

## Quality Management System

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### Policy Title

Higher Education Academic Appeals Policy

<b>Document Author</b>	Julie Cairns Advanced Quality Assurance Practitioner
<b>Approved By</b>	Director of Quality and HE Lee Phillips
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Quality Improvement Team

Email: [Quality@bacoll.ac.uk](mailto:Quality@bacoll.ac.uk)

Phone: 01388 443069

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## Higher Education Academic Appeals Policy

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### 1.0 Purpose

**1.1** To provide definitive, transparent and detailed guidance on Higher Education (HE) academic appeals. Ensuring that all HE staff and students have a clear and comprehensive understanding, with associated instructions of how to pursue an academic appeal, including the grounds on which a student has the right to make an academic appeal.

### 2.0 Scope

**2.1** This policy applies to all students studying on a Higher Education (HE) programme at Bishop Auckland College / South West Durham Training thereafter to be termed 'BACG'.

**2.2** Applies to academic appeals related to procedural and organisational irregularities in the conduct of:

- (i) Decisions made by a Higher Education Examination Board, where it is believed that the members have not followed the appropriate policy, procedure or terms of reference.
- (ii) Decisions made by a Higher Education Academic Misconduct Panel, where it is believed that the members have not followed the appropriate policy, procedure or terms of reference.
- (iii) Decisions made by a Higher Education Research Ethics Committee, where it is believed that the members have not followed the appropriate policy, procedure or terms of reference.
- (iv) Decisions made by a Higher Education Extenuating Circumstances Committee, where it is believed that the members have not followed the appropriate policy, procedure or terms of reference.

Students are informed of their rights of academic appeal during their college induction and within their Programme and Student Handbook(s).

**2.3** The policy may be used by any student currently enrolled across BACG on a Higher Education programme of study or are within a maximum of six months after completion of their programme of study.

**2.4** BACG will only accept academic appeals from the student, and not from a third party. For those wishing to instigate an academic appeal, support and assistance can be provided at any stage by the HE Student Liaison Mentor or designate. When the student is attending any meetings with BACG staff in relation to the academic appeal, they are permitted to bring with them a member of student support staff or other supporter/advisor. This is an internal process, and it is appropriate for students to represent themselves. If the student is accompanied by a friend, family member, a Trade Union or professional association staff member. The individual accompanying is only permitted to make representations or ask or answer questions on behalf of the student, where reasonable adjustments have been agreed prior, to ensure the process is equitable for all, and as not to disadvantage the student.

All HE students can access support from the dedicated HE Student Liaison Mentor, who will act impartially. The student can also make direct contact with the Quality Assurance Manager (QAM).

**2.5** As appeals are always related to individual academic decisions/outcomes, it is unusual for students to submit collective appeals. However, it is recognised that there may be exceptional circumstances where the issues raised affect a number of students, and therefore those students may wish to lodge a collective academic appeal. In these cases, each student is expected to show how they believe the appropriate policy, procedure or terms of reference have not been followed, and how they have been personally affected by the final decision/outcome.

To manage the progress of the appeal in such circumstances, the group must agree in writing that they nominate one student to act as the spokesperson for all wishing to appeal. A copy of this agreement must be submitted alongside the application for appeal. In agreeing to act as spokesperson the student accepts responsibility for representing the group views and to act as a key contact in relation to the academic appeal.

**2.6** Academic appeals made anonymously will not be accepted.

**2.7** BACG will endeavour to ensure holistic consideration is given to multi-issue appeals and that a coordinated response is given wherever possible.

**2.8** The Group defines a 'working day' as Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays and other days when BACG is closed.

**2.9** Students should ensure that the issues being raised are pursued in accordance with the relevant policy or procedure and should seek advice from the Quality Department if required.

**2.10** As this policy involves processing personal data, data protection regulations will be adhered to. Please refer to the Data Protection Policy (ref: POL-DP-01) for further information.

### **3.0 Principles**

**3.1** The decisions made will be reasonable and, where required, provide appropriate redress.

**3.2** Academic appeals submitted outside of the timescales prescribed in the policy will only be considered in the most exceptional circumstance and where there is good reason, supported by evidence, for late submissions.

