

# Student Academic Queries and Appeals Procedure

Effective from 1 September 2022



*This procedure applies to all registered students, in all locations, on and off campus both in the UK and overseas and should be read in conjunction with the [Student Academic Queries and Appeals Policy](#).*

*[Appendix 1](#) provides a glossary of terminology, which you may find helpful to consult while using this procedure.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Newcastle University has a [Student Charter](#) that sets out what you can expect from your academic unit regarding your Programme of Study.

The Academic Queries and Appeals Procedure is used to investigate formal academic decisions which have been made in relation to your Programme of Study. It is **not** used for:

- Reports about the service and/or treatment you have received from an Academic Unit/Service or staff member are dealt with under the [Student Complaints and Resolution Procedure](#).
- Accommodation Complaints. Complaints of this nature should be directed to either [Universities UK](#) (for private accommodation) or to the [University accommodation service](#) (for Newcastle University-owned accommodation).
- Reports of Academic Misconduct (i.e. cheating) are investigated under the [Procedure for Assessment Irregularities](#).
- Reports about the Non-Academic Conduct of other Newcastle University students are dealt with under the [Student Disciplinary Procedure](#).
- Appeals against academic judgement; these are not permitted under any University procedure.

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## SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

We understand that submitting an appeal can be a complicated and stressful experience. You may find it helpful to seek support and advice via the following services:

- [Student Health and Wellbeing Service](#)
- [Student Progress Service](#)
- [Student Advice Centre of the Students' Union](#)

If you are required to attend any meetings throughout this process, you may choose to be accompanied by a friend or supporter. Please see the [guidance on the role of a friend or supporter](#). We strongly encourage you to access this support.

If you have a query on how the Procedure works you are also able to email [casework@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:casework@ncl.ac.uk) and a member of the Student Progress Service will contact you.

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## STUDENT ACADEMIC QUERIES AND APPEALS PROCEDURE

As part of this Procedure you are able to submit a request for reconsideration of decisions made: at the

Board of Examiners, as part of the Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) Process, by the Degree Programme Director (DPD) usually *in relation to Unsatisfactory Progress decisions* and/or by the Dean of Postgraduate Study usually *in relation to Postgraduate Research Progress decisions*.

The Procedure is split into three stages:

- **Level 1: Local Resolution**  
This is the informal stage for querying academic decisions, where you should raise your initial assessment/progress query, in writing, with your School/Faculty (Graduate School for PGR students), to try to reach an early resolution. This level needs to be completed before you can submit at Level 2. (for further details see page 4)
- **Level 2: Formal Investigation**  
This is the beginning of the formal stage of appeal and should only be used when the steps taken under Level 1 of the procedure have failed, or if you feel that your issue has not been resolved. To start this process you need to submit an Academic Appeal Form together with full details of the formal appeal and supply any available supporting evidence. (for further details see page 5)
- **Level 3: Case Review**  
This is the final stage of the Appeals Process, where if you remain unhappy with the decision reached at Level 2, you can request a review of the outcome by the Academic Registrar (or nominee). (for further details see page 7)

To ensure there is no conflict of interest, each Level of the procedure is handled by a Case Officer or member of staff who has no prior involvement in the case.

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#### IMPORTANT THINGS TO NOTE BEFORE SUBMITTING AN ACADEMIC QUERY OR APPEAL:

- Provisional marks *e.g. marks which have not yet been confirmed by a final Board of Examiners*, or any other provisional decision, cannot be considered under Level 2 or 3 of the Procedure.
- Provisional marks or decisions can be considered under Level 1 of the procedure. If you are an undergraduate or postgraduate taught student, you should follow School instructions on how to query this. Most Schools have a dedicated email for you to use to submit your request. Either contact your School Office or look in your Degree Programme Handbook for this information. If you are a Postgraduate Research student please contact your Faculty Graduate School (contact information is available here).
- There are specific grounds under which you can submit your query/appeal which are explained in more detail below. These grounds do not include inadequacy of teaching and/or supervision which should be raised as a complaint, following the Student Complaints and Resolution Procedure.
- A challenge to the academic judgement of the examiners on a mark or a recommended degree classification is not a valid ground of academic appeal.
- Level 2 Academic Appeals must be supported by a clear statement and evidence, including the Level 1 submission and outcome. It is your responsibility to provide all relevant evidence to support your case. If you do not provide sufficient evidence your appeal may be rejected.
- The University does not usually investigate two Procedures at the same time, if your submission contains elements of both appeal and complaint then you will be contacted to discuss how these will be processed, and which issues will be considered first. If you feel there are exceptional reasons why both procedures should run in parallel then you would need to submit a request to

the Academic Registrar, by emailing [casework@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:casework@ncl.ac.uk). The Academic Registrar (or nominee) will consider your request, decide if this is appropriate and communicate this to you.

