



**TRAFFORD &  
STOCKPORT  
COLLEGE GROUP**

# **HE Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure**

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## 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The HE Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure relates to the provision of higher education programmes delivered at Trafford & Stockport College Group (TSCG). TSCG students undertaking a programme of study awarded by Sheffield Hallam University or University of Huddersfield, may access the regulations here:

[University rules and regulations | Sheffield Hallam University \(shu.ac.uk\)](#)  
[Student complaints procedure - University of Huddersfield](#)

- 1.2 This Policy and Procedure explains what to do if you wish to appeal a decision made by one of the following:
- Mid-year Assessment Board
  - End of year Assessment Board
  - Academic Misconduct Panel
- 1.3 The aim of this Policy and Procedure is to enable students enrolled on to Higher Education programmes at the TSCG to request a review of a published decision of an assessment board particularly as it applies to decisions on student progression, assessment and award. The appeals processes detailed in this document also apply to decisions resulting from investigations into academic misconduct.
- 1.4 A student who wishes to seek a review of a **provisional** mark awarded by a module leader prior to confirmation and ratification of that mark from the appropriate assessment board should, in the first instance, discuss the issue with the module leader. If the student is not satisfied with the response provided, they should be invited to discuss the matter further with the Head of Studies.
- 1.5 The appeals procedure can only be invoked once marks have been made definitive and the assessment board has determined the student's progression or overall award. There is no provision to appeal academic judgement. The grounds on which an appeal can be lodged are set out at Section 5.
- 1.6 The appeals procedures contained within this document refer only to decisions made by the aforementioned decision-making bodies. Appeal mechanisms for matters relating to Disciplinary, Fitness to Study and admissions decisions are referenced in those policies.
- 1.7 The Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure should not be used to formally record dissatisfaction with TSCG facilities, services or teaching-related provision. These areas fall within the purview of the Complaints, Compliments and Incidents Procedure. Outcomes of the appeals process cannot be made the subject of a complaint.
- 1.8 This Policy and Procedure has been informed by the Good Practice Framework for the Handling of Complaints and Academic Appeals, published by the Office for the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) and the UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Concerns, Complaints and Appeals.

## 2. Scope

The Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure is made for the use of employees and students of Trafford & Stockport College Group, comprising of Trafford College, Stockport College, Cheadle College and Marple Sixth Form. For convenience, and

unless otherwise indicated the group of colleges is referred to as 'we', 'our', 'us' or 'the College'. 'You' and 'your' refer to all students of Trafford & Stockport College Group.

### **3. Policy Statements**

#### **3.1 Appointment of a Third Party/Representative**

The TSCG expects students to engage fully with this Policy and make your own representations when using the procedures described. Where a student feels unable to do that, they may request that they be permitted to appoint a representative to act on their behalf. They should make their request in writing alongside the submission of their Appeal Form explaining their reasons for their request. If the TSCG accepts the request to communicate through a third-party representative, the student expressly permits the College to:

- Share personal data pertaining to the investigation,
- Channel all communication, including determinant information requests regarding the appeal, through the nominated representative, and,
- Communicate final appeal outcomes to the nominated representative.

Additionally, the student accepts responsibility for any claims made by their representative on their behalf, including the ramifications of any false claims made in their name.

#### **3.2 Collective Appeals**

It is expected that students will submit an appeal against the outcome of an assessment board's decision which relates to their results only. However, there is provision to make a collective appeal should material error or irregularity (as defined at Section 5.1) be found to have disadvantaged more than one student. Where a collective appeal is made, Trafford & Stockport College Group will request one student is nominated as a spokesperson to act on the group's behalf. In doing this, all correspondence, including outcomes will be through the nominated spokesperson.

#### **3.3 Vexatious Appeals**

The TSCG can reject an appeal at any time if, in the opinion of the Head of Higher Education (Quality & Standards) the appeal is vexatious or frivolous in nature.

An appeal can be characterised as such in a number of ways, for example:

- Appeals that are persistent, obsessive, harassing
- Insistence upon pursuing unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason
- Pursuing meritorious appeals in an unreasonable manner
- Appeals that cause disruption or annoyance
- Remedy and redress that lack any serious purpose or value.