**3.3** Academic appeals will be treated seriously, and students should be assured that they will not suffer any disadvantage or recrimination when making an appeal in good faith.

**3.4** This process will be fair and transparent.

**3.5** The process for the academic appeal will be evidence-based.

**3.6** BACG is committed to dealing with academic appeals within the timeframes stated, and to complete the processing of a formal appeal and any associated review within 90 calendar days, wherever possible (in line with the Good Practice Framework – OIA).

**3.7** BACG will make every reasonable effort to meet the time limits as stated in this policy. However, for complex cases additional time may be required to ensure a thorough review. Where an exception to the standard time limit is needed you will be

notified of this in writing, and you will be kept informed of when you can expect to receive an outcome response.

#### **4.0 Definitions**

- 4.1** OIA: Office of the Independent Adjudicator
- 4.2** HE: Higher Education
- 4.3** HN: Higher Nationals
- 4.4** OU: Open University
- 4.5** QAM: Quality Assurance Manager
- 4.6** AAP: Academic Appeal Panel
- 4.7** AAF: Academic Appeal Form
- 4.8** COIP: Completion of Internal Procedures
- 4.9** COP: Completion of Procedures
- 4.10** QN: Quality Nominee
- 4.11** SLMT: Senior Leadership and Management Team

#### **5.0 References**

- 5.1** Student Academic Appeal Form HE-AA-01
- 5.2** Student Behaviour and Disciplinary Procedure BAC-SS-01
- 5.3** Completion of Internal Procedures (COIP) Letter: Outcome of HE Academic Appeal Stage 2: Formal HE-AA-03
- 5.4** The Good Practice Framework OIA
- 5.5** Data Protection Policy POL-DP-01
- 5.6** HE Academic Misconduct Policy POL-HE-03

#### **6.0 Stage one: Early Resolution/Informal** (Managed by Bishop Auckland College Group)

**6.1** If a student believes that they have grounds and the evidence base on which to request reconsideration of a decision or outcome made by a specific HE academic committee, board, panel they are expected to firstly seek to resolve the issue informally with an appropriate staff member. This could include, but is not limited to Programme Leader, Module Lead/Tutor, HE Student Liaison Mentor or Examinations Officer. The student must make contact to raise the issue within 10 working days of being informed of the relevant academic outcome / decision.

**6.2** The Early Resolution Stage does not stop the student from submitting a formal Academic Appeal Application.

**6.3** The staff member will seek to resolve the issue within 3 working days. At the conclusion of this stage, the student will be informed in writing of the outcome within 3 working days after the Early Resolution Stage has concluded.

**6.4** If the issue is unresolved, and the student does not feel that the outcome is fair and transparent. They may wish to make a formal academic appeal. This process is explained in section 7.0

## **7.0 Stage Two: Formal Academic Appeal** (Managed by Bishop Auckland College Group)

**7.1** Students must submit their formal request on an Academic Appeal Form (AAF) HE-AA-01. These are available from Moodle, the student portal or the College's website [Higher Education - Bishop Auckland College](#). All sections of the form must be completed in as much detail as possible. The completed AAF must be emailed to the Quality Assurance Manager (QAM) on [quality@bacoll.ac.uk](mailto:quality@bacoll.ac.uk) within 7 working days of the completion of, and decision / Outcome of Stage One: Early Resolution / Information Stage.

**7.2** The AAF must clearly identify the relevant ground(s) of academic appeal. A student must be able to substantiate their case with documentary evidence. The evidence should be original copies. All efforts should be made to submit the supporting documentary evidence at the same time as the form, if this is not possible at this stage this must be submitted at least 2 working days prior to the planned panel meeting.

**7.3** Once the AAF has been submitted the student must understand that they have instigated the formal stage of the academic appeal process. The formal process starts on the date of receipt of the AAF to the QAM. The student will receive acknowledgement of receipt from the Quality Administrative Team within 2 working days.

**7.4** On receipt of the AAF, the QAM and the Quality Nominee (QN) will review the application. The College reserves the right to contact any person named in the submission, to seek clarification or further information prior to any referral to the Chair of the Academic Appeal Panel.

**7.5** If a student is suspected of submitting a fraudulent application or documentary evidence, this will be investigated under the HE Academic Misconduct Policy (ref: POL-HE-03).

