

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Academic Judgement:** relates to the considered application of academic expertise in the assessment and grading of a student's academic work. It is a matter solely for the person or committee that has made that academic judgement. The University's academic judgement procedures are approved by the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). The University will not normally consider appeals concerning the academic judgement of any of its examiners or committees unless it can be shown that they have not followed correct procedures or that their decision was perverse (i.e. that the decision was one that no reasonable person, properly advised, could have reached). Where a student disagrees, or is unhappy with a decision of academic judgement, for example the award of a particular CGS mark, that student cannot submit an appeal solely because they disagree or are unhappy. To submit an appeal there must be valid grounds, for example, if the procedure used in reaching the decision was flawed.

**Appeal Panel:** the body of trained staff and student representatives that will hear an appeal at the 'Further Stage' of the University's Appeals process.

**Case Officer:** a University Officer assigned by Registry to a student's appeal. This person will be a student's main point of contact throughout their appeal.

**Class Certificate:** confirmation that a candidate has attended and duly performed the work prescribed for a course.

**Code of Practice of Student Discipline (Academic) and (non-Academic):** refers to the procedures of the University in relation to prescribing sanctions against misconduct by students which interferes with the proper functioning of the University, its activities, or with the legitimate interests of those who work or study in the University.

**Competency Review:** a review, undertaken at the point of submission of a case to determine (i) whether the case is in time and (ii) whether the case is competent for progression on procedural grounds.

**Discrimination:** there are nine 'protected characteristics' in equality and diversity related legislation that make it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of: sex; age; race; disability; religion & belief; sexual orientation; gender reassignment; pregnancy & maternity; and marriage & civil partnership.

**Extenuating or Mitigating Circumstances:** circumstances or events which may be considered to have had a disadvantageous effect (e.g. serious illness supported by a medical certificate)

**Evidence:** supporting statements or information which must be independent (e.g. provided by a medical practice).

**File Record:** the case documents compiled during an appeal and consisting of a Form for Appeals, supplementary evidence (e.g. medical certification), formal outcome letters and other related correspondence.

**Fitness to Practise:** refers to the guidance of the General Medical Council (GMC), the General Dental Council (GDC), and the General Teaching Council (GTC) on the fitness (or suitability) of students undertaking medical, dentistry and teaching qualifications to go on to work with the public in those fields.

**Frontline Resolution:** refers to the opportunity, prior to the submission of a formal appeal case, to resolve an issue at the point of origin (e.g., a matter relating to attendance monitoring with the appropriate course coordinator).

**Grounds to Proceed:** the procedural grounds (or basis) upon which an appeal is considered suitable to proceed to a formal hearing by an Appeal Panel. This decision will be made by the Grounds to Proceed Panel, consisting of the Case Officer and two senior members of University staff. The decision will be based on whether the appeal satisfies the criteria for such an action (e.g. it relates to procedures rather than the

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questioning of academic judgement).

**Head of School or Service:** the head of an academic 'School' (e.g. the School of Social Sciences or the School of Biological Sciences). Where an appeal involves the Head of School, or where deemed appropriate, the Head of School may nominate another member of staff to lead on an appeal.

**Hearing:** a meeting of an Appeal Panel to hear and decide a case at the Further Stage of the University's appeals process.

**Material disadvantage:** is the verifiable disadvantage that a student feels they have suffered. For example, where an irregularity has resulted in a student failing to be admitted to an Honours programme, or where an Honours classification has been adversely affected by problems with an individual course. Material disadvantage must have resulted from a breach of procedure or lack of competency or prejudice.

**Lead Appellant:** In the case of group appeals, an individual assigned by the group to act as liaison between the University and appealing group.

**Policy on Undergraduate Student Progress:** refers to the University's policy on Undergraduate Student Progress and applies to those undergraduate students<sup>1</sup> wishing to put forward a case against not being permitted to progress to the next Programme Year of their undergraduate degree programme or a requirement that they discontinue attendance on courses as set out in the relevant Degree Regulations;

**Registry:** the Registry is part of the University's central administration and has responsibility for many aspects of student and academic administration, including appeals.

**Remedy/Remedies:** the agreed action to be taken as a result of an upheld appeal. For example, a student who had an appeal against an academic decision upheld (e.g. a CGS mark) would be advised that the decision in question would be returned to the examiners for review. This is because a decision of the examiners can only be altered by the examiners (see Academic Judgement above). The examiners would be invited to re-consider their academic judgement in light of the grounds of appeal and of the Appeal Panel's decision and will only be asked to do so where it can be shown that they have not followed correct procedures or that their decision was perverse (again, see Academic Judgement above). Students should note that in reviewing an academic decision the examiners may decide not to revise an award, or may revise it up or down.

**Senate:** the Senatus Academicus (or University Senate) is the supreme academic body of the University of Aberdeen.

**Students' Union:** the Aberdeen University Students' Association (AUSA) is the organisation that represents and serves the interests of all Aberdeen University students. It is an independent body to the University but works closely with it.

