



ASSESSMENT APPEAL PROCEDURE (HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS)

Date Last Reviewed	December 2024
Date Effective From	6th January 2025
Date of Next Planned Review	December 2025
Signed	Natalie King, Managing Director

Purpose of the Policy:

We are committed to maintaining the integrity of our academic awards and validity of our assessments. We support this aim by ensuring that we manage our academic appeals procedures in a transparent and effective way.

Learners have the right to appeal against an assessment and extenuating circumstances decision without fear of reprisal or victimisation. We will treat each appeal seriously, impartially and within our set timescales. We are committed to endorse and support the principles of the Equality Act 2010 and we believe that all individuals should be treated with fairness and respect regardless of their gender reassignment, sexual orientation, race, sex, ethnicity, religion or belief, age, disability or marriage and civil partnership.

Scope:

The policy applies to all Higher Education (HE) students enrolled at AccXel. It is intended to encompass all programmes delivered and assessed by AccXel. This policy does not cover:

- Concerns about admissions decisions.
- Misconduct and disciplinary outcomes.
- Administrative appeals.
- Concerns about teaching.
- Other complaints about college services.

The above concerns are dealt with under our Complaints Policy.

Roles and Responsibilities:**Lecturer/Programme Lead:**

All teaching and assessment staff are responsible for informing students of the procedures and for its effective operation within their programmes.

Ensuring fair and unbiased grading and evaluation of students work.

Provides relevant information and support under stage one of the academic appeals procedures, by reviewing initial concerns and attempting to resolve issues informally.

Ensuring students are aware of the grounds for appeal and required documentation.

Compliance Lead (CL):

The CL is responsible for the day-to-day operation of each of the stages of the appeals procedure but is only involved in the details of the case at the review stage.

Providing guidance to students and staff members regarding the appeals policy.

Maintaining records of all appeals, decisions, and related documentation.

Ensuring the confidentiality of the appeal process in accordance with the Data Protection Policy.

Coordinating training for staff involved in the appeals process.

Investigator:

The investigator is responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of the appeals procedure and will conduct the stage two formal appeal investigation. This role is carried out by Head of Education, who will not have been involved in the decision-making process related to your appeal.

The investigator is responsible for collecting relevant evidence related to the appeal. This may include academic records, communications, and any other documentation pertinent to the case.

They may conduct interviews with relevant parties, such as the appellant, faculty members, and any witnesses. Obtain statements to gather a comprehensive understanding of the circumstances surrounding the appeal.

Ensure a thorough understanding of our policies, procedures, and relevant regulations that pertain to the academic appeal and confirm that the appeal process is being conducted in accordance with the below procedures.

They will gather all relevant information related to the appeal case, along with the academic appeal form and supporting evidence. Conduct any interviews with relevant members of staff where required.

Approach the investigation with impartiality and objectivity, avoiding any conflicts of interest.

Analyse the gathered evidence and evaluate its relevance to the grounds of the appeal. They will consider how the evidence aligns with the academic appeals policy and procedure.

They will prepare a comprehensive report summarising the findings of the investigation and clearly present the evidence, interview summaries, and an objective assessment of the appeal in their outcome letter.

Reviewer:

AccXel review for (stage three) will be conducted by the Vice Principal who was not involved in any of the stages of the appeal.

Conduct an impartial and thorough review of the appeal, considering all relevant documentation.

Clearly communicate the decision to the appellant, providing a detailed rationale.

Principal:

Responsible for leading, developing and implementation of the HE academic appeals policy ensuring alignment with external bodies requirements (i.e., Office for the Independent Adjudicator) and that the policy is clear and transparent for students, staff, and relevant stakeholders.

Engage with key stakeholders to gather input, foster collaboration, and communicate the purpose and procedures of the appeals policy.

Facilitate training sessions to ensure a clear understanding among faculty, staff, and students.

Foster a culture of continuous improvement by regularly reviewing and updating the policy based on feedback and emerging needs.

Students:

It is student responsibility to ensure that they have read and understood the academic appeal policy and procedures and seek advice when required.

You are responsible for being aware of the timeframes for submitting an informal appeal, formal appeal, and review request.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you submit relevant evidence that will support your appeal. You must make sure that your appeal is clear and concise to aid the investigator in reviewing your case.

If you require assistance with your appeal form or advice on the policy, you should contact your teacher or the HE Quality Officer. If you prefer to speak to an independent person, you could contact the Student Welfare team or the Student Representative.