If an appeal is considered to fall within any of the above categories, the Head of Higher Education (Quality & Standards), will write to the student explaining that Trafford & Stockport College Group is terminating further consideration of the appeal, clearly stating the reasons for doing so and issue a Completion of Procedures letter.

### 3.4 Unacceptable Behaviour

All students have the right to be heard and respected; employees have those rights, too. Communication or actions from appellants or their representatives that are demanding, angry or persistent can result in unreasonable demands or unacceptable behaviour towards employees. Aggressive, offensive or abusive actions or behaviour and unreasonable demands or persistence are all areas of unacceptable behaviour that are managed under this Policy and Procedure.

## 4. Academic Judgement

4.1 Students may **not** appeal against the academic judgement of examiners.

4.2 The OIA define academic judgement as “a judgement that is made about a matter where only the opinion of an academic expert will suffice”.<sup>1</sup>

## 5. Grounds on Which an Appeal Can be Made

5.1 Material Error or Irregularity

There has been an error or irregularity in the process of assessment or by which an Academic Conduct Panel has considered outcomes. Examples might include being examined outside of approved regulations or an academic conduct panel failed to follow its own procedures.

5.2 Mitigating Circumstances Not Known

There were mitigating circumstances or exceptional factors that the student was unable to disclose for good reason(s), before the deadline for receipt of applications to the mitigation panel. Where this is the case, the student must support their claim with supporting evidence, such as medical reports, which verify the reasons the student could not disclose the circumstances but also validate the original claim of mitigation.

The TSCG accepts that in some cases, students may feel embarrassed when disclosing their circumstances and their impact on the ability to complete study, however this is not a valid reason for not divulging mitigating circumstances. TSCG considers applications for mitigation in confidence with a small, discreet panel whose role it is to establish the merits of the claim only.

## 6. Academic Appeals Procedure

There is a three-stage process, students need to follow when pursuing an academic appeal. It is expected that students will complete each stage before moving on to the next. There may be occasion where it is necessary to escalate appeals which will be managed on a case-by- case basis.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/glossary.aspx>

## 6.1 Stage 1: Initial Concern or Query

Before submitting a formal appeal, students should discuss their concerns with their Course Leader or the Head of Studies for their department. If a student has a concern about the decision of an academic conduct panel, they should discuss their concerns with the relevant Chairperson in the first instance. Students can access impartial advice from student support or their student representatives. Students are encouraged to raise their initial concerns in a timely manner as all formal appeals should be received by Trafford & Stockport College Group within 14 days of the decision of the Assessment Board.

## 6.2 Stage 2: Formal Appeal

If after completing actions described at Section 6.1 the student decides to submit a formal appeal, they should complete an Academic Appeals Form (Appendix 1) and forward it to: [HESupport@TSCG.ac.uk](mailto:HESupport@TSCG.ac.uk). It is important that all sections of the form are completed within the time period permitted for appeals to be submitted. The written appeal must be received in the inbox within 14 days of the date that the results were released to the student.

The Appeal Form should be supported by all available evidence to substantiate the claims made. The appellant is responsible for providing any evidence that they wish to be considered. Digital copies of evidence are acceptable, although Trafford & Stockport College Group reserves the right to require paper copies to be provided for verification purposes. Claims that cannot be verified with independent evidence are likely to be dismissed.

A member of the HE Student Support Team will acknowledge receipt of the appeal and convene an Appeals Panel to hear the formal stage of the appeal. To avoid any conflict of interest, members of the panel must not have been party to any preceding decision that may have initiated the appeal.

The panel will consist of:

- Independent Head of Studies (Chair)
- Head of Higher Education (Quality & Standards)
- A lecturer from another curriculum area

Possible outcomes:

- Uphold the appeal and amend the record of the student accordingly
- To dismiss the appeal
- Request additional evidence and to seek clarity on unclear evidence from students and others relevant to the investigation. This is to ensure a well-informed judgement is reached in good time.