- If there are a number of students who have been affected by the same issues, you can submit your query/appeal together as a group. However, you should nominate one member of the group to act as your group representative. The group representative will be the only person the University will communicate with in regard to the appeal. The representative will be responsible for liaising and keeping the other members of the group informed. Under a group appeal individual circumstances will not be able to be considered
- The original decision stands until any review or reconsideration takes place and therefore you should prepare for any resit examinations, or other progress requirements, to be completed in case your appeal is unsuccessful.
- If you are eligible to receive a University award but you are appealing against a decision of the Board of Examiners you may attend your degree award (congregation) ceremony. If the award is subsequently amended, there will be no further opportunity to attend a congregation ceremony. Alternatively, you may defer your attendance until the outcome of your Academic Appeal is known. If you receive a certificate of award (parchment) before your appeal is determined and the Board of Examiners change their decision, the parchment should be returned to the University and a replacement will be issued upon receipt of the original.

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## GROUPS FOR APPEAL

You are only allowed to submit an academic query/appeal on one of the following grounds:

Grounds for academic appeal following **Board of Examiners Decisions**:

- (i) Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC)
  - If you have PEC which you weren't able to disclose through an online PEC application to the Personal Extenuating Circumstances Committee (PEC Committee) before the Board of Examiners took place;
  - If you weren't able to provide evidence for the PEC at that time but you now have evidence to support your circumstances;
  - If you have PEC which you weren't aware of at the time, but you are aware of now and you have supporting documentation to evidence this;
  - The decision of the Board of Examiners relied on a decision of the PEC Committee. You were previously unaware of the PEC Committee decision and you now wish to challenge it.
- (ii) Procedural irregularity on the part of the examiners.
- (iii) Bias or prejudice on the part of an examiner or examiners.
- (iv) That the decision reached was perverse in that it was one which no reasonable person or body could have reached on the available evidence.

Grounds for academic appeal following **PEC Committee (PECC) Decisions**:

- (i) Procedural irregularity on the part of the PECC
- (ii) Bias or prejudice
- (iii) That the decision reached was perverse in that it was one which no reasonable person or body could have reached on the available evidence.

Grounds for academic appeal following an **Unsatisfactory Progress Decision**:

- (i) Evidence which was not available or considered previously
- (ii) Procedural irregularity during the Unsatisfactory Progress process
- (iii) Bias or prejudice
- (iv) That the decision reached was perverse in that it was one which no reasonable person or body could have reached on the available evidence.

Grounds for academic appeal following a **DPD Request Decision**:

- (i) Evidence which was not available or considered previously
- (ii) Procedural irregularity on the part of the DPD/Dean of PG Study
- (iii) Bias or prejudice
- (iv) That the decision reached was perverse in that it was one which no reasonable person or body could have reached on the available evidence.

**Doctoral and MPhil Students**

Grounds for academic appeal following **Examination Outcome**

- (i) Personal Extenuating Circumstances
  - If you have personal extenuating circumstances which you weren't able to disclose, to your Examiners before your examination.
  - If you weren't able to provide evidence for your personal extenuating circumstances at the time of your examination but you now have evidence to support your circumstances
  - If you have personal extenuating circumstances which you weren't aware of at the time, but you are aware of now and you have supporting documentation to evidence this.
- (ii) Procedural irregularity on the part of the examiners.
- (iii) Bias or prejudice on the part of an examiner or examiners.
- (iv) That the decision reached was perverse in that it was one which no reasonable person or body could have reached on the available evidence.

