

Academic Queries and Appeals Procedure

Effective from 1 September 2026

Purpose

1. The Academic Queries and Appeals Procedure (**'the Procedure'**) applies to all registered students, in all locations, on and off campus, both in the UK and overseas.
2. This procedure includes appeals relating to apprenticeship End-Point Assessment (**'EPA'**) decisions where the University is the End-Point Assessment Organisation (**'EPAO'**).
3. Nothing in this policy should be read as undermining or conflicting with the University's [Code of Practice for Freedom of Speech](#). In the case of any conflict, particular regard must be given to the Free Speech Code of Practice.
4. 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:
 - [Registry and Education Services](#)
 - [Student Health and Wellbeing Service](#)
 - [Support & Advice Hub of the Students' Union](#)
5. 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.

Scope

6. This Procedure is used to investigate formal academic decisions which have been made in relation to your programme of study.
7. As part of this Procedure, you are able to submit a request for reconsideration of decisions made:
 - by the Board of Examiners for your programme;
 - as part of the Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) process;
 - by your Degree Programme Director (DPD) (usually in relation to Academic Progress decisions); or
 - by the Deans of Postgraduate Research (usually in relation to Postgraduate

Research Project Approval or Progress decisions).

8. This procedure is not used for:

- Reports about the service and/or treatment you have received from an Academic Unit/Service or staff member; these 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); these are investigated under the [Academic Misconduct Procedure](#).
- Reports about the non-academic conduct of other Newcastle University students; these are dealt with under the [Student Conduct Disciplinary Procedure](#).
- Appeals against academic judgement; these are not permitted under any University procedure.

Academic queries and appeals process

9. The Procedure is split into three stages:

- **Level 1: Academic query**
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.
- **Level 2: Formal appeal investigation**
This is 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
- **Level 3 Review stage**
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).

10. [Appendix 3: How will my appeal be handled by the University?](#) provides a flow chart to illustrate how an appeal is handled under the Procedure.
11. 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.
12. The original decision stands until any review or reconsideration takes place. You should therefore prepare for any re-sit examinations, or other progress requirements, in case

your appeal is unsuccessful.

Level 1 Academic queries

13. All concerns should be raised under Level 1 of the procedure in the first instance.
14. To submit an academic query under Level 1 of the Procedure, you should write to the relevant Chair of the Board of Examiners/Chair of the PEC Committee/Degree Programme Director/Dean of Postgraduate Research, **within 14 days of the communication of the academic decision** which you wish to appeal. Most Schools have a dedicated email for you to use to submit your request. Contact your School Office (for Taught Students) or Faculty Graduate School (for Postgraduate Researchers) if you are unsure where to direct your appeal.
15. Level 1 academic queries can be used to raise concerns relating to provisional marks or decisions, which have not been confirmed by a Board of Examiners or Dean of Postgraduate Research. This may be appropriate where you believe an administrative error has taken place e.g. PEC adjustment or late penalty not applied correctly. But provisional marks cannot be considered under Level 2 or Level 3 of the Procedure.
16. You should explain why you are raising the query, and reference a valid reason why you think the academic decision should be reviewed, these are listed as the grounds in [Appendix 1](#).
17. All Level 1 queries should be determined within 14 calendar days of submission and a written outcome provided.
18. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your Level 1 academic query, you will be given details of how to raise a Level 2 academic appeal.
19. If your Level 1 query was admitted for reconsideration by the relevant Chair of the Board of Examiners/PEC Committee/Degree Programme Director/Dean of Postgraduate Research, and you remain dissatisfied with the outcome, you may be referred directly to Level 3 of the Procedure.
20. Level 1 appeals that are received later than 14 days after the publication of the academic decision will be forwarded on to the Director of Registry and Education Services (or nominee) (casework@ncl.ac.uk) to consider whether there is a credible and compelling reason to admit them out of time. Appeals will not be admitted where the length of delay makes it reasonable for the University to decline to consider the matter, regardless of reason for delay. If the Director of Registry and Education Services does not admit your academic appeal, you will be informed in writing and a Completion of Procedures Letter (CPL) will be issued, which confirms that the University's internal procedures have been completed..

