatory stage;
  - 11.15.3. A copy of any further comments made in writing by the appellant following receipt of the responses received during the investigatory stage;
  - 11.15.4. A copy of the appellant's most recent academic results transcript where the appeal is at undergraduate or postgraduate 'taught' level.

## 12. Outcomes of the Academic Appeals Board

- 12.1. For each case, the Academic Appeals Board will decide either:
- 12.1.1. The appeal should be upheld in part or in full, or;
  - 12.1.2. The appeal should be dismissed and the original decision should stand.

12.2. Where the Academic Appeals Board decides in accordance with 12.1.1. it will determine a remedy using the procedure at Section 13. The appellant will receive a letter from the Investigating Officer within **14 days** of the decision containing the following:

12.2.1. Where necessary, the reasons for the decision in relation to each part of the appeal submission; and

12.2.2. Details of the remedy decided upon by the Academic Appeals Board.

12.3. Where the Academic Appeals Board decides in accordance with 12.1.2. it will give full reasons for the decision. The appellant will receive a letter from the Investigating Officer within **14 days** of the decision containing the following:

12.3.1. The reasons for the decision in relation to each part of the appeal submission;

12.3.2. Advice on whether there might be a different procedure that the appellant can use to pursue the case (for example, the Complaints Procedure);

12.3.3. An explanation of the review procedure and the grounds upon which an appellant whose appeal has been dismissed can request a review of that decision;

12.3.4. An explanation of the procedure for requesting a Completion of Procedures Statement if the appellant does not believe that they have grounds to request a review; and

12.3.5. An offer of a telephone conversation or, in some circumstances, a meeting with the appellant within **28 days**. Any such conversation or meeting will be to clarify the reasons why the appeal was rejected and is not an opportunity to have the decision reviewed or overturned.

## 13. Powers of the Academic Appeals Board

13.1. The Academic Appeals Board operates with the full delegated authority of Senate. Therefore, when it decides to uphold an appeal, it can impose whatever remedy it deems is reasonable to resolve the matter, except it can never:

13.1.1. Increase (or decrease) the marks awarded by the Examiners;

13.1.2. Alter a decision relating to progression by the Awards Assessment Board;

13.1.3. Alter a degree classification determined by the Awards Assessment Board;

13.1.4. Quash a decision that the student has submitted work which breaches the Academic Conduct Policy;

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- 13.1.5. Interfere with the academic judgement of the Independent Progress Assessment Panel; or
- 13.1.6. Interfere with the academic judgement of the Postgraduate Research Degrees Awards & Progression Board (representing the judgement of the Examiners).
- 13.2. Where the Academic Appeals Board decides to uphold an appeal against a decision of the Awards Assessment Board or the Progression Assessment Board it may normally:
- 13.2.1. In the case of Exceptional Circumstances being established and the Academic Appeals Board being satisfied that there are justifiable reasons for the appellant having not used one of the other procedures available, make a recommendation to the Assessment Review Board that the relevant assessment attempt(s) be set aside.
- 13.2.2. In the case of procedural or administrative error, instruct the Faculty(ies) concerned to correct the matter using one of the University's established procedures.
- 13.2.3. In the case of a Specific Learning Difference diagnosis not resolved under Section 6, to grant a deferral of the affected assessments.
- 13.3. Where the Academic Appeals Board decides to uphold an appeal against an outcome of the Exceptional Circumstances procedure, a recommendation will be made to the Assessment Review Board that the relevant assessment attempt(s) be set aside.
- 13.4. Where the Academic Appeals Board decides to uphold an appeal against a decision of the Academic Conduct Review Panel or an academic conduct outcome received from Academic Services, it will decide the stage that the case should be referred back to (i.e. Faculty or Panel, and whether the whole case should be heard again or a review of the penalty decision undertaken). The Board may also specify if the previous Panel which heard the case should be involved or whether a new Panel should be convened.
- 13.5. Where the Academic Appeals Board decides to uphold an appeal against a decision of the Independent Progress Review Panel, University PGR Progress Panel or the Postgraduate Research Degrees Awards & Progression Board, it will determine an appropriate remedy to be overseen by the relevant Senior Faculty PGR Tutor and the Head of Student Records (or nominees).
- 13.6. In very exceptional circumstances, where the Academic Appeals Board does not believe that any of the normal remedies outlined at 13.2., 13.3., or 13.4., are sufficient to resolve the matter, it may decide on another remedy. Where it does this, the Chair of the Academic Appeals Board must provide a report to Education Committee.
- 13.7. Where the Academic Appeals Board decides on a remedy that does not involve the Assessment Review Board, the Officer who investigated the case will monitor compliance with the Academic Appeals Board's decision.

