

# STUDENT ACADEMIC APPEALS POLICY

**Scope:** Policy and principles for the management of academic appeals related to award and progression

for taught and research students. The Policy covers awards made by City and applies to all programmes leading to an award of City, University of London including those delivered by Validated Institutions.

## **Senate Regulations**

### **Senate Regulations**

[Senate Regulation 20 Appeal Procedures Taught Programmes](#)

[Senate Regulation 20b Appeal Procedures – Taught Programmes in Validated Institutions](#) [Senate Regulation 21 Appeal Procedures Research Programmes](#)

[Senate Regulation 21b Appeal Procedures – Research Programmes in Validated Institutions](#)

### **Date approved/re-approved**

June 2012, September 2012, minor amendments October 2012, October 2020

# Student Academic Appeals Policy

## Overview

1. We manage academic appeals in accordance with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and the Senate Regulations for Appeals (20, 20b, 21 and 21b).
2. The following principles underpin our approach to appeals:
  - a. A focus on providing **support** and enabling **resolution**
  - b. Recognition that our students are preparing for business and the professions where **personal responsibility** for seeking support, guidance and resolution is expected
  - c. **Clarity** in language and process
  - d. **Fairness and consistency** in treatment of the student body as a whole, as well as for particular individuals
  - e. Upholding **independence in appeals decisions** and the **integrity of academic judgement**
  - f. Maintaining **awareness** through collaboration with support services (academic and welfare), targeted local campaigns, and visible and accessible central information
  - g. Respecting **confidentiality** with regard to personal information
  - h. A culture of **enhancement** seeking to learn from appeals and improve the student experience
3. We expect all of our appeal procedures and support mechanisms to be developed, operated and reviewed with the eight principles in mind. Each School maintains its own statement covering how it supports the eight principles for appeals. City's Learning Enhancement and Development reviews its procedures against the eight principles as part of annual monitoring with oversight being provided by the Director of the Learning Enhancement and Development. Within Validated Institutions Course Boards consider how the eight principles are met as part of their annual monitoring activities. For collaborative and partnership provision the students appeals regulations and policy to be followed are agreed between City and each partner institution as part of the contractual process and included in each signed Memorandum of Agreement and the student's programme handbook.

4. The remainder of the policy identifies agreed mechanisms for supporting the articulation of the eight principles within practice. Appendix 1 provides specific information on the process for a School Appeal Panel meeting, to support students and School staff.

### **Equality and Diversity**

5. City, University of London is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in all its activities, processes, and culture, under its Public Sector Equality Duties and the Equality Act 2010. This includes promoting equality and diversity for all, irrespective of any protected characteristic, working pattern, family circumstance, socio-economic background, political belief or other irrelevant distinction.
6. Where relevant to the policy, decision-making panels will ensure a reasonable gender balance (with at least one man and one woman) and will actively consider representation of other protected groups.

### **Support and resolution**

7. The appeals procedure is the last in a suite of mechanisms available for students experiencing problems with regard to their assessment, award or progression. These may be related to external circumstances outside the control of the student, or to errors made during assessment. The mechanisms are made known to students through handbooks and published information provided by Schools and Validated Institutions as well as through the Student Centre and the Students' Union.
8. Our goal is to enable early, informal resolution of errors wherever possible, and to assist students experiencing difficulties in ways that do not compromise academic standards or overly advantage them in relation to their peers. Where problems do occur, we aim to learn from these and so improve the student experience in the future. Any learning points are identified from individual appeals and an annual review process at School and University level ensures that lessons learned from appeals inform institutional change and the enhancement of support services for students.

### **Personal responsibility**

9. We will, of course, always endeavour to act on and remedy any errors made which might impact on a student's progression or award as speedily as possible. We rely

on students to make any potential errors known to us at the earliest possible opportunity.

10. For students experiencing problems during their time at City there are a number of support mechanisms and specialist services in place including the personal tutor system, Student Centre, academic and welfare advisors, Students' Union and other services provided by individual Schools and Validated Institutions. These are well publicised at key points during the student life cycle and we expect students to make use of these at the earliest possible opportunity. It is important for students to remember that the Appeals process is not a substitute for the early reporting of problems – the earlier a problem is reported the more the University will be able to do to assist in minimising disruption to studies.
11. When a student identifies potential grounds for an appeal we expect the appropriate forms and accompanying guidance to be used when preparing the appeal. These are made available on the University website along with further sources of advice, guidance and support.
12. Our appeals procedures are designed to be enabling and we encourage feedback from students on their usability.