## 6.3 Stage 3: Review

If a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of their appeal, they may request a review of the decision taken. Students wishing to do this must do so in writing within 7 days of the date of the appeal outcome. The request for review should be labelled as such and forwarded to [HESupport@TSCG.ac.uk](mailto:HESupport@TSCG.ac.uk).

The review will be conducted by the Assistant Principal Higher Education and Higher Skills (or nominee) with reference to at least one of the following three reasons, which the student must specify and provide supporting evidence and explanation.

1. That the procedures described in Section 6.2 were not followed,
2. That the outcome was unreasonable,
3. New material evidence has become available which the learner was unable to provide earlier in the process.

If the Chair considers that there are grounds for the appeal decision to be revised, they will refer the matter back to the Head of Higher Education (Quality & Standards) who will reconsider the evidence presented and seek counsel and advice from senior staff where necessary.

## **7. Completion of Procedures**

- 7.1 The College is a member organisation of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA).
- 7.2 Once all stages of the College's Academic Appeals procedure have been exhausted, the student on a Higher National programme will be issued with a Completion of Procedures letter confirming that all internal procedures have been completed. At this point, outcomes in relation to progression and award outcomes are implemented. Once the College's internal processes have been followed, students on a university validated programme may if they so choose, take their complaint to the validating partner institution who will then be responsible for the issue of a Completion of Procedures letter.
- 7.3 Students are advised to contact the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the final stage of the complaints procedure. The OIA will determine whether the student's complaint is eligible for consideration under its rules.
- 7.4 All applications to the OIA must be made within twelve months of the date of the Completion of Procedures letter issued by the College.
- 7.5 The OIA's scheme rules and guidelines are available here: [www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk)

## **8. Participation of Students While Appeal is Under Consideration**

- 8.1 If a student's appeal is still being considered under the processes described in Section 6 at the start of an academic year or mid-way through the year and the decision being appealed prevents a student from progressing normally, they may attend the programme and undertake assessments.
- 8.2 Students who chose to attend will not be notified of any results of assessed work.
- 8.3 Students who choose to attend will be enrolled conditionally and should be aware of the financial implications of choosing this option. If a student's appeal is upheld, they will be enrolled unconditionally and resume their programme of study as previously.
- 8.4 In cases where appeals are rejected students will be withdrawn from the programme.

Appendix 1: Stage 2: Formal Appeal Form

<b>STAGE 2: ACADEMIC APPEALS FORM</b>	
<b>Appellant's Details</b>	
<b>Name</b>	
<b>Course title</b>	
<b>Year of study</b>	
<b>Outcome of Stage 1: Local Resolution of Concern</b>	
<b>When and with whom did you raise your initial concern/query about the outcome of assessment under Stage 1 of this Policy?</b>	
<b>Please summarise the date and advice you were given at Stage 1 of this Policy. Please provide copies of any written advice.</b>	
<b>Details of Assessment Outcome that is Being Appealed Against and Outcomes Sought</b>	
<b>Please provide details of the assessment outcome(s) you are appealing against. Please include unit numbers, titles, specific assessments within units and, where relevant, progression or final award decisions.</b>	



<p><b>Please confirm on what basis you are appealing against the assessment outcome as referenced in Section 5.1 and 5.2 Please also confirm the evidence you are providing to corroborate the grounds for appeal. There are no grounds on which you can appeal academic judgement – please refer to Section 3 of this Policy and Procedure for more information.</b></p>	<p><b>Claim on the basis of material error or irregularity as defined in Section 5.1 of the Appeals Procedure:</b></p>	<p><b>List of evidence to support each claim, which should be attached / included with this submission:</b></p>
	<p><b>Claim on the basis of mitigating circumstances not known to the Assessment Board as defined in Section 5.2 of the Appeals Procedure:</b></p>	<p><b>List of evidence to support each claim, which should be attached / included with this submission:</b></p>
<p><b>What outcome are you seeking?</b></p>		

Please forward completed forms and documentation to [HESupport@TSCG.ac.uk](mailto:HESupport@TSCG.ac.uk)