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Procedure for Academic Appeals and Review of Assessment- Related Matters



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About this procedure

The Procedure for Academic Appeals sets out the grounds and procedures through which students can appeal Assessment Board decisions, along with the remedies for upheld appeals.

Introduction and Context

1.1. The University's [Assessment Boards](#) are, as committees of the [Academic Board](#), responsible to the Academic Board for the assessment of students. Except as provided for in this Procedure, no decision of a properly convened, constituted and conducted University Assessment Board, acting within the University's regulations, may be modified by any authority within the University. In the context of appeals from postgraduate researchers, the term "Assessment Board" in this procedure should be taken to mean the body making a decision on the registration (RD1), transfer (RD2), annual review (RDAR) and examination stage.

1.2 In reaching a final decision on a student's assessment, an Assessment Board may take into account such other factors as it deems appropriate. It is in the interest of students to ensure that the relevant Assessment Board is aware of any [exceptional factors](#) which may have adversely affected their performance in assessment. Students must submit evidence of these in good time to their [Faculty Exceptional Factors Panels](#).

1.3 This Procedure applies to:

- i) the final stage of all undergraduate

and taught postgraduate programmes where the recommendation concerning an award is made by an Assessment Board of the University (and thus a Committee of the Academic Board);

ii) all intermediate stages of programmes where student progress is at the discretion of the University.

iii) all assessment points within the postgraduate researcher journey, i.e., registration (RD1), transfer (RD2), annual review (RDAR) and examination stage

1.4 This Procedure provides for:

i) early resolution of students' assessment-related issues and concerns through results surgeries;

ii) early review of assessment-related matters through Faculty Exceptional Factors and Assessment Review Panels;

iii) formal consideration of academic appeals through University Appeals Panels;

iv) the review of decisions of University Appeals Panels, on limited grounds.

Grounds for Academic Appeal

2.1 A student may use this Procedure where s/he considers that either or both
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of the following grounds applies:

i) that their performance in examinations or other forms of assessment was adversely affected by exceptional factors which they did not submit to the Assessment Board prior to its making a final decision on their assessment. In such cases, the student's claim must be supported by acceptable contemporaneous medical or other appropriate evidence. Little or no weight may be attached to medical certificates or other evidence obtained some time after the occurrence of the exceptional factors on which the appeal is based;

ii) that a material error had occurred in the conduct of their assessment, or that the examinations or assessments or the proceedings of the Assessment Board or other relevant body were not conducted in accordance with the relevant regulations or that some other material irregularity in the conduct of their assessment had occurred and that the error, conduct or irregularity was of such a nature as to cause reasonable doubt as to whether their result might have been different had it not occurred.

In addition, in all cases that are considered through the formal and the review stages of this Procedure, consideration will always be given to whether there is evidence of bias or perception of bias, and whether the outcome is reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances.

2.2 A student may also appeal against a decision of an [Assessment Disciplinary Committee](#), on either or both of the following grounds:

i) that there were exceptional factors they did not submit to the Assessment Disciplinary Committee prior to its making a final decision;

ii) that the proceedings of the Assessment Disciplinary Committee were not conducted in accordance with the relevant regulations or that some other material irregularity had occurred and that the conduct or irregularity was of such a nature as to cause reasonable doubt as to whether the decision of the Assessment Disciplinary Committee might have been different had it not occurred.

2.3 The Procedure may not be used:

i) to challenge the academic judgment of Assessment Boards in reaching a decision on progression or on the final level of award, based on the marks, grades and other information relating to a student's performance. Any such cases will be rejected;

ii) to express dissatisfaction with results where a case cannot be made under section 2.1 above;

iii) to pursue allegations that poor teaching, supervision or guidance affected performance. These matters should normally be progressed through the [Student Complaints Procedure](#).

2.4 Students should be encouraged to disclose any disability they feel may be relevant to their case. University staff should ensure that in managing the operation of this Procedure for such students, any reasonable adjustments are made to ensure the students are adequately supported. However, students cannot use this Procedure to request alternative assessment methods that have not been previously identified in a [Personal Learning Plan](#). A disability does not exempt a student from demonstrating achievement in the learning outcomes required for their course, although an alternative means of assessment may be specified in a [Personal Learning Plan](#).

Remedies

3.1 Where an appeal is upheld on either of the grounds in section 2.1 above, a Faculty Exceptional Factors and Assessment Review Panel or a University Appeals Panel will normally apply a standard remedy appropriate to the circumstances. Panels must not amend marks, other than to correct an error of calculation.