Level 2 Formal appeal investigation

21. If the Level 1 outcome has not resolved your query, you should complete and submit the Level 2 Academic Appeal form to casework@ncl.ac.uk within **14 calendar days** of

the Level 1 decision.

22. Level 2 Formal appeals must explain the grounds for appeal (see [Appendix 1](#)) and explain clearly how the grounds are supported by evidence. You must include your Level 1 submission and outcome and any supporting documentation. It is the student's responsibility to provide all relevant evidence to support their case. If sufficient evidence is not provided, the appeal may be rejected.
23. Level 2 of this process will normally be concluded **within 60 calendar days** from receipt of the appeal. Where there is a delay expected in the process you will be informed in writing.
24. The Level 2 Academic Appeal process is used to consider appeals against formal academic decisions only. It cannot be used to consider provisional marks or decisions which have not been confirmed by a Board of Examiners or Dean of Postgraduate Research.

Preliminary review

25. Your Level 2 Academic Appeal will be considered by the Director of Registry and Education Services (or nominee) in the first instance to undertake a preliminary review. They may decline to admit your appeal if:
 - Your application is late (beyond 14 days) without a credible and compelling reason for the delay. Appeals will not be admitted where the length of delay makes it reasonable for the University to decline to consider the matter, regardless of reason for delay.
 - You have not specified your grounds for appeal;
 - You have not provided necessary supporting information/documentation;
 - The information provided to you by the Academic Unit during Level 1 of this Procedure has adequately answered the issue you have raised;
 - Your request is being considered under an alternative University procedure;
 - The academic appeal is a challenge to academic judgement (see [Appendix 1](#) – Terminology);
 - The academic appeal is considered to be vexatious, including where there has been a previous appeal on the same matter for the same module.
26. If the Director of Registry and Education Services does not admit your academic appeal, you will be informed in writing and a Completion of Procedures Letter (CPL) will be issued, which confirms that the University's internal procedures have been completed.

Level 2 appeal process

27. Academic appeals will be acknowledged in writing within 7 calendar 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.

28. 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. If the appeal is from a research student, comments may also be sought from the External Examiner(s).
29. The relevant Academic Unit is normally given 7 calendar days to respond and their response will be forwarded to you so that you can make any further comments you believe are relevant. You will normally be given 7 calendar days to provide any additional comments you wish to submit. If you do not respond to the invitation to comment, the case will be sent on to the Appeal Adjudicator.
30. Once all comments have been received, all appeal documentation will be forwarded by the Case Officer to the appointed Appeal Adjudicator for consideration. The Appeal Adjudicator will have had no prior involvement with your case (for example, they will not have been involved in the Level 1 decision) or programme of study.

Outcomes

31. 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.
32. 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 standalone modules and taught elements of Research Programmes)

- In the case of all taught programmes and modules, the Case Officer will write to the original examiners (via the Chair of the Board of Examiners), or other relevant authority, requesting a reconsideration of the case. This could include specific instructions for action, where relevant.
- The Appeal Adjudicator may decide that it is appropriate to request an Independent Chair to oversee the reconsideration process.
- The appeal 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

Appeals relating to Project Approval or Annual Progress Review (APR) Outcomes

- The Case Officer will write to the Dean of Postgraduate Research via the Graduate School for attention of the Project Approval or Annual Progress Review Panel requiring reconsideration of the outcome, which could include specific instructions for action; **OR**
- The Case Officer will direct the relevant Graduate School to organise a new Project Approval or Annual Progress Review Panel for the student within two months of the

appeal outcome, which will consider their continued progress.

- The Appeal Adjudicator will decide whether the original Project Approval or Annual Progress Review panel should consider the student's progress, or under exceptional circumstances, whether a new Project Approval or Annual Progress Review panel should be appointed.

