



Assessment Appeals

UCD POLICY

Approved by Academic Council on 5 May 2016

Version No: 1

Policy Title	Assessment Appeals Policy
Policy Officer	Hanna Laitinen/Barry Shanahan
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1. Purpose

UCD is committed to providing an excellent education and student experience. The University supports improvement in educational quality and academic decision-making. However, the University recognises that from time to time situations arise when a student considers that they might have grounds for appeal against a decision related to assessment of their academic work. The Assessment Appeals Policy outlines the principles and process for such an appeal. The University is committed to resolving appeals as quickly as possible with emphasis on local resolution.

2. Principles

The following principles underpin the Assessment Appeals Policy and appeals process:

- **Accessible and user-focused** – Easily available and understood, transparent process where outcomes are communicated giving clear reasons for the decisions reached.
- **Simple and timely** – Offer opportunities for early resolution avoiding unnecessarily cumbersome and lengthy stages of the process.
- **Robust and fair** – Support constructive engagement applying principles of natural justice and promote students' confidence in the process by giving students opportunity to voice their concerns in writing and in person as appropriate, giving equal access for all parties to all the evidence and treating all documentation confidentially.
- **Supports improvement** – Appeals provide an important source of feedback for the University, which contributes to the enhancement of the quality of learning and to the improvement of the Assessment Appeals Policy and process.

3. Scope and Definitions

3.1. Appellants

The Assessment Appeals Policy applies to all registered students¹, including students registered to collaborative programmes, and graduands. Ordinarily, students who have graduated have thereby indicated their formal acceptance of their academic results and therefore cannot appeal such results.

An appeal can be submitted collectively by a group of students. In cases where an appeal has been submitted by a group of students the appeal will be considered as a single submission and all students should be in agreement of the grounds and evidence for the appeal.

¹ The UCD Assessment Appeals Policy does not apply to students of UCD Recognised Colleges who are governed by the rules and regulations of the relevant Recognised College.

3.2. Types of appeal

An appeal is a request for a formal review of a decision of an academic body charged with making decisions concerning student assessment, progression or award. Decisions that can be appealed under the Assessment Appeals Policy are limited to:

- An appeal against the result of any assessment of students' academic work. An appeal against the result of a module can only be submitted against a final result, including an appeal against a component of a module.
- An appeal against the decision of the Academic Council Committee on Examinations on the award of a Research Master's Degree.
- An appeal against decisions on progression in and award of doctoral programmes. A student can appeal the decision of
 - i. The Transfer Assessment Panel or
 - ii. The decision of the Academic Council Committee on Examinations on the award.

3.3. Grounds for Appeal

An assessment appeal will only be considered on the following grounds:

- Procedural irregularity – There is evidence of substantive irregularity in the conduct of the assessment process, including where this results in an inappropriate grade assessment.
- Extenuating circumstances –
 - i. There were extenuating circumstances of which the Programme Board was aware but had rejected, because the application was late and the programme Board did not consider the reason why the application was late to be valid.
 - ii. A prior circumstance emerged of which the Programme Board was not aware.

3.4. Appeals that do not meet any of the above grounds will not be accepted. Students cannot appeal simply because they are unhappy with a mark awarded or other academic judgement exercised. An appeal is distinct from a complaint that seeks to raise concerns over the quality of a function, unit or a service provided by the University. Such complaints should be addressed through the Student Complaint Policy and Procedures.

3.5. Sometimes a student might be subject to several university procedures. In such cases the Registrar or a person nominated by the Registrar shall decide which procedure takes precedence.

4. Process

The University encourages students, faculty and staff to resolve matters as close as possible to the level they arise. Only when such channels have been exhausted will formal appeals procedures apply.

4.1. Early resolution

Provisional results are made available to students prior to the final Programme Examination Board. The Head of School should ensure that the School has a timely feedback process in place. The School should provide an appropriate contact person who is available to students for the purpose of feedback and keep an appropriate record of any matters that arise. The School should complete this process within **15 working days** of the publication of the final results.