**7.6** The QAM and QN will have 12 working days, from receipt of the AAF and supporting evidence to review the application and make a decision. The student will be informed of the outcome, in writing within this period. The written outcome will clearly state if the request for appeal has been granted, and referred to the panel, or if the appeal is not upheld. The QAM will use the eligibility criteria identified on the application form e.g., grounds for appeal. If the application has not met the eligibility criteria this will be made clear in the written outcome, this is where the appeals process would end.

**7.7** Formal Academic Appeals which are submitted outside of the 7 working day period will only be considered in the most exceptional circumstances. The student must contact the QAM on [quality@bacoll.ac.uk](mailto:quality@bacoll.ac.uk) to request an extension to this deadline. However, this may impact the timeframes for other parts of the procedure to ensure that the whole process is completed within the appropriate timescales.

**7.8** If the stage two formal appeal request has not been upheld, this decision is considered final. At this stage the student will be provided with a Completion of Internal Procedure's (COIP) letter (HE-AA-03) within 3 working days of the decision. Students studying on a OU validated programme of study will have the opportunity to request that OU review this process (Ref: 8.0). If the appeal has been upheld this process will continue as per 7.9 onwards.

**7.9** The QAM or designate will convene an Academic Appeal Panel within 3 working days following the decision to uphold the appeal being made.

**7.10** The Academic Appeal Panel will comprise of:

- HE Development Coordinator (Chair)
- A senior member of academic staff (not related to the student's programme of study)
- HE Student Liaison Mentor
- BACG's Quality Nominee or representative
- A member of the Quality Administration Team (minutes)

Note: There must be at least 3 panel members present

Note: The student will not be invited to this meeting

**7.11** The Academic Appeal Panel will consider:

- the student's Academic Appeal Form;
- the Chair's Report from the relevant academic committee / board / Panel;
- any other additional relevant information.

**7.12** After consideration of the available evidence, the Academic Appeal Panel may:

- Request further information from BACG or the student, or any other relevant person. This information must be provided to the administrative member of the Panel within 2 working days of the request. This will allow time for the Chair to consider the additional evidence and still respond to the student within the timescale of 3 working days after the panel meeting has taken place.
- Uphold the Academic Appeal Application.
- Dismiss the Academic Appeal Application, where it is agreed that the application does not meet the grounds for an Academic Appeal, based on the evidence submitted.

**7.13** The Chair of the Panel, who has received appropriate training and has suitable authority to provide assurance that this is the provider's definitive response, will inform the student of the decision of the panel. The decision will be made, in writing, within 3 working days of the panel meeting taking place. A copy of the Chair's Report, and any additional documentation, will be provided to the student along with the panel's decision letter.

**7.14** If the Academic Appeal Application is unsuccessful the student will be reminded that they have the right, in certain circumstances, to request a review of the decision under the Review Stage process (Ref: 8.0).

**7.15** If the appeal is upheld, the Academic Appeal Panel will recommend reconsideration of the original decision / outcome by the appropriate academic committee, board, or panel.

**7.16** If the appeal is rejected as invalid, the student will be informed of the reason why, i.e., because it is made against academic judgement, or for another good reason identified by the Academic Appeal Panel.

**7.17** The student will be informed that they have reached the end of the internal Academic Appeals processes and the appeal will not be heard further by the BAC Group.

**7.18** If the student is studying on an OU validated programme, on completion of the full investigation where the stage two formal appeal was not upheld, BACG will issue them with a Completion of Internal Procedures (COIP) Letter (HE-AA-03). This confirms that the internal appeals process has been concluded. The student has the opportunity to request a review by OU (Ref: 8.0)

**7.19** If the student is on a Pearson Higher National, or NCFE Level 4 or above programme of study, on completion of the full investigation where the stage two formal appeal was not upheld, BACG will issue them with a Completion of Procedures (COP) Letter (Q-CC-18). This confirms that the internal appeals process has been concluded. In some cases, the student has the opportunity to take their appeal to OIA (Ref: 8.0).