3.2 Where a Faculty Exceptional Factors and Assessment Review Panel or a University Appeals Panel upholds a claim but there are complex circumstances, for which a standard remedy might not be appropriate, the Panel Chair will consult with the Chair of the Assessment Board to ensure that the remedy is academically and /or professionally practicable.

3.3 Where an appeal from a postgraduate researcher is upheld, the normal remedy is a further opportunity to take the examination, with or without a further period of supervision. The Panel may also sanction the appointment of new examiners through the normal appointments process, if, following invitation, the original ones signify that they are no longer available. The Panel has the authority to implement such remedies, but shall report them to the Academic Board Research Degrees Committee. Exceptionally, the Panel may recommend that the decision of the original examiners should be annulled and that new examiners shall be appointed. On receipt of a clear statement of reasons, the Committee shall approve or dismiss this recommendation. They shall provide an explanation for any dismissal, but there shall be no right of appeal against this decision.

Stages of the Procedure

4.1 The Procedure comprises the stages that are set out below. Students will be required to submit all academic appeals and requests for review of assessment-related matters on a standard form, which will be used as the basis for the consideration of their case by Faculty Exceptional Factors and Assessment Review Panels and University Appeals Panels.

Early resolution through results surgeries

4.2 Results surgeries will be held at departmental or faculty level, after students have been notified of their results. The surgeries will give students an opportunity to seek clarification of their results and/or to discuss concerns with a member of staff. Each faculty and collaborative partner institution will determine how and by whom results surgeries will be conducted. Students will be strongly encouraged to make use of a results surgery before they make a decision about whether to take a matter forward to the next stage.

Early review of assessment-related matters

4.3 Where students do decide to pursue a matter relating to the outcome of their assessment, initial review will be undertaken by a Faculty Exceptional Factors and Assessment Review Panel which will make decisions on exceptional factors claims and on any other claims the Panel considers can be upheld on the basis of the information and evidence provided by students.

4.4 The Faculty Exceptional Factors and Assessment Review Panels will be distinct from the Faculty Exceptional Factors Panels that deal

with exceptional factors claims that are submitted before Assessment Boards have met to consider students' results. They will comprise all of the Heads of Department or School in the Faculty (or their nominees) and the Chair of the Faculty Exceptional Factors Panel (or their nominee from the Panel) and at least one other member of the Faculty Exceptional Factors Panel.

4.5 Where a Faculty Exceptional Factors and Assessment Review Panel is unable to uphold or part-uphold a claim, the case will be referred to the central Student Case Management Team. Students will be informed either that their request has been upheld by the Panel, or that their case has been referred to the Student Case Management Team for consideration. Exceptionally, where a student has not provided supporting documentation but where the case appears to a Faculty Exceptional Factors and Assessment Review Panel to be straightforward, the Panel may give the student a fixed period of time in which to provide the documentation.

The formal stage of the academic appeals procedure

4.6 The Student Case Management Team will assess all cases that are referred by Faculty Exceptional Factors and Assessment Review Panels to identify which should be considered through the formal stage of the academic appeals procedure and which should be dealt with in some other way (for example, as a complaint rather than as an appeal).

4.7 Following the initial assessment, the Student Case Management team will acknowledge receipt of the appeal and give the student a 14 day period in which to submit further evidence or an

additional statement.

4.8 When the Student Case Management Team receive an appeal from a postgraduate researcher, the student will be provided with copies of all preliminary and final examiners reports and any other documentation concerning the examination. The student will be given the opportunity to submit further evidence, or an additional statement, in the 28 days following the dispatch of this material. This extended period for submission of additional material is in recognition of the need to allow the student an opportunity to consult with his or her supervisors, to absorb and if necessary to receive advice on the reasons for the examiners' or scrutineers' decisions.

4.9 The formal stage of the academic appeals procedure will be undertaken by University Appeals Panels, which will be convened and chaired by a senior officer nominated by the Registrar and will also include:

i) two academic appeal assessors, who will be senior members of academic staff of the University with appropriate experience and no prior involvement in the cases that are under consideration;

ii) the President or another elected sabbatical officer nominated by the Students' Union.

4.10 Only those cases that are considered by University Appeals Panels will be formally recorded as academic appeals.

4.11 As part of the investigation that is undertaken of every appeal, University Appeals Panels will consider whether there is evidence of bias or perception of bias, and whether the outcome is reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances.