If the School fails to accommodate students' queries or students are not satisfied with the feedback and/or resolution provided by the School, and they have stated grounds for initiating an appeal, they may submit a formal appeal to the Assessment Appeals Officer. Students registered to graduate research programmes receive informal and formal feedback in advance of final examination and results. They may submit a formal appeal to the Assessment Appeals Officer directly after the publication of the final results.

4.2. The process for submitting a formal assessment appeal

Appeals should be submitted to the Assessment Appeals Officer using the appropriate form provided within **20 working days** of receiving the final result of an assessment². It is recognised that in exceptional circumstances a student may not meet the stated timeframe. In such exceptional circumstances the Appeals Officer may allow the submission of an appeal outside the stated timeframe. Such submissions will be considered on a case by case basis. The decision of the Assessment Appeals Officer on such cases is final.

The submission should include all supporting evidence to be presented to the Assessment Appeals Committee in support of the appeal. It is the onus of the student to submit the necessary information and evidence to the Committee. A student cannot submit further evidence at a later stage, unless requested by the Assessment Appeals Committee. If the submission is deemed incomplete by the Assessment Appeals Officer, the student is advised that they can submit a new appeal once the documentation is complete. A submission can be disregarded by the Appeals Officer if the submission

- Does not fall within the scope (section 3);
- Clearly does not meet any of the grounds for appeal (section 3.3);
- Does not provide necessary evidence to support the appeal; or
- Is not submitted within the given timeframe.

The appellant should note that:

- A student submitting an assessment appeal shall pay a fee, which will be refunded, with any incurred resit or repeat fee, if the appeal is upheld.
- A student (or group of students) can withdraw from the appeals process at any point before the final decision of the Assessment Appeals Committee.
- If a result that contributes to the calculation of a final degree classification is appealed, a student's graduation will be postponed pending the outcome of the appeal.
- Disciplinary actions may be taken against a student who submits false or vexatious material as part of their appeal.

4.3. School response to appeal

The School³ will be notified of the appeal as soon as possible, no later than **5 working days** of the submission of the appeal. The School's response to an appeal should be normally submitted within **10 working days** of the date of notification of the appeal. The response should be given in writing, and address all pertinent issues raised by the student. The School should provide all relevant evidence to support their response. The student (or students) will receive a copy of the response and may provide a further response within **5 working days** to inform the review of the appeal by the Assessment Appeals Committee.

4.4. Review of an appeal by the Assessment Appeals Committee

The Assessment Appeals Committee will be drawn from a standing panel of assessors and comprise of at least **3 members** of faculty, one of whom will be appointed as chairperson. The composition of the Committee should respect balance between gender and disciplines. The Committee will only review what has been submitted by the student and the School, based on the grounds for appeal stated by the student and addressing all issues raised by the student. The Committee will normally reach a conclusion by simple majority in one meeting within **30 working days** of the formal submission of an appeal. The Appeals Officer should keep an official record of the Committee conclusion.

4.5. Outcomes of formal assessment appeal process

The purpose of the Assessment Appeals Committee is to determine whether or not fair procedures were followed in the assessment process and whether or not a fair outcome was reached in the circumstances pertaining to a student. It is not the function of the Committee to reassess the student's work.

² A final result is a result ratified by the relevant Programme Examination Board or in case of PhD results the Academic Council Committee for Examinations or in case of PhD Progression the relevant Graduate School Board.

³ Where an appeal relates to the awarding of research degrees, the Academic Council Committee on Examinations (ACCE) will be responsible for responding to appeals adhering to the timeline.

The determination of the Assessment Appeals Committee will be given in writing no later than **5 working days** after the Committee has reached a decision. The determination of the Assessment Appeals Committee is final and cannot be appealed further within the University.