Support available:

We are committed to fostering a supportive environment that empowers you to ask questions about the assessment of your work. If you require assistance or have questions about any stage of the appeals process, you can discuss the matter with your lecturer or Head of Education.

Independent support is also available via the pastoral team at (safeguarding@accxel.co.uk).

Throughout all the stages of the appeal process, you can nominate someone to be your advocate to speak and deal directly with us on your behalf. You will need to contact us in writing (quality@accxel.co.uk) to confirm who your advocate is and that you give us permission to share data relevant to your academic appeal process with them. The academic appeal procedure is an internal process and is not a formal legal proceeding, therefore legal representation is not required.

Policy Principles:

We recognise the importance of providing a mechanism to address academic concerns, these principles aim to ensure a consistent and equitable appeals process. This policy has been created with the intention of promoting a supportive and accountable framework for addressing academic disputes while maintaining the integrity of AccXel's educational mission.

Through clear communication, unbiased evaluation, and a commitment to procedural integrity, we seek to create an environment that values rights, upholds academic standards, and encourages continuous improvement.

What is an Academic Appeal?

An academic appeal is an appeal against the decision of an academic body that makes decisions on student progress, assessment, and awards (e.g. tutors/assessors and assessment boards) based on the below grounds:

- A procedural irregularity in the assessment process.
- Bias or reasonable perception of bias.
- Circumstances affecting performance where, for good reason, the assessors were not made aware of the significant factors relating to the assessment of your work when it made its original decision.
- A challenge to the outcome of an extenuating circumstance consideration of personal circumstances which have affected your performance.

There is no right of appeal over matters of academic judgement for example decisions that can only be made by applying an academic expert opinion. Therefore, you cannot appeal because you disagree with the assessment of how well you met the assessment criteria, or you are unhappy with your results.

How to submit a Formal Appeal:

You should submit your formal academic appeal in writing along with your supporting evidence to the Compliance Lead at he@accxel.co.uk within 15 working days of the decision.

The appeal form sets out all the information you need to include to enable the investigation to be started. If the form has missing information or supporting evidence is not attached the process will not start until a completed form has been submitted.

You should include all the supporting evidence and any information you wish to be considered as part of your academic appeals investigation. Any additional evidence that is submitted at a later date in addition to the original appeal may cause a delay to the investigation and consideration timeframe.

Timeframes:

Below are the timeframes for each stage of the academic appeals procedures:

Stage One: Informal Considerations:

- Submission deadline: The initial appeal for Stage One must be submitted within 10 working days of the academic decision in question.
- Acknowledgement: Compliance Lead will acknowledge receipt of the appeal within 3 working days of submission.
- Response: A response to the Stage One appeal will be provided by the Compliance Lead within 10 working days of the acknowledgment date.

Stage Two: Formal Appeal:

- Submission Deadline: A formal appeal must be submitted within 15 working days of the academic decision or within 5 working days from the outcome of the Stage One informal consideration, whichever is later.
- Acknowledgment: Compliance Lead will acknowledge receipt of the formal appeal within 3 working days of submission.
- Response: A response to the formal appeal will be provided by the Head of Education within 20 working days of the submission date.

In exceptional situations where we deem it necessary to extend the established timeframes for any stage of the appeal process, we will inform you straight away and provide a clear rationale for the extension.

Late Appeals

If you submit your formal appeal (stage two) or right to final challenge (stage 3 below) after the timeframe deadline your appeal/request will be considered out of time unless you can provide evidence to support your late submission.

A formal appeal and/or review request should be submitted within the requested timeframe and if you are submitting late, you must provide a reason for the late submission and the following reasons will not be accepted (but not limited to):

- Not knowing about the academic appeal procedures and timeframes.
- Being on holiday or work commitments.

If your appeal or review request is out of time, you will receive an outcome letter informing you of this and why this decision has been made.

Group Appeals:

In instances where an issue arises that affects several students, you may submit a group appeal. The group should nominate a representative and must all agree that this person can speak and liaise on their behalf.

The response will be focused on the factors affecting the group as a whole and will not detail individual circumstances.

Should you wish for your individual circumstances to be considered alongside the group appeal, you can submit a separate individual formal appeal for consideration.