4.12 Where the facts and evidence of a case are complex or contentious, the Chair of a University Appeals Panel may invite the student and a representative of the Assessment Board to attend the Panel meeting in order to explain their position. Students will have the right to be accompanied when attending a meeting of a University Appeals Panel.

The review stage of the academic appeals procedure

4.13 Students who are dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal stage will be able to request a review on the following grounds only:

i) that the correct procedures were not followed in the consideration of their case through the earlier stages of the Procedure;

ii) that the outcome of the formal stage of the academic appeals procedure was not reasonable;

iii) that there is new material evidence that for good reason was not available at the earlier stages of the Procedure.

4.14 The reviewer will be an academic Head of Department who has extensive experience as a member of University Appeals Panels and has had no previous involvement in the particular case s/he is reviewing. Reviewers will be supported by the Student Case Management Team. In all cases, reviewers will also be asked to consider whether there is evidence of bias or perception of bias.

Timescales and communication of decisions

5.1 The closing date for the submission of a request for the review of an assessment-related matter will be 14 calendar days after the publication of the relevant assessment result. Where a request is received later than this and

the Faculty Exceptional Factors and Assessment Review Panel does not consider there are reasonable grounds for the delay, it will be referred to the central Student Case Management Team. Outcomes from Faculty Exceptional Factors and Assessment Review Panels will normally be communicated to students within 14 calendar days of the meeting of the Panel.

5.2 The formal and review stages of this Procedure will be completed within 90 calendar days. The 90 day period will begin when a case is received by the central Student Case Management Team.

5.3 Summary decisions of University Appeals Panels, giving the outcome of the appeal with brief details, will normally be sent to students within 7 calendar days of the meeting of the Panel. A report will normally then be sent within 28 calendar days of the summary decision. This will identify the evidence used, the findings of fact, the regulations applied, the reasons for the Panel's decisions, any remedy that has been identified, and instructions on what to do next. Where an appeal has not been upheld, the student will receive with the report a draft Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter and will be given 14 calendar days in which to comment on the report and/or request a review. If the student does not request a review within that time, the draft CoP letter will become the final CoP letter.

5.4 Outcomes of reviews will normally be sent to students within 28 calendar days of the central Student Case Management Team receiving their request for a review. Students will also receive a final CoP letter.

5.5 In any case where an outcome cannot be communicated within the normal timeframes that are set out above, the student will be notified of the reason(s) for this and given a revised timeframe.

Office of the Independent Adjudicator

6.1 Once all stages of this Procedure have been exhausted, students have the right to refer the case to the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator \(OIA\) for Higher Education](#) for further review. An application to the OIA must be made within 12 months of the issue of a Completion of Procedures letter.

6.2 In considering academic appeals, the OIA will assess whether MMU procedures were properly followed, whether these procedures were reasonable, and whether the final decision was reasonable in all the circumstances.

6.3 Full details regarding the OIA's rules and guidelines are available via www.oiahe.org.uk.

Recording and Monitoring

7.1 A record of all appeals considered by University Appeals Panels will be maintained by the Student Case Management Team.

7.2 Appeals shall be monitored to identify trends, areas of good practice and where improvements could be made.

7.3 The Student Case Management Team will prepare an annual report on academic appeals for the University's Academic Quality and Standards Committee. Recommendations from this report shall be used to enhance the quality of the student experience

by informing the future development of University practices, procedures and activities.

Additional Information

This Procedure forms part of the University's regulatory framework. Other institutional Policies and Procedures that relate to Assessment include:

- [Undergraduate Assessment Regulations](#)
- [Taught Postgraduate Assessment Regulations](#)
- [Procedure for Addressing Academic Misconduct](#)
- [Procedure for Consideration of Exceptional Factors](#)
- [Procedure for Academic Appeals and Review of Assessment-Related Matters](#)
- [Student Complaints Procedure](#)
- [Assessment Arrangements for Disabled Students](#)
- [Procedure for the Suspension and Expulsion of Students on the Grounds of Professional Unsuitability](#)



Support and Guidance

Further support and guidance in relation to these Assessment Regulations is available from the following locations:

Assessment Regulations Website
www.mmu.ac.uk/assessment-regulations

Student Hubs
www.mmu.ac.uk/students/hubs

Faculty Student Support Officers
www.mmu.ac.uk/sas/student-services/student-support-officers.php

Students' Union Advice Centre
www.theunionmmu.org/your-advice-centre
Tel: 0161 247 6533
Email: s.u.advice@mmu.ac.uk