**University Court:** the University Court is the supreme governing body of the University of Aberdeen.

**Vexatious:** where an action that has been deemed to be without merit is pursued with undue persistence or is pursued in a manner that harasses a member of University staff or a fellow student.

<sup>1</sup>For the purposes of this policy, the term 'undergraduate student' includes students registered on the Professional Graduate Diploma in Education.



## Annex A

### OUTLINE OF PROCEDURES: MEETING WITH A HEAD OF SCHOOL OR SERVICE

The Head of School or Service (or nominee) has an obligation to ensure that appeals made by students are fully and properly explored.

On receiving a Form for Appeals and Complaints from Registry, the Head of School or Service will arrange to meet with the student, and such additional staff members as are required, to seek resolution of the matter. An administrator will also be present to take notes of the meeting.

In instances of group appeals, the Head of School or Service will meet with the lead appellant, as identified by the appealing group.

During an appeal meeting the Head of School or Service will ensure that all statements made are substantiated and are made in an appropriate manner. Where the Head of School or Service believes that any written or verbal statement is inappropriate, derogatory or defamatory they will ask that such statements are retracted and/or rephrased.

The procedure to be followed at an appeal meeting with the Head of School or Service will be kept as informal as possible but will include the following:

1. The Head of School or Service will ensure that all of those present, including any representatives, are introduced at the start of the meeting.
  2. The Head of School or Service will invite the student (or their representative) to make an opening statement based on the written grounds of the appeal.
  3. The Head of School or Service may address questions to the student (and/or their representative).
  4. The Head of School or Service will then invite any member of staff present (or their representative) to comment on the circumstances of the case.
  5. The Head of School or Service may address questions to the member of staff (and/or their representative).
  6. The Head of School or Service will invite the student (or their representative) to address questions to the member of staff (or their representative).
  7. The Head of School or Service will invite the member of staff (or their representative) to address questions to the student (or their representative).
  8. The Head of School or Service will invite the staff member (or their representative) and the student (or their representative) to make a closing statement.
  9. When the Head of School or Service is satisfied that no party or respective representative has any further question to ask or statement to make, the Head of School or Service will ask all parties to leave the room while they consider the outcome of the meeting.
  10. The Head of School or Service's decision, including any proposed remedy, will be conveyed in writing to the student, and where appropriate any member(s) of staff, normally within three working days of the meeting. The outcome and any proposed remedy will be recorded on Part B of the Form for Appeals. The Head of School or Service should address **all points** raised by a student within their appeal within Part B. It will also include the procedure and grounds for further appeal to an Appeal Panel.
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## **Annex B**

### **OUTLINE OF PROCEDURES: APPEAL PANEL HEARING**

A University Appeal Panel has powers delegated to it by the University Senate and Court to hear and decide on student appeals and to apply such remedies as it considers appropriate.

The Panel Convener has an obligation to ensure that appeals made by a student are fully and properly explored. During an Appeal Panel hearing, the Panel Convener is responsible for ensuring that all statements made are substantiated and are made in an appropriate manner. Where the Panel Convener believes that any written or verbal statement is inappropriate, derogatory or defamatory they will ask that such statements are retracted and/or rephrased.

The procedure to be followed at an Appeal Panel hearing will be kept as informal as possible but will include the following:

1. The Panel Convener will introduce the Panel members to the student and/or, where in attendance, the student's representative and witness(es).
  2. The Panel Convener will invite all other University staff in attendance to introduce themselves to the Panel and to the student (and/or his or her representative).
  3. The Panel Convener will outline the procedure to be followed.
  4. The Panel Convener will ask any witness(es) to wait outside the hearing room until called.
  5. The Panel Convener will invite the student (or his/her representative) to make an opening statement and the Panel will have an opportunity to ask the student (and/or his/her representative) questions.
  6. The Panel Convener will invite the Head of School (or nominee) to comment on the case and the Panel will have an opportunity to ask the Head of School or Service (or nominee) questions.
  7. The Panel Convener will call, where relevant, any witness(es) named by the student for questioning by the Panel. The witness(es) will be asked to leave the room after answering questions.
  8. The Panel Convener will call, where relevant, any staff witness(es) invited by the Head of School or the Panel for initial questioning by the Panel. The student (or their representative) will be given an opportunity to question the witness(es). The witness(es) will be asked to leave the room after answering questions.
  9. The Panel Convener will invite the student (or their representative) to make a concluding statement.
  10. Once the Panel Convener is satisfied that no parties or representative has further questions to ask or statements to make, they will invite all parties, except the Panel members and the Case Officer, to leave the room while the Panel considers its decision.
  11. The decision of the Panel, including any proposed remedy will, where possible, be communicated to the student and Head of School or Service verbally on the day of the hearing. It will normally be provided in writing to all relevant parties within three working days.
  12. The decision of the Panel is final and is not subject to further appeal within the University. The student will be provided with detail of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's procedure for conducting external review of the University's handling of the appeal.
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