Appeals relating to Thesis Examination

- The Case Officer will write to the Dean of Postgraduate Research and the original examiners requiring reconsideration of the thesis without further revision; **OR**
- The Case Officer will direct the relevant Faculty Graduate School to write to the student to give permission for them to revise their 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 with Independent Chair or, under exceptional circumstances, by newly appointed examiners; **OR**
- The Appeal Adjudicator will declare the original examination null and void and require the Head of Academic Unit to nominate two new external examiners to re-examine the 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.

33. Once the case has been reconsidered, the Case Officer will write to the student to inform them of the outcome, 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 Research reconsideration. This communication will also provide appropriate feedback on/minutes of the relevant decision.
34. Following an academic appeal, any reconsideration of decisions made by the Board of Examiners, Personal Extenuating Circumstances Committee, Degree Programme Director or Dean of Postgraduate Research, cannot be further appealed under Level 2 of the Procedure, but you can request a review under Level 3.

Level 3 Review stage

35. Students may submit a Level 3 Request to review;
 - The decision of the Appeal Adjudicator to not refer the appeal for reconsideration;
 - The outcome of Level 1 or Level 2 Academic Appeals when the decision has been reconsidered by the Academic Unit, such as through a Board of Examiners or PEC Committee.
36. Level 3 Requests for review must meet one or more of the following grounds:

- Procedural irregularity: you think that something was not done correctly in the consideration of your Level 2 Academic Appeal 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.
37. Level 3 Requests to review an appeal outcome should be submitted in writing to the Academic Registrar (via 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.
38. 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.
39. If the Academic Registrar considers that your review request is valid, they will do one of the following:
- Offer an alternative resolution (including offering a PEC adjustment with the exception of exemptions from minor elements or progression carrying fails), or refer the case back to the Board of Examiners, the Personal Extenuating Circumstances Committee, Degree Programme Director, Dean of Postgraduate Research for reconsideration
 - Arrange for the appeal to be reconsidered under Level 2 by a different impartial Appeal Adjudicator who has no previous involvement in the case;
 - Where the issues raised in the appeal are particularly serious, refer the issue to an Appeal Committee for consideration.
40. At the end of the case review, a Completion of Procedures Letter (CPL) will be issued, which confirms that the University's internal procedures have been completed.

Provision for external review

41. 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 a student is dissatisfied with the outcome offered by the University, they 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.

Key principles in operating this procedure

Confidentiality

42. The Procedure is an internal and confidential process. In submitting an academic query or appeal, students 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, students give the University explicit consent to share relevant details with appropriately appointed University

employees.

43. All University colleagues and students involved in the investigation of an academic query or appeal have a duty of confidentiality to the student. This means that all parties should refrain from discussing the case with anyone other than people who may be deemed to have a legitimate need to know.
44. It is the responsibility of the student to seek consent for any third-party data that they wish to submit in support their appeal. Where consent is not explicit, this information may be disregarded.
45. If there are elements of your appeal that are particularly sensitive, or the student has other concerns about confidentiality, they may contact casework@ncl.ac.uk and a discussion will take place with the student to decide how disclosure of information can be minimised.
46. Relevant colleagues will be informed, in confidence, of the outcome of any academic Appeal case.

Academic judgement

47. Students submitting academic queries or appeals at any level of this procedure should clearly state their grounds for appeal and provide any relevant additional information. 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. See [Appendix 1](#) for a guide to the accepted grounds for appeal. It is your responsibility as a student submitting an appeal to provide all relevant information, evidence or documentation required to support your appeal.

Group appeals

48. If there are a number of students who have been affected by the same issue/s, 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 regarding 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.

