

# **ACADEMIC APPEALS AND REVIEW POLICY**

1 The University of Law's Academic Appeals and Review Policy has been informed by the Office for Students Sector-Recognized Standards and the General Ongoing Conditions of Registration and has regard to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. These definitive reference points for all English higher education institutions set out how academic standards are established and maintained and how excellence in the quality of learning opportunities is assured.

This policy sits within The University of Law's Quality and Standards Code, which provides a suite of policies designed to safeguard the academic standards of The University of Law and to assure the quality of learning opportunities offered; this policy should therefore be read in conjunction with other relevant policies within the code.

## Introduction

2 This policy sets out the expectations, key aims and principles, and procedural approach of the Academic Appeals and Review Policy of The University of Law (the University). The University recognises that central to this policy is the University's responsibility for the academic standards of all awards granted in its name and the quality of learning opportunities for students.

## Responsibility for this policy

3 Ultimate responsibility for the development of clear and effective processes and procedures associated with the maintenance of standards and quality assurance of academic provision and overseeing their application lies with the Academic Board.

## Expectation

4 The University has procedures for handling academic appeals and student concerns and complaints about the quality of learning opportunities, or the provision of a programme of study or related academic or administrative service; these procedures are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement.

## Key aims and principles

5 The University ensures that, in the operation of its policies and procedures on academic appeals:

- 5.1 no student suffers disadvantage as a result of raising an appeal;
- 5.2 opportunities for early resolution of appeals are available;

- 5.3 procedures are clear and readily accessible to students, taking into account equality and diversity issues and barriers to access;
- 5.4 clear and accurate advice and guidance is available to students and staff;
- 5.5 training is available for staff conducting procedures;
- 5.6 procedures are conducted in a timely and fair manner;
- 5.7 appropriate action is taken following an appeal;
- 5.8 processes are in place to monitor the effectiveness of procedures;
- 5.9 outcomes of appeals processes are monitored and reviewed, and a record of resulting enhancements is maintained.

## Procedural Approach

6 Under the University's programme regulations, final decisions on the marks, grades or qualifications which a student receives can be made **ONLY** by the Examination or Degree Board (Board) related to the programme concerned.

7 However, the University does allow students, in certain circumstances, to challenge Board decisions, and this policy explains the circumstances in which, and the procedures through which, they may do so.

8 The outcome of any Stage One Appeal or Stage Two Review may have to depend on regulations which are prescribed for the programme concerned by the professional or regulatory body which governs it, and which the University must apply rigorously as a condition of validation.

9 As is true of all other higher education institutions, the University does not permit challenges to a Board's academic judgement. So, for example, a challenge would not succeed if it was based only on the ground that the appellant did not agree with a mark or grade that had been confirmed by the Board.

10 Queries about results at the end of the course must be directed to the Course Leader in the relevant University Centre, or to the Programme Director for online courses.

11 The University operates a two stage process of review after an initial Board decision. The process is conducted in a timely and fair manner; however, it will be dependent on when a Board is next sitting. The University aims to provide a final outcome for all appeals within 90 calendar days of receipt of the Stage One Appeal application. However, this outcome may be delayed if the student requires additional time at any stage to obtain and provide the required evidence. At the end of this internal process, students have the right to raise the matter with the Office of the

Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA), which is an external body that conducts independent reviews of cases.

## **Stage One – Request for appeal to the Board that made the original decision**

12 The Stage One Appeal request to the Board is conducted in accordance with the Assessment Regulations in force for the programme of study taken.

13 Full details of grounds for Stage One Appeal are defined in the relevant Assessment Regulations, but Stage One Appeal applications can normally only be accepted where a concession application has already been submitted and rejected.

14 A form to request a Stage One Appeal to the Board can be obtained by the student from the University Centre's Assessment Office or from the University website (<http://www.law.ac.uk/about/policies/>). This form must be completed and submitted to the Board with any supporting documentation within seven calendar days of the publication of results. The University does not consider Stage One Appeals received outside this time limit unless the student is able to provide evidence of exceptional circumstances which justify the delay in submission. Advice is given to students in the Student Handbook and also in the Concessions, Academic Appeals and Reviews - Student Guide (which is attached to the Stage One Appeal Form, and can also be found on the University website - <http://www.law.ac.uk/about/policies/>).