The Assessment Appeals Committee may:

- Uphold the appeal and instruct the relevant Programme Board, Graduate School Board or the Academic Council Committee for Examinations (ACCE) on the decision based on evidence of the irregularity of the assessment process or extenuating circumstances. The implementation of the decision is the responsibility of the relevant Chair in consultation with the relevant examiner.
- Not uphold the appeal and confirm the original decision.

4.6. Complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman

If a student is not satisfied with the University appeals process, they can submit a complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1. All Faculty and Staff

All faculty and staff responsible for assessment should be aware of the University's Assessment Appeals Policy and process. As the majority of assessment queries are likely to be dealt with locally within the School, faculty and staff should be appropriately prepared to respond to queries.

5.2. Students

Students should:

- Ensure that they are familiar with the content of any relevant University Regulations, Policy, Procedures and Code of Practice on the assessment of their work, seeking feedback or submitting an appeal on the assessment of their work;
- Seek feedback from the relevant assessor;
- Prepare and provide sufficient evidence to support their appeal; and
- Take all necessary actions in regard to progressing in their studies in case the appeal is not successful.

5.3. Assessor

Assessors, such as module coordinators, examiners and supervisors, should:

- Facilitate timely feedback on assessment results;
- Inform students of clear assessment criteria, and the manner in which students may obtain feedback on their results, including arrangements around the viewing of examination scripts following the release of final module results; and
- Ensure a request to amend a student record is actioned as quickly as possible should an administrative error be discovered.

5.4. Head of School

Responsibility for dealing with student queries in relation to feedback and assessment results lies with the Head of School. The Head of School should ensure that:

- Timely feedback mechanisms are in place and assessed work and outcomes are retained and made available to students for the purpose of feedback – the School should publish specific dates, to fall within **15 working days** of the issue of final results when students may review their assessed work and receive feedback;
- Support is available to students who wish to raise concerns; and
- Faculty and staff within the School engage with the appeals process and respond to appeals, when formal appeals are made against assessment results.

5.5. Assessment Appeals Officer

The Assessment Appeals Officer:

- Manages formal assessment appeals received by the Appeals Office;
- Provides procedural advice to students wishing to submit an appeal and to faculty and staff responding to appeals;
- Ensures that appeals submitted include necessary details and supporting evidence;
- Liaises and communicates with students, Schools and the Assessment Appeals Committee;
- Ensures a case record is maintained; and
- Escalates any observations on the process highlighted by the Assessment Appeals Committee; and produces information and reports to the Academic Council Student Appeals and Complaints Committee.

5.6. Assessment, UCD Registry

Assessment have a key role in implementing the final decisions on assessment appeals. Assessment also support the Academic Council Committee for Examinations. Assessment should:

- Provide final results to students on published dates;
- Update student records in a timely manner following a valid request for amendment; and
- Advise students on any amendment to results once implemented.

5.7. Relevant University decision-making bodies

The University decision-making bodies responsible for the decisions that can be appealed under this policy include:

- Programme Examination Boards approve final grades across modules and these grades are published as final results.
- Graduate School Boards approve the decisions of Transfer Assessment Panels.
- The Academic Council Committee on Examinations (ACCE) awards, on behalf of the University, all research degrees.

5.8. Assessment Appeals Committee

The Assessment Appeals Committee is the final arbiter in formal assessment appeals cases. The Committee should:

- Consider appeals transparently and independently; and
- Communicate its decisions in a timely and clear manner to students, Schools, and other university members.

5.9. Academic Council Student Appeals and Complaints Committee

The Student Appeals and Complaints Committee:

- Have oversight of the implementation of the assessment appeals process and the review of the Assessment Appeals Policy and related procedures; and
- Report to Academic Council annually.

VERSION HISTORY

Version	Date	Summary	Changed by
	05/05/2016	Approved by Academic Council	HL
1	23/05/2016	Minor amendments approved by ACEC	HL