Appeals on the grounds of personal extenuating circumstances

49. Most appeals are made on the basis of querying a decision that has already been made, the appeal process is also used for students to be able to notify that there were personal extenuating circumstances that had not been notified at the time a Board of Examiner's decision was made.
50. Consideration of personal extenuating circumstances after an academic decision has been made is on an **exceptional basis** as students are expected to raise extenuating circumstances at the time they occur or, if there is credible and compelling reason for delay, prior to the Board of Examiners at which marks are finalised, through the

[Personal Extenuating Circumstances Procedure](#). In order for extenuating circumstances to be considered through the appeal process you must meet one or more of the grounds set out in Appendix 1 **and** meet requirements of the Personal Extenuating Circumstances Procedure.

Parallel procedures

51. The University does not usually permit parallel procedures relating to the same substantive matter. 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, noting that the [Student Complaints and Resolution Procedure](#) can provide a wider range of outcomes than this Procedure.

Graduating while an appeal is ongoing

52. 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 Graduation (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.
53. If a different award is made, a new certificate of award (parchment) will be issued to you. This will be dated to reflect the date of the new decision.

Document control	
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Appendix 1: Grounds for appeal

There are specific grounds under which a query/appeal may be submitted depending on the decision being appealed.

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.

Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Students

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 Education
- (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 Project Approval or 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 Research Request decision:

- (v) Evidence which was not available or considered previously
- (vi) Procedural irregularity on the part of the Dean of Education
- (vii) Bias or prejudice
- (viii) That the decision reached was perverse in that it was one which no reasonable person or body could have reached on the available evidence.

Appendix 2: Terminology

Academic Appeal: 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 for a Project Approval or Progress decision.

Academic Judgement: 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'.

Academic Query: 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.

Academic Registrar (or nominee): is the senior University employee with overall responsibility for ensuring a proper outcome for any student appeal/complaint. The Academic Registrar is also responsible for considering requests for Level 3 case reviews of academic appeals.

Academic Unit: The unit that manages the student's programme. Normally this is a School, but occasionally a Faculty, Institute or other organisational unit applies.

Annual Progress Review Panel: For research degree programmes, the Annual Review Progress Panel is deemed to be equivalent to that of the Board of Examiners for taught programmes.

Appeal Adjudicator: A nominated Academic, appointed by the Director of the Registry and Education Services, who will be a Dean or other approved member of the Appeal Panel, with no previous involvement in, or close connection to, the case. *(The term Appeal Adjudicator in this procedure also extends to any Appeal Committee made up of Appeal Adjudicators).*

Appeal Panel: 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.

Appeal Committee: Impartial academic employees of the University or other approved members, appointed by the Appeal Adjudicator, as deemed appropriate, to consider a case.

Appellant: are students/apprentices, or former students/apprentices, wishing to query or appeal against an academic decision. Appellants are responsible for ensuring that the information they provide is accurate.

Case Officer: are members of the Registry and Education Services with

responsibility for administering Level 2 and Level 3 academic appeals.

The Director of Registry and Education Services is responsible for considering Level 2 academic appeals and deciding whether they meet the specific grounds to be admitted for consideration by an Appeal Adjudicator.

The Chair of the Board of Examiners for your programme of study may consider Level 1 academic queries.

The Chair of the Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) Committee for your programme of study may consider Level 1 academic queries.

The Dean of Education for your programme of study may consider Level 1 academic queries.

Degree Programme Directors (DPDs) for your programme of study may consider Level 1 academic queries.

Examiners: This refers to 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 Education 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 Review of Academic Progress cases.

The Lifelong Learning Senior Manager may consider Level 1 academic and EPA queries. Where these queries relate to a credit bearing EPA as part of an integrated degree apprenticeship, the relevant DPD may also be consulted.

Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC): 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. [Personal Extenuating Circumstances \(PEC\)](#).

Project Approval Panel: For research degree programmes, the Project Approval Panel is similar to the Annual Progress Review panel and deemed to be equivalent to that of the Board of Examiners for taught programmes.

Registry and Education Services The [University service](#) with responsibility for academic appeals.

Review of Academic Progress: The University may seek to terminate a student's degree programme if they do not fulfil the requirements of their programme of study. Reasons for a review of 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.

Appendix 3: How will my appeal be handled by the University?