## **Enhancement**

13. Schools and Validated Institutions prepare annual reports on appeals considered at local level to School Boards of Studies or Validated Institution Course Boards. These detail the number and outcome of cases.
14. Within Validated Institutions, Course Boards consider how the eight principles are met as part of their annual monitoring activities.
  - a. Schools prepare annual review and action plans are designed to create a point of focus for:
    - i. the collation of University and School data to be used for annual evaluation and enhancement at local level;
    - ii. the facilitation of feedback and collaboration between Schools and central services including Students' Union and Student and Academic Services;
    - iii. the articulation of the ways in which Schools embed City's principles for appeals within practice;
    - iv. the articulation (and evidencing) of systematic evaluation and enhancement activities;

- b. Schools prepare annual review and action plans are also designed to provide a mechanism for:
  - i. the sharing of good practice across Schools;
  - ii. the capture of local knowledge and practice which might otherwise be lost over time;
  - iii. the co-ordination of School and support service recommendations for institutional change.
15. Annual Reports and School review and action plans are collated with information on University level reviews for annual report to Senate.

### **Clarity in language and process**

16. Our appeals procedure is important both for individual students and for the student body. Our staff and students should feel confident that our appeals processes are fair and enabling and that lessons learned are fed into institutional planning.
17. The University has developed a set of standard forms and guidance to be used by students wishing to submit a School-level appeal or a University-level review request. These are kept under review and we welcome feedback from staff and students regarding their usability.
18. We expect students to be kept informed of the progress and outcomes of their appeal at the key stages identified within the guidance. When notified of the outcome of a particular stage of an appeal, students can expect to be informed of any further stages, including whether they are able to request further reviews of the outcome.
19. Student academic appeals are different from student complaints, which should be dealt with via the Student Complaints Regulations and Policy. To protect the integrity of the appeal regulations and to support consistency of treatment between students, any complaints that are incorporated within an appeal claim will be dealt with separately, in accordance with the principles, processes and timescales set out in the Complaints Regulations and Policy. Normally, consideration of an appeal will occur prior to consideration of a complaint. The consideration of issues under two different sets of regulations should not disadvantage the student.

### **Fairness and consistency**

20. The University has taken a decision not to develop a detailed set of 'rules' by which individual circumstances might be measured. Every case is considered on its own merits. Appeals are considered in accordance with University Regulation and

Policy and the outcomes seek to uphold principles of natural justice and fairness for the study body as a whole as well as for individuals.

21. Appeals cannot be made against academic judgement and, when an appeal is upheld, the University still has a responsibility to ensure that no student is unfairly advantaged through special arrangements unavailable to their peers.
22. Appeals should be dealt with in a timely fashion. The regulations include timescales for the consideration of different stages of an appeal which should be treated as normal maximum timescales.
23. In accordance with our commitment to equal opportunities and equality and diversity, the University will make reasonable adjustments to the Regulations where appropriate.

### **Independence and integrity**

24. The appeals procedure seeks to ensure fairness both to individual students and to the student body as a whole. We have a responsibility to our students to maintain the quality and standards of our awards and preserve the integrity of academic judgement. Our appeals procedures and potential outcomes are designed to ensure that fairness is maintained through independence in the consideration of appeals and independence in academic judgement.
25. Appropriate consideration is given to ensuring that those involved in the consideration of appeals do not have a conflict of interest in the case. Staff who had been directly involved in supporting the student prior to the appeal or making decisions concerning his/her academic progress should not be involved in decision-making around appeal cases but may be consulted as part of the investigation.
26. Equally, staff involved in decision-making at the School level stage of an appeal should not then have any responsibilities for decision-making should the appeal be submitted for University review. The School or University Officer is responsible for appointing staff considering appeals and will need to take into account potential vested interests as well as conflicts of interest during the appointment process.
27. As well as assuring independence in decision-making the School Officer needs to be assured that those appointed have the necessary expertise, seniority, and experience to discharge their responsibilities:

- a. Individuals consulted during the course of an investigation are selected on the basis of their knowledge of the case, expertise and/ or experience in the issues under investigation.
- b. Individuals managing appeals are appointed on the basis of their expertise, experience and knowledge of the relevant procedures.
- c. Decision-making at the initial scrutiny and appeal panel stages should be undertaken by individuals with sufficient experience and expertise to: consider the evidence presented; seek further information as required; and reach a considered judgement based on the facts of the case. Matters of academic judgement remain the responsibility of the Assessment Board but academic input is important during the appeals process and it is expected that consultation and decision-making will be undertaken by an appropriate mix of academic and professional services staff at each stage within the appeals process.
- d. Appeals by research students require scrutineers and panels to have sufficient knowledge of the research environment and supervisory arrangements. It is recommended that a Category A supervisor is available for initial scrutineers to consult with and that any appeal panel includes at least one Category A supervisor within its membership.