Grounds for appeal following an **Annual Progress Review Outcome**

- (i) Evidence which was not available or considered previously
- (ii) Procedural irregularity during the Annual Progress Review process
- (iii) Bias or prejudice
- (iv) That the decision reached was perverse in that it was one which no reasonable person or body could have reached on the available evidence.

Grounds for academic appeal following a **Dean of Postgraduate Study Request Decision**:

- (i) Evidence which was not available or considered previously
- (ii) Procedural irregularity on the part of the Dean of PG Study
- (iii) Bias or prejudice
- (iv) That the decision reached was perverse in that it was one which no reasonable person or body could have reached on the available evidence.



**LEVEL 1 – INFORMAL ACADEMIC QUERY**

To lodge an academic query under Level 1 of this procedure, you should write to the relevant Chair of the Board of Examiners/Chair of the PEC Committee/DPD/ Dean of Postgraduate Studies, **within 14 calendar days** of the publication of the academic decision.

Please note: Most academic units will have a generic email address for you to submit your academic query, contact your School Office for information. Research students should contact their Faculty Graduate School.

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your academic query, you will be given details of how to make a Level 2 formal appeal or where your query has been already been reconsidered by the Chair of the Board of Examiners/Chair of the PEC Committee/DPD/Dean of Postgraduate Studies you may be referred to Level 3 of the procedure to request a case review. All Level 1 outcomes should be determined **within 14 calendar** days of submission.

## LEVEL 2 – FORMAL ACADEMIC APPEAL

If you think that the Level 1 outcome has not resolved your query, you should complete and submit the Level 2 Academic Appeal application form along with supporting evidence, including the Level 1 outcome, to [casework@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:casework@ncl.ac.uk) within **21 calendar days** of the outcome of the Level 1 decision.

A request to submit a late formal Academic Appeal, with good reasons for the delay, will be considered by the Head of the Student Progress Service.

Your Appeal will be acknowledged in writing within 7 days of receipt. In the acknowledgement, we will confirm whether your concerns can be addressed under this procedure. Where this procedure is not appropriate for dealing with your Appeal, we will direct you to a more suitable procedure.

Your Level 2 Academic Appeal will be considered by the Head of the Student Progress Service. They may reject your appeal if:

- Your application is late without a good reason;
- You have not provided a good reason/evidence for failing to follow correct University procedures to inform the Examiners/Personal Extenuating Circumstances Committee/ Annual Progress Review Progress Panel of any personal extenuating circumstances affecting performance in advance of their decision;
- The information provided to you by the Academic Unit during Level 1 of this Procedure has adequately answered the issue you have raised;
- The documentation you have submitted does not provide enough evidence to support your appeal;
- Your request is being considered under an alternative procedure;
- The academic appeal is a challenge to academic judgement;
- The academic appeal is considered to be vexatious.

If the Head of the Student Progress Service rejects your academic appeal, you will be informed in writing. If you are dissatisfied with this decision you will be referred to Level 3 of this procedure.

A Case Officer will be appointed to administer your appeal. The Case Officer will send your full appeal submission to relevant staff within the Academic Unit, requesting a response to the issues you have raised. The External Examiner(s) comments may be sought, particularly where the appeal is from a research student. The relevant Academic Unit is normally given one week to respond and their response will be forwarded to you so that you can make any further comments you believe are relevant, noting you will normally be given one week to provide any additional comments you wish to submit.

Once all comments have been received the Head of the Student Progress Service will consider all information about your appeal and decide how this should be processed. Their decision will be communicated to you in writing.

Where the appeal is accepted for investigation, an Appeal Adjudicator will be appointed to consider the case. All appeal documentation will be forwarded by the Case Officer to the appointed Appeal Adjudicator for consideration.

If the Appeal Adjudicator decides that there are no reasonable grounds for referring your case back for reconsideration, the Case Officer will inform you of this in writing, with reasons, within 14 calendar days of the decision.