## 14. Assessment Review Board

- 14.1. Where the Academic Appeals Board instructs the Assessment Review Board to reconsider an assessment decision, it will normally provide reasons which must be taken into consideration when determining any amended outcome.
- 14.2. The Academic Registrar (or nominee) will receive the Academic Appeal Board's decision and, normally within 10 days, will determine the level of discretion available to the Assessment Review Board to amend the original assessment decision. The Academic Registrar (or nominee) will then decide either:
  - 14.2.1. The Assessment Review Board would have no discretion and the original decision of the Awards Assessment Board or the Progression Assessment Board must be amended according to the regulations and conventions of the University; or
  - 14.2.2. The Assessment Review Board may have some discretion on matters relating to progression or for any other reasons deemed relevant.
- 14.3. Where the Academic Registrar (or nominee) decides in accordance with 13.2.1., the Chair of the Assessment Review Board will be invited to authorise an amendment to the original decision of the Awards Assessment Board or the Progression Assessment Board according to advice from the Academic Registrar (or nominee). Any such amendment will be reported to the next meeting of the Awards Assessment Board.
- 14.4. Notwithstanding the advice of the Academic Registrar (or nominee) the Chair of the Assessment Review Board may determine that there is sufficient reason for the matter to be considered at a full meeting of the Assessment Review Board.
- 14.5. Where the Academic Registrar (or nominee) decides in accordance with 13.2.2., the Assistant Manager (Student Casework) or nominee will be invited to convene a meeting of the Assessment Review Board.
- 14.6. The Assessment Review Board will be composed as follows:
  - 14.6.1. A Chair who shall normally also be the Chair of the Awards Assessment Board or Progression Assessment Board; and
  - 14.6.2. Normally two, but no fewer than one, members of academic staff, at least one of whom has some knowledge of the appellant's programme of study.
- 14.7. The Assessment Review Board will be advised by the Academic Registrar (or nominee).
- 14.8. The Investigating Officer will normally be present to take a record of proceedings.
- 14.9. Where a full meeting of the Assessment Review Board is convened it must meet within a reasonable amount of time to consider the cases referred to it, taking into consideration the reasons advanced by the Academic Appeals Board. The Assessment Review Board must act

in a way that is compatible with the decision of the Academic Appeals Board and it is not empowered to overturn any decision of the Academic Appeals Board.

14.10. The Assessment Review Board may decide as follows:

14.10.1. The original decision of the Awards Assessment Board or Progression Assessment Board shall be overturned and a new recommendation for the relevant assessment(s) is made; or

14.10.2. Exceptionally, the original decision of the Awards Assessment Board shall be upheld and the original recommendation confirmed.

14.11. Where the Assessment Review Board decides in accordance with 14.10.1., the Academic Registrar (or nominee) will write to the appellant and the Investigating Officer to confirm the new outcome. The decision of the Assessment Review Board will be final. If the appellant remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they may request a Completion of Procedures Statement and refer the matter to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.

14.12. Where the Assessment Review Board decides in accordance with 14.10.2., the Chair of the Assessment Review Board will write to the Chair of the Academic Appeals Board giving reasons for the decision. On receipt of this, the Chair of the Academic Appeals Board may decide to refer the matter to the review stage. The Investigating Officer will write to the appellant with further information.

## 15. Review of the decision of the Academic Appeals Board

15.1. At the conclusion of the process, the appellant may request a review of the academic appeal under the following circumstances:

15.1.1. If the Academic Appeals Board decided to dismiss the appeal. Where the appeal was upheld in part, a review may be requested only of those parts which were not upheld; or

15.1.2. If the Academic Appeals Board decided to uphold the appeal (either in full or in part), but the Assessment Review Board declined to amend the relevant assessment outcome, provided that the Chair of the Academic Appeals Board has not already referred the case for review.

15.2. In order to request a review of the academic appeal, the appellant must be able to demonstrate one or both of the following:

15.2.1. There is evidence of some procedural or administrative irregularity in the operation of the Academic Appeals Procedure;

15.2.2. New evidence has come to light which could not have been disclosed in time to be considered by the Academic Appeals Board.