28. The Students' Union has a key role to play in providing students with a source of independent advice and support concerning appeals and other related matters. Students are encouraged to contact the Students' Union at the earliest possible opportunity if they are experiencing problems.

### **Maintaining awareness**

29. Schools maintain a statement indicating the key points at which students are notified of the appeals regulations and procedures. As a minimum these including:
- a. the provision of accurate, up-to-date information about the appeal regulations and policy in programme handbooks. The programme handbook will also contain information on other sources of advice and guidance students can access;
  - b. reminders concerning the options for appeal when results are released.

### **Respecting confidentiality**

30. The University has a duty to investigate appeals made in good faith which meet the grounds identified in the Regulations. This will, by necessity, involve the sharing of information during the course of the investigation. The circulation of the appeals documentation and evidence will always be limited to those directly

involved in the investigation who might reasonably be expected to require direct sight of the information in order to ensure the investigation is conducted with fairness and rigour.

31. Personal information will be stored in accordance with our Information Compliance policies.



## **Appendix 1 – Detailed Procedural Notes**

### **Initial consideration within the School**

1. The Board of Studies in a School will appoint an officer to deal with academic appeals – referred to as the School Officer. Normally this will be the Dean or their nominee.
2. The School Officer and one other member of staff within the School will give initial scrutiny to a Student's appeal. The staff performing this role must have knowledge of the Appeal Regulations and other relevant Regulation, Policy and procedures.
3. The School Appeals Administrator will manage the initial scrutiny process within the School. This means:
  - a. receiving appeals and ensuring that they are acknowledged
  - b. Arranging for them to be given initial consideration
  - c. Advising the scrutineers as necessary
  - d. Recording the outcome of initial scrutiny and reporting to Board of Studies and Senate
  - e. Informing the student
  - f. Implementing the outcome

### **School Appeal Panel**

4. A School Appeal Panel will normally meet within 28 calendar days of the outcome of initial scrutiny being notified to the student who has appealed.
5. The panel will have three members:
  - a. A Chair (the School Officer or their nominee)
  - b. Two other members appointed by the School Officer
6. The School Appeals Administrator or their nominee will attend the hearing to advise the panel concerning relevant Regulation, Policy, procedure and guidance. The Administrator will not be part of the Appeal Panel.
7. The student will be invited to attend the School Appeal Panel hearing and can choose to be accompanied by one other person. If the student chooses to be accompanied, they must provide information about the person who is accompanying them to the Secretary of the panel at least 7 calendar days in advance. This should include details of the person's relationship to the student and the reason for the person's attendance.
8. A student may only be represented in their absence in exceptional circumstances. Any request for this requires the agreement of the Chair of the Panel. If a student chooses not to attend, or fails to attend without submitting, in writing, valid reasons for a postponement, the panel may meet in the student's absence.
9. The Programme Director may attend the hearing but does not form part of the panel and will not be present during the panel's deliberations. The Programme Director's role is to provide information and/or clarification to the panel.

10. The School Appeals Administrator will manage the Appeals Panel process within the School. This means:
  - a. Arranging for Panels to meet as necessary
  - b. Acting as Secretary to Panels, or appointing a nominee to act in their place
  - c. Advising the Panel as necessary
  - d. Recording the outcome of the Panel meeting and reporting to Board of Studies and Senate
  - e. Formally writing to the student after the meeting to confirm the outcome
  - f. Implementing the outcome

### **Senate-level review**

11. Senate will appoint an officer to oversee the Senate-Level Review process. This will normally be the Deputy-President or their nominee.
12. The Senate-Level Review Administrator will be a senior member of staff within Student and Academic Services.
13. The Senate-Level Review Administrator will oversee the Senate-Level Review process, consulting as necessary with the Senate-Level Review Officer. This means:
  - a. Acknowledging receipt of requests for a Senate-Level Review
  - b. Identifying two senior members of Student and Academic Services, with knowledge of the Appeals Regulations and other relevant Regulation, Policy and Procedure, to scrutinise the Appeal, and advising them as necessary
  - c. Recording the outcome of the scrutiny, and reporting it to Senate
  - d. Implementing the outcome of the scrutiny
  - e. Writing formally to the student to tell them the outcome of the scrutiny, including advising them of the completion of procedures (CoP) in line with the OIA requirements.

## Policy Details Table

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