## **8.0 Stage Three: Review Stage** (Managed by External Strategic Partner/Awarding Organisation)

**8.1** If the student is studying an OU validated programme they will receive a COIP letter confirming that the internal academic appeals process has now been completed. It will inform the student that if they are still not satisfied with the outcome of their formal academic appeal, they can access the OU review process. The student needs to write to the Secretary to the SAARP (Senate Academic Appeals Review Panel) within 28 calendar days from the date of the COIP letter issued by BACG. The OU has 28 working days to complete stage three. Further information relating to this can be found in Appendix 1 of the OU Handbook for Validated Awards. ([OU Handbook](#))

**8.2** Once an OU student has exhausted the review process carried out by the OU, they will receive a Completion of Procedures Letter (COP). They then have a final period of 12 months from the date of the COP to raise a review with the OIA. Both the form and the procedures are available on the OIA website ([www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk)).

**8.3** If the student is on a Pearson Higher National or NCFE Level 4 or above programme of study, following BACG issuing them with a Completion of Procedures (COP) Letter, confirming that the internal appeals process has been concluded (Ref: 7.18). The student has the right to submit an appeal for review to the OIA for Higher Education. The student has 12 months from the date of issue on the COP letter to appeal to the OIA. Both the form and the procedures are available on the OIA website ([www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk)).

## **9.0 Consistency of Outcomes**

**9.1** To ensure consistency of outcomes, all appeals and outcomes associated with the Academic Appeal Process are logged, monitored and reviewed by the Quality Assurance Manager/ designate. The Director of Quality & HE reports on academic appeals to Senior Leadership and Management Team (SLMT) and the HE Academic Board.

## **10.0 Records**

**10.1** The Quality Assurance Manager/ designate is responsible for maintaining the documented records associated with this policy. They will determine the records to be held, their location, retention period and disposition using the 'Guidelines for Completing a Quality Records Schedule' for reference.

## **11.0 Documentation**

**11.1** [HE-AA-01 Academic Appeal Form](#)

**11.2** [POL-HE-03 Higher Education Academic Misconduct Policy](#)

**11.3** [POL-HE-04 Higher Education Research Ethics Policy](#)

**11.4** [POL-HE-05 Higher Education Extenuating Circumstances Policy](#)

**11.5** [HE-TR-01 Terms of Reference for Higher Education Module Assessment Progression and Award Boards](#)

## 11.0 Appendix

### Higher Education Student Academic Appeals Process

Appeals are only considered if they are based on the grounds detailed in the **Higher Education Academic Appeals Policy (POL-HE-06)**

**Stage One: Early Resolution/Informal:** A HE student should firstly raise appeal-related matters informally at a local level with the appropriate staff member, as soon as they arise. They must raise the issue within 10 working days of the academic outcome / decision. The college will have 3 working days to attempt to resolve and will inform the student within a further 3 working days.

**Satisfied with decision / outcome  
– no further actions required.**

**Dissatisfied with decision /  
outcome. Move to Stage Two.**

**Stage Two: Formal Academic Appeal:** If the matter cannot be resolved informally, and if there are valid grounds, the student can proceed to the formal stage appeal. A formal appeal must be made on a HE Student Academic Appeals Form HE-AA-01 (available from Moodle, Student Portal, College website). The form must be submitted within 7 working days (of the decision/outcome of the early resolution / informal stage) to the QAM, together with appropriate supporting evidence, it will be acknowledged with 2 working days. The student will be informed of the decision as to if the appeal will be upheld within 12 working days. If the appeal is upheld, a panel will be convened within 3 working days. Once the panel has made their decision, the Chair will inform the student of the final outcome in writing within 3 working days.

**The appeal is rejected as invalid**  
because it is made against academic judgement, or is made outside the published deadlines, or insufficient evidence to substantiate the claim.

**The appeal is upheld / partially upheld**  
The Academic Appeal Panel recommends reconsideration of the original decision made by the relevant HE Academic Committee/Board/Panel.

#### **Stage Three: Review**

If the appeal is rejected as invalid and will not be heard further within the College, the student will be advised they may apply to Stage Three: Review Stage (managed by an external organisation) for further review.

**If OU student:** Once they received COIP letter from BAC they can appeal to OU within 28 calendar days. The OU has 28 working days to review.

**If Pearson / NCFE L4 (or above) student:** They will receive a COP Letter, then they have the opportunity to apply to the Office of the Independent Adjudicators (OIA), if eligible under the OIA's rules.