GUIDE

THE APPEALS PROCEDURE
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INTRODUCTION

The University of Lancaster Student Appeals Procedure can be found in MARP (Manual of Academic Regulations and Procedures).

The guide is about the procedure and aims to be a useful reference document for students and staff and to make the procedure easier to understand.

Whilst this guide provides the basics, to avoid doubt the procedures in MARP provide the definitive statement. We ask you to make sure that you have read and understood the procedure before making an appeal.

The University is committed to providing the best possible experience for you in a high quality learning environment, and values the integrity of accurate academic assessment. However, we recognise that, on occasion, it can be appropriate for you to ask us to reconsider our decisions for procedural reasons or because there are other factors that we have not considered.

The procedure exists so that there is an effective way for you to be able to make an appeal, and to ensure that all appeals are treated fairly, efficiently, and with consistency.

In this guide you will find helpful information and tips to help you if you are considering making an appeal, as well as where to find other sources of help and advice.

WHAT IS AN APPEAL?

The Office for the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) defines an appeal as ‘a request for a review of a decision of an academic body charged with making decisions on student progress, assessments and awards’.

WHO CAN MAKE AN APPEAL?

The MARP Academic Appeals procedure applies to all current and recently graduated students registered on a Lancaster University programme, with the exception of those students registered on collaborative programmes where an alternative appeals procedure has been formally approved as being procedurally equivalent.

The right of appeal is available to students who:

(a) have failed to qualify to proceed from one stage of a degree programme to the next;
(b) have failed to qualify for the award of the degree for which they were registered;
(c) wish to challenge on procedural grounds, the class of degree to be awarded;
(d) received a lower class of degree than would otherwise have been the case had plagiarism penalties not been applied.
If you and your fellow students want to make a collective or group appeal, you may do so; you will however need to nominate one student as a spokesperson for the group.

If you have left the University you can also use the procedure, but you must submit your appeal no later than one month following the formal publication of your results.

**WHAT CAN I APPEAL AGAINST?**

The procedure allows you to request a reconsideration of a decision related to your progress, assessments, and awards; in other words make an appeal. You may make an appeal by providing evidence to support a consideration against at least one of the following grounds:

**Grounds for an appeal:**
- material administrative error or irregularity in the conduct of assessment which adversely affected the student’s performance and results (for example, there has been an administrative error and as a result a mark you received has been incorrectly recorded);
- significant extenuating circumstances which adversely affected the student’s performance and results (for example, this could be something that has seriously affected your studies, such as illness);
- unfair treatment or discrimination, out with the exercise of academic judgement; (this could be evidence of bias or prejudice of an assessor).

All which, for good reasons, could not be brought to the attention of boards of examiners at the relevant time and which could have influenced their recommendations had the information been available.

If you are unsure about whether or not you have grounds for an appeal then you should seek advice and help from one of the various sources available to you. Please see the advice and help section of this guide for more information.

**ACADEMIC JUDGEMENT**

One of the most common misconceptions surrounding an academic appeal is the belief that simply not being happy with a mark is enough reason to make an appeal. This is known as an academic judgement.

Academic judgement is the judgement that is made about a matter (i.e. a mark, award, or result) where only the opinion of an academic expert is sufficient. Because we have a process in place to ensure our academic judgement is correct, it remains something that you are unable to appeal against.

The Academic Appeals Procedure may be used to consider whether or not Lancaster’s academic regulations and related procedures have been followed but not to challenge a mark awarded because you feel that you may have deserved a better one.
BEFORE I MAKE AN APPEAL

We ask that if you are considering making an academic appeal, that you thoroughly read the University of Lancaster’s Student Appeals Procedure in MARP to make sure you fully understand the stages of the procedure, its principles, scope and limitations.

You must be aware of the time limits that apply to the procedure, and particularly to the time limits that apply directly to you.

We also recommend that you make use of the various sources of help that are available to you across the University before making an academic appeal. Please look at the advice and help section and the useful and important links section for more information on where to find these.