If the Appeal Adjudicator decides that a case should be referred back for reconsideration you will be informed of this in writing and the Case Officer will follow the relevant process below:

***Taught Programmes (including non-standard programmes and stand-alone modules and taught elements of Research Masters Programmes)***

In the case of all taught programmes and modules, the Case Officer will:

Write to the original examiners (through the Chair of the Board of Examiners), or other relevant authority, requesting a reconsideration of your case, with an Independent Chair, if deemed appropriate. This could include specific instructions for action where relevant. Please note that your case may be referred to the next normal meeting of the Board of Examiners to be considered by the full Board rather than Chair's action being taken

***Research Programmes***

In the case of postgraduate research programmes, the Case Officer will:

**1. Appeals relating to Annual Progress Review Outcomes**

Write to the Dean of Postgraduate Studies and the Annual Progress Review Panel requiring reconsideration of the APR outcome, which could include specific instructions to action.

Or

Direct the relevant Graduate School to organise a new Annual Progress Review Panel for you within two months of the appeal outcome, which will consider your continued progress. The Appeal Adjudicator will decide whether the original Annual Progress Review panel should consider your progress, or under exceptional circumstances, whether a new Annual Progress Review panel should be appointed.

**2. Appeals relating to Thesis Examination**

Write to the Dean of Postgraduate Studies and the original examiners requiring reconsideration of the thesis without further revision.

Or

- i. Direct the relevant Faculty Graduate School to write to you giving you permission to revise your thesis in line with the examiner's report and re-submit it for examination within a specified time frame in accordance with the normal procedure for re- submission. The Appeal Adjudicator should decide whether the re- examination will be undertaken by the original examiners or, under exceptional circumstances, by newly appointed examiners,
- ii. Declare the original examination null and void and require the Head of Academic Unit to nominate for the approval of the Faculty Dean of Postgraduate Studies two new external examiners to re-examine your thesis without further revision. Where an appeal on the grounds of bias or prejudice on the part of an examiner or examiners has been upheld, this is the only outcome that can be chosen.

Once the case has been reconsidered and an outcome reached. The Case Officer shall inform you in writing, normally within 14 calendar days of receiving the report of the final outcome of the Examiners', Personal Extenuating Circumstances Committees' or Degree Programme Directors', Dean of Postgraduate Studies reconsideration, providing appropriate feedback on / minutes of / extract of the decision.

The decision of the Examiners, the Personal Extenuating Circumstances Committee, Degree Programme Director, Dean of Postgraduate Studies on any reconsideration following an academic appeal shall be final.

A Level 2 Formal Academic Appeal will normally be determined within **60 calendar days** of receipt of your submission, although some circumstances may require a longer period of investigation and determination. We will contact you if an extension is required.

## LEVEL 3 – REVIEW OF THE APPEAL OUTCOME

If you are dissatisfied with the Head of the Student Progress Service/ Appeal Adjudicator's Level 2 decision, or if you are dissatisfied with the decision made after your Level 1 academic query has been reconsidered, you can request a review of the decision based on one or more of the following:

- Procedural irregularity: you think that something was not done correctly and that this may have affected the decision reached;
- Unreasonable decision: you consider that no reasonable person could have reached the same decision based on the available evidence.

If you would like to request a case review, you should submit your request in writing to the Academic Registrar (via [casework@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:casework@ncl.ac.uk)) within **14 calendar days** of the outcome of the query/appeal. The Academic Registrar will decide whether to undertake a review of your complaint case.

If the Academic Registrar considers that your review request is valid, they will do one of the following:

- Offer you an alternative resolution;
- Arrange for the appeal to be reconsidered under Level 2 by a different Appeal Adjudicator who has no previous involvement in your case;
- Where the issues raised in your appeal are particularly serious, refer the issue to an Appeal Committee for consideration.

At the end of the case review, you will be issued with a Completion of Procedures Letter (CPL), which confirms that the University's internal procedures have been completed.

Consideration of a Level 3 Review of the Appeal Outcome will normally be determined within **30 calendar days** from receipt of the request for review, although some circumstances may require a longer period of investigation and determination. We will contact you if an extension is required.

### What if you are dissatisfied with the final outcome?

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) runs an independent scheme to review student complaints. The University subscribes to this scheme. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome offered by the University, you can seek an external review by submitting a complaint via the [OIA website](#). Complaints must be submitted within 12 months of the date of the Completion of Procedures letter.

### Confidentiality

The Academic Queries and Appeals Procedure is an internal and confidential process. It is important that you should respect this confidentiality and treat all information as confidential.