15 Supporting documentation which is not available at the time of the application must be submitted within a maximum of 21 calendar days from the date of the application.

16 The outcome of the Stage One Appeal is communicated to the student in writing in a timely fashion.

17 If the outcome is not in the student's favour, full details of their right to a further Stage Two Review, as outlined below, is provided with the outcome.

18 The Board does not enter into any further correspondence with the student.

## **Stage Two - Review**

19 The Stage Two Review acts as a mechanism for the review of the processes undertaken by the Board. No action is taken under this stage until the process of a Stage One Appeal to the Board, as described above, has been exhausted. The student then has 14 calendar days from receipt of the Stage One Appeal outcome letter to submit an application for Stage Two Review.

20 This process is administered by the Academic Registry, which also supports the Review Panel.

21 Stage Two Reviews are carried out by an Review Panel, comprising a minimum of three University staff of Senior Tutor level or above.

22 This panel meets at a number of points during the year to coincide with the publication of final results. The outcome of this review is normally notified to the student in writing within seven calendar days of the Stage Two Review Panel meeting.

23 Valid grounds for consideration under this stage are confined to claims that:

23.1 the Board did not follow its own rules and procedures under the Assessment Regulations, or;

23.2 despite having followed the correct procedures, the decision reached was one that no reasonable body, properly directed and taking into account all relevant factors, could have arrived at.

24 If no valid grounds are established, or this review stage does not find in the student's favour, they are informed in writing accordingly and the whole review process is concluded. The student is sent a Completion of Procedures letter by the Academic Registry with the outcome of their Stage Two Review, which they need if they wish to make a submission to the OIA.

25 If the Stage Two Review finds in the student's favour, a recommendation is made to the Board and the Board decision made on consideration of this recommendation is communicated to the student, together with a Completion of Procedures letter.

26 The Stage Two Review Panel records, monitors and reviews the outcomes of the appeals and review process and makes recommendations as appropriate.

## **Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)**

27 The University is a member of the OIA for Higher Education scheme. This scheme enables the student to obtain an independent review of their case, subject to the OIA's rules for eligibility. Further information can be obtained from [www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk).

28 If, having completed the University's procedures for appeals, the student is dissatisfied with the outcome; they may request a review by the OIA. Full details of this service, incorporating required timescales, are provided to the student by the University.

29 On conclusion of any review of the appeal decision, the University Complaints Officer provides the student with a Completion of Procedures letter, which they must present to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA), if they wish to request the OIA to review their case.

## Responsibility for the provision

30 Responsibility for the effective implementation of Academic Appeals and Review Policy lies with the Academic Registrar.

## Monitoring and review of the provision

31 Responsibility for reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of the Academic Appeals and Review Policy lies initially with the Academic Registrar. Formal responsibility for monitoring and evaluation of this provision lies with the Academic Board.

## Version history:

Version	Amended by	Revision summary	Date
V1.0	Campus Dean – Guildford	Initial drafting group	31/05/13
V1.1	Campus Head – Bristol	QA group	05/07/13
V1.2	External Consultant	Coherence activity amendments	18/09/13
V1.3	Campus Dean – Birmingham	Head of Complaints	19/09/13
V1.4	Student Officer	Review	23/09/13
V1.5	VP – AGQS	Review	24/09/13
V1.6	Academic Registrar	Review	25/09/13
V1.7	Academic Board	Approval	03/10/13
V1.8	Registry Officer	Final amendments following proofing	02/12/13
V1.9	VP – AGQS	Chair's sign off	13/12/13
V1.10	Registry Officer	Amendments following OIA recommendation	02/07/14
V1.11	Academic Registry	Review	16/07/15
V2.0	Vice Provost – External and Academic Development	QA group	20/08/15
V2.1	Academic Board	Approval	10/02/16
V2.2	Review Group and other stakeholders	Revised to align with published QAA advice and guidance	06/09/19
V2.3	Registry Officer	Change to the document coding convention	March 2020

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V2.4	Registry Officer	Amendment to process stage terminology	May 2020
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