HOW DO I MAKE AN APPEAL?

This section will summarise each stage of the procedure, making reference to the time limits, and communication responsibilities of both you and the University.

The Student Appeals Procedure uses two stages to enable you to make an appeal. The University aims to complete all aspects of the procedure within 90 calendar days of the Stage 1 appeal application being submitted. If your case is particularly complex, we may agree with you a longer timeframe.

OVERVIEW OF PROCEDURE

Stage 1 – The Formal Stage
Providing that the appeal has met the required grounds (please see the ‘what is an appeal?’ section for these), a formal academic appeal can be made.

How do I submit my appeal?
You must make a formal Stage 1 appeal by completing an appeal form and sending it by email to ug.appeals@lancaster.ac.uk or pg.appeals@lancaster.ac.uk depending on your level of study.

Time Limit: You must be aware that you have one month from the formal publication of results to submit your application form. You must therefore allow enough time to gather the forms of evidence and documentation that you may need for your application. Once submitted, no further evidence at Stage 1 will be accepted.

Applications received after one month will not be considered unless there are exceptional circumstances for the delay, these should be discussed with the Head of Student Registry or designated alternative nominated by the Director of Students, Education and Academic Services.
What happens next?
Once the form has been submitted, the University has **14 calendar days** to decide whether or not the appeal has grounds and to inform you of their decision. If the application is deemed as not having grounds then a Completion of Procedures Letter or COP will be issued. If it is decided that the appeal has grounds then you will be referred to an Academic Appeals Panel. The Appeals Panel will hear the case based on the information and accompanying evidence that you have provided in your Stage 1 application form.

The Appeals Panel has **30 calendar days** to make a decision about whether or not the academic appeal has been accepted or denied. You will receive a written response outlining the reasons why the panel’s decision has been reached, and in the case of an appeal being accepted, offer any actions or solutions as applicable.

If you do not accept the outcome at Stage 1, you may wish to have the decision of the panel reviewed. If this is the case then you may proceed to Stage 2 as described on the next page.

Please note the **14 calendar day/30 calendar day** period will not start until the result/outcome is verified. For example, for degree classification appeals, the formal results are confirmed by Senate up to 2 weeks after the provisional results are announced in departments. The time period starts once Senate has confirmed the results and they have been formally published on your Interactive Transcript on the Student Portal.

**Stage 2 – The Review Stage**
According to the procedure, if you do not accept the outcome at Stage 1, then you may proceed to Stage 2. **You cannot request a review of Stage 1 simply because you are dissatisfied with the outcome, you can only request a review based on the following grounds:**

- That there exists evidence that could not reasonably have been made available at Stage 1.
- That there exists evidence of a material procedural irregularity in Stage 1.
- That there exists evidence that the judgement at Stage 1 was perverse or bias.

**How do I submit my request for a review?**
You must make a request for a review by completing the [review form](mailto:review_form) and sending it by email to ug.appeals@lancaster.ac.uk or pg.appeals@lancaster.ac.uk depending on your level of study.

**Time Limit:** You have **14 calendar days** to submit the review form. This includes the time to collect any further evidence according to the grounds above.

**What happens next?**
After you have submitted your application to request a review, the Head of Student Registry (or designated alternative nominated by the Director of Students, Education and Academic Services) has **7 calendar days** to make an initial decision as to whether or not the review has grounds. If the review does not have grounds then you will be informed via a COP letter. If the review does have grounds then a Review Panel will make the decision within **21**
calendar days to accept or deny the review; either way this will be communicated to you in a written response outlining the reasons why their decisions have been reached. If it is accepted then any actions or solutions will be described as applicable. After this a COP letter will be issued.

**Appearing before a panel**

It may be possible to resolve an appeal without requiring student attendance. You should, however, be aware that according to the procedure you may be asked to attend both the Stage 1 and/or Stage 2 panel meetings. As the procedure describes it is not compulsory for you to attend either of the panel meetings, and failure to attend will not stop the proceedings going forward.