In submitting an academic query or appeal, you should be aware that details will normally be shared with University employees responsible for investigating and administering the query/appeal. By submitting an Academic Appeal and relevant evidence you are giving the University explicit consent to share this with appropriately appointed University employees.

It is your responsibility to seek consent for any third party data that you wish to submit in support your appeal.

If there are elements of your appeal that you feel are particularly sensitive, or you have other concerns about confidentiality, please contact [casework@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:casework@ncl.ac.uk) and we can discuss how disclosure can be minimised.

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## APPENDIX 1: TERMINOLOGY

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| <b>Academic Appeal:</b>    | A Level 2 formal request regarding a decision made by the Board of Examiners or Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) Committee of a taught Programme, a recommendation of the examiners of research degrees, or a Degree Programme Director or Progress decision.  |
| <b>Academic Judgement</b>  | Defined by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator as 'Not any judgment made by an academic; it is a judgment that is made about a matter where the opinion of an academic expert is essential'  |
| <b>Academic Query:</b>     | A Level 1 informal request regarding a decision following a Board of Examiners/ PEC Committee or DPD/Progress Decision made in writing to a nominated contact in the relevant academic unit.   |
| <b>Academic Registrar:</b> | or nominee, is the senior member of staff in the University with overall responsibility for ensuring a proper outcome for any student complaint  |
| <b>Academic Unit:</b>      | The unit that manages the student's programme. Normally this is a School, but occasionally a Faculty, Institute or other organisational unit applies.  |
| <b>Appeal Adjudicator:</b> | A nominated Academic, appointed by the Head of the Student Progress Service, who will be a Dean or other approved member of the Appeal Panel, with no previous involvement in, or close connection to, the case. <i>Note the term Appeal Adjudicator in this procedure also extends to any Appeal Committee constituted by Appeal Adjudicators</i>   |
| <b>Appeal Panel</b>        | A panel of Academic/ or other approved members, appointed by University Education Committee (UEC) who have experience of student academic progress and/or welfare matters  |
| <b>Appeal Committee:</b>   | Independent members of academic or other approved members, appointed by the Appeal Adjudicator, as deemed appropriate to consider the case.  |
| <b>Case Officer:</b>       | A Student Progress Officer appointed to process a submitted academic appeal and where appropriate, to advise the Appeal Adjudicator. Advice on the Academic Queries & Appeals procedure can be obtained from the Case Officer or another member of the Student Progress Service.   |
| <b>Examiners:</b>          | The Board of Examiners (or other authority within the Academic Unit) for an undergraduate or postgraduate taught programme, or for research degrees either the Annual Review Progress Panel/Dean of Postgraduate Study or individually appointed internal and external examiners. Other authorised roles within the Academic Unit, against which academic appeals may be considered, are Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) Committees and Degree Programme Directors for Unsatisfactory Progress cases. |



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| <b>PEC:</b>                      | Personal Extenuating Circumstances. Students should inform their School of any circumstances that may affect their studies or assessment by completing a PEC application, throughout the year and prior to Board of Examiners meetings in accordance with any School published deadline. PEC forms are considered by a PEC Committee appointed by the relevant Board of Examiners. <a href="https://www.ncl.ac.uk/academic/progress/pec">Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) - Student Progress - Newcastle University (ncl.ac.uk)</a> |
| <b>Progress Panel:</b>           | For research degree programmes, the Annual Review Progress Panel is deemed to be equivalent to that of the Board of Examiners for taught programmes.  |
| <b>Student Progress Service:</b> | The University service appointed by the Academic Registrar with responsibility for administering academic appeals. The Head of the Student Progress Service is responsible for considering Level 2 academic appeals and deciding whether or not they meet the specific grounds to be admitted for consideration by an Appeal Adjudicator. <a href="https://www.ncl.ac.uk/academic/progress">Student Progress - Student Progress - Newcastle University (ncl.ac.uk)/</a> .   |
| <b>Unsatisfactory Progress:</b>  | The University may seek to terminate a student's degree programme if s/he does not fulfil the requirements. Reasons for failure to make satisfactory progress include failure to (i) attend interviews or the programme of study without good cause, (ii) perform adequately, (iii) submit written work, (iv) attend examinations, (v) attend English Language assessments (vi) attend or provide evidence to dissertation supervisors. Full details are available in the University regulations.   |