- 15.3. An appellant wishing to request a review of an academic appeal must do so in writing to the Head of Academic Standards and Governance (or nominee) within **10 days** of receiving the full outcome of the Academic Appeals Board. Such a request can be made via email to [academicappeals@chester.ac.uk](mailto:academicappeals@chester.ac.uk), marked for the attention of the Head of Academic Standards and Governance.
- 15.4. If, on receipt of the request for review, the Head of Academic Standards and Governance (or nominee) identifies any potential conflict of interest, a Dean of an Academic Faculty will be asked to undertake the review.
- 15.5. On receipt of the request for a review of an academic appeal, the Head of Academic Standards and Governance (or nominee) will consider only the conduct of the Academic Appeals Procedure and/or the evidence submitted. The review is not an opportunity for the case to be re-heard and consequently the circumstances which lead to the decision that was subject to appeal will not normally be considered.
- 15.6. The Head of Academic Standards and Governance (or nominee) will consider the request and determine either:
- 15.6.1. The decision of the Academic Appeals Board to dismiss the appeal should stand and that a Completion of Procedures Statement should be issued; or
- 15.6.2. The case shall be reconsidered by the Academic Appeals Board;
- 15.7. When considering the request, the Head of Academic Standards and Governance (or nominee) will have due regard to whether the decision to dismiss the appeal in full or in part was reasonable in all of the circumstances.
- 15.8. Where a request for review has been made because the Assessment Review Board has declined to amend the original decision of the Awards Assessment Board despite the recommendation of the Academic Appeals Board, the Head of Academic Standards and Governance (or nominee) will present the case to the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic) whose decision will be final.
- 15.9. The decision of the Head of Academic Standards and Governance (or nominee) will be communicated to the appellant, normally within **21 days** of the date that the request was received.
- 15.10. Where the Head of Academic Standards and Governance (or nominee) decides in accordance with 15.6.2., the case will be referred to the next meeting of the Academic Appeals Board.

## 16. Mark Amendments

- 16.1. If at any point during the conduct of an appeal, a Faculty agrees to or is required to submit an amendment to a mark previously agreed by the Awards Assessment Board or the Progression Assessment Board, the procedures outlined in this section will be used.
- 16.2. The Chair of the relevant Module Assessment Board, or nominee, will complete a mark amendment form supplied by Registry Services for this purpose. The form will outline the reasons for the amendment, where appropriate, referring to a decision made during the conduct of an appeal.
- 16.3. Where, in the view of the Head of Student Records (or nominee), the nature and reasons given for the amendment indicate a serious breach of process, or would change an assessment outcome decision to the detriment of a student, the request will be referred to the Academic Registrar.
- 16.4. Where a request for a mark amendment is referred to the Academic Registrar, the nature and extent of the circumstances which led to the request will be determined. The Academic Registrar will authorise any action deemed necessary to avoid a reoccurrence.

## 17. Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education

- 17.1. If an appellant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of their appeal, they may ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) to review their case. In order to do this, the appellant must normally have been issued with a Completion of Procedures Statement.
- 17.2. The University will automatically issue a Completion of Procedures Statement when an appellant has exhausted all of the University's internal procedures; this will normally only follow a review of the decision at the preliminary stage or of the Academic Appeals Board.
- 17.3. An appellant is entitled to request a Completion of Procedures Statement at an earlier point provided that they confirm their understanding that they do not have grounds to request a review according to these procedures.
- 17.4. Further and specific details about the OIA can be obtained from its website:  
[www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk).

## 18. Enhancement Opportunities

- 18.1. The University will use information gathered throughout the conduct of appeals to determine areas of its practice that might be enhanced.
- 18.2. The outcome of each academic appeal will be communicated to the relevant Head of Faculty, School, or Division, and to the Academic Registrar (or nominee).
- 18.3. Where the need arises, the Academic Appeals Board will write to the Head of Academic Standards and Governance (or nominee) and, where appropriate, other office holders to

draw attention to any specific matters that may require attention or to general issues of policy that the University may wish to reflect on.

18.4. Academic Services (Student Casework) will record details of each appeal received, its nature and the outcome. Statistical data will be compiled on an annual basis in order to provide reports to Senate, via Education Committee. Such reports will not include any personally-identifiable information.