For degree classification challenges, students are not normally required to attend a meeting of the panel.

For more information on exactly what happens at both Stage 1 and 2 panel meetings please refer to the Academic Appeals Procedure that forms part of MarP. This will give you a detailed description of what you may expect at each stage.

It is important that you remember that a Student’s Union representative can attend the panel meetings to advise and support you if you wish.

A written record of the meeting will be produced and sent to you for your records. However if you wish to record the panel meetings you may do so, providing that all attendees of the meeting sign an agreement giving their permission to be recorded. You will also be responsible for providing any equipment needed to record the session.

**Taking your appeal further**

If all internal appeals procedure stages have been completed and you feel dissatisfied at the outcome of your case, the MarP procedure describes how you can take the case to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA), for further review.

The application to the OIA must be made within 12 months of the issue of the Completion of Procedures letter after conclusion of Stage 2. Information about the OIA and its processes can be found here.
DEFINITIONS

**Academic Appeal:** According to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, an appeal is defined as a ‘request for a review of a decision of an academic body charged with making decisions on student progress, assessments and awards’.

**Academic Judgement:** Academic judgement is a judgement that is made about a matter where only the opinion of an academic is sufficient.

**Boards of Examiners:** Are academic committees responsible for commenting on the content, balance and structure of degrees and their component modules as well as academic achievements by individual students.

**Complaint:** According to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA), a complaint is defined as, ‘an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about a University’s action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the University’.

**Completion of Procedures letter (often referred to as COP letter):** Once a student has exhausted the University's internal academic appeals or complaints procedures, and there is no further avenue available to the student within the University, the University must promptly send a Completion of Procedures letter to the student. This letter should set out clearly what issues have been considered and the University’s final decision.

**Exceptional circumstances:** Each University’s regulations will allow for exceptional circumstances to be taken into account in a student’s assessment if those circumstances are made known to the University in a timely manner. It is for each University to determine what exceptional circumstances are acceptable. However, they are, by definition, post hoc; that is they are only considered after a submission deadline.

**Evidence and supporting documentation:** Items presented in support of the appeal. They may include: correspondence, medical evidence, reports by professionals, financial information, coursework or examinations.

**Procedural irregularity:** A procedural irregularity is where the procedures and regulations of a University have not been complied with, giving rise to a complaint or academic appeal.

**Student:** The term ‘student’ includes those registered or enrolled on a course through the University. It includes those on an interruption of study (intercalation), temporary withdrawal or temporary exclusion or suspension and those who have recently left the University.

**Student experience:** The student experience refers to all aspects of a students’ interaction with the University; it goes beyond learning opportunities.

**Students' Charter:** Articulates this relationship and the standards to which the University and its students aspire.
## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This section includes a table outlining the roles and responsibilities belonging to the Student Appeals procedure.

### ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES TABLE

Roles and responsibilities of various members of the University:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role / Position</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Appeal Panel (i.e. UG Part I, UG Part II, PGT, PGR)</td>
<td>Three-person panel responsible for hearing, reviewing and deciding on the merits of the appeal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeals Co-ordinator</td>
<td>Responsible for administering the Academic Appeals procedure and giving definitive advice about said procedure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Standards and Committee</td>
<td>Responsible for ensuring that all taught and research programmes leading to Lancaster University awards, whether delivered in Lancaster or elsewhere, are of comparable academic standards and offer an equivalent educational experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Dean (of the student’s department/faculty)</td>
<td>Member of the Academic Appeals Panel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam Board Chair</td>
<td>Member of academic staff with responsibility to ensure proper running of University Exam Boards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Students, Education and Academic Services</td>
<td>Person with overall administrative responsibility for student services at Lancaster including: registry, the academic standards and quality unit, counselling services and careers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Student Registry</td>
<td>Person with responsibility for overseeing the recording and storing of all student information including marks, course handbooks, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office for the Independent Adjudicator</td>
<td>Independent body responsible for the student complaints scheme in England and Wales.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review Panel</td>
<td>The review panel will consist of the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education) or the Provost for Student Experience, Colleges and the Library (in the chair) and two other members of academic staff (appointed by the Vice- Chancellor).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ Union</td>
<td>The Students’ Union will provide support and guidance through the complaints process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**OWNERSHIP OF COMMUNICATION**

Below is a table showing the responsibilities of both students and the University to produce written communication. Please note that the preferred method of communication is electronic. NB: A COP letter may be issued at different points of the procedure as it depends at what stage in the process the procedure is deemed to be complete.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Owner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1 – Formal application form</td>
<td>Student via online form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1 – Initial decision</td>
<td>Head of Student Registry or delegate to student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1 – Response</td>
<td>Nominated member of the Appeals Panel to student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1 – Acceptance of decision</td>
<td>Student to Head of Student Registry or delegate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2 – Request for review application form</td>
<td>Student via online form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2 – Initial decision</td>
<td>Head of Student Registry or delegate to student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2 – Response</td>
<td>Nominated member of the Review Panel to student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2 – Acceptance of decision</td>
<td>Student to Head of Student Registry or delegate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of Procedures (COP) letter</td>
<td>Head of Student Registry or delegate to student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHAT ADVICE AND HELP IS AVAILABLE?

This section will outline where advice and help can be found across the University.

There is a range of help that is available to you throughout the whole process of making an appeal. Make sure you use the advice and help that is available to you; some useful sources of help and advice are listed below:

**STUDENTS’ UNION**

The Students’ Union will be a major source of advice for most students as their adviser will be able to:

- Offer an explanation of how the process of making an appeal works, drawing from knowledge of the appeals procedure.
- Offer advice and help on how to prepare evidence and supporting documentation for your application forms.
- Offer support and representation for any panel meetings a student may wish to attend.

We recommend that you get in touch with the Students’ Union via their page on appeals and complaints which can be found in the ‘Important and useful links’ section of this guide.

**ACADEMIC TUTORS**

Each of you will have been assigned an academic tutor from your department. This person should be able to help you understand if your appeal meets necessary grounds.

**STUDENT WELLBEING SERVICES**

It is also important to remember that help is offered through Student Wellbeing Services, who may be able to help you with any issues that may affect your studies. Their link is also in the ‘Important and useful links’ section of this guide.

**COLLEGES AND THE ADVISORY SYSTEM**

Each college has an advisory/welfare system in place that aims to support students independently of their academic departments. The system that exists in your college may be able to help you with your appeal, for more information please find the relevant college’s link in the Important and useful links section of this guide.
IMPORTANT AND USEFUL LINKS

LUSU (appeals):  https://lancastersu.co.uk/academic-advice

Student Wellbeing Services: http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/student-based-services/wellbeing-counselling-and-mental-health/

Student Discipline Regulations: https://gap.lancs.ac.uk/policy-info-guide/5-policies-procedures/rules-of-the-university/Pages/default.aspx

Standing Academic Committee: http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/student-based-services/exams-and-assessment/regulations/standing-academic-committee/

Office of Independent Adjudicator: http://oiahe.org.uk/

Student’s Charter website: http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/current-students/student-charter/

Student Based Services Website: http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/student-based-services/

Bowland College: http://lancaster.ac.uk/bowland/welfare-and-support/

Cartmel College: http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/users/cartmel/advisors.htm

County College: https://thecountycollege.com/welfare-and-rules

Furness College: http://furnesscollege.co.uk/support/

Fylde College: http://lancaster.ac.uk/colleges/fylde/about-us/welfare/

Graduate College: http://lancaster.ac.uk/graduate-college/information-for-students/support-and-wellbeing/

Grizedale College: http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/colleges/grizedale/student-welfare/

Lonsdale College: http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/colleges/lonsdale/about/people/

Pendle College: http://lancaster.ac.uk/pendle/welfare-and-support/