Evidence Standards:

The evidence provided for an academic appeal should be factually supportive and should make it clear in your appeal form why you believe this evidence supports your appeal. Examples of the type of evidence you can provide are:

- Email correspondence with tutors and staff members.
- Medical or other urgent cause evidence relating to extenuating circumstances that could not have been provided earlier.
- Alternative arrangement agreements.

Supporting evidence that will not be beneficial for your appeal can include (but not limited to):

- Statements commenting on expected results or highlighting surprise at the outcome of the assessment.
- Statements challenging the examiner's academic judgement.

Outcomes:

There are three types of outcomes given to an academic appeal case:

- Upheld
- Partially Upheld
- Not upheld
- Out of time

Upheld:

If your appeal is upheld this means that the investigator found evidence to support one or more of the grounds of appeal. Your outcome letter will detail the next steps and if any action will take place. In most cases the decision maker (e.g. assessor) will be asked to revisit their considerations.

The upholding of an appeal does not guarantee that there will be a change of results/classification or outcome decision. If, after the correct procedures have been followed the decision makers consider that there is no change to be made, this decision is final and cannot be challenged.

Upheld appeals will not negatively affect your academic results, they will either stay the same or change in a positive manner.

Partially Upheld:

Partially upheld appeal/review means that the investigator found evidence to support one or more of your grounds of appeal/review, but not all of them. Your outcome letter will detail the next steps for the upheld grounds of your appeal/review and explain why some of the grounds were not upheld.

You may request a review of your stage two formal appeal outcome under stage three if you have grounds to do so. For review requests you can submit an external complaint to the OIA following the procedures below.

Partially upheld appeals will not negatively affect your academic results or your relationship with the college or its staff.

Not Upheld:

If your appeal is not upheld, you will be given the reasons why in your outcome letter and that stage of the process will be closed. You may request a review of the stage two outcome under stage three if you have grounds to do so.

Out of Time:

If your appeal is considered out of time this means that your formal appeal or review request was submitted outside of the required timeframe, and you did not have a suitable reason for doing so. For stage two, you may request a review of this outcome under stage three if you have grounds to do so.

Academic Appeals Procedure:**Stage One – Informal Stage:**

If following the publication of your results or outcome decision you believe you have identified an issue, you are able to seek clarification by contacting your Teacher or Programme Lead. Your informal appeal

should be sent to your tutor or Programme Lead via email copying in the Compliance Lead (quality@accxel.co.uk) within 10 working days of the decision being made.

The Compliance Lead will acknowledge your informal appeal within 3 working days of receipt.

Your tutor will be able to provide you with information on how the decision or outcome was made and why. For example, if you are concerned that your results are significantly out of line with what you expected, your tutor can confirm how the marks were considered in accordance with the marking criteria.

Your tutor will respond to your informal appeal via email within 10 working days of when your informal appeal was submitted. If you feel that the informal stage has not addressed your concerns and you feel you have grounds to do so, you can submit a formal academic appeal under stage two within 5 working days of the informal appeal outcome.

Stage Two – Formal Stage:

A formal academic appeal should be submitted to the Compliance Lead at quality@accxel.co.uk, within 15 working days of the decision being made or within 5 working days of the informal appeal outcome, using the academic appeals form along with supporting evidence.

Your appeal will then be acknowledged by the Compliance Lead within 3 working days of receipt.

Your appeal will be investigated by the Head of Education who will be impartial from the decision you are submitting your appeal against. The investigation will involve collecting all the relevant information relating to your appeal case which may include but not limited to:

- Mark sheets and feedback
- Comments from tutors/assessors
- Marking criteria
- Course programme details
- Assessment briefing

All the gathered materials along with your appeal form and supporting evidence will be considered carefully. Staff involved in the decision process that led to your appeal will be asked to provide their comments on the matter. The investigator will assess whether procedures have been followed in line with the Assessment Policy and whether there any evidenced grounds in which to uphold your appeal.

Based on the gathered evidence and policy considerations, the Head of Education will make a recommendation regarding your appeal. The outcome of these considerations, along with a detailed explanation of the decision, rationale, and any actions to be taken will be sent to you via the email address given on your academic appeals form within 20 working days of receiving the formal appeal.

If the formal appeal cannot be investigated within this period, the Compliance Lead will contact you via email to explain what action is being taken and provide an estimated timeframe of when you will receive a full response.

Stage 3 – Right to final challenge:

Students who consider AccXel to have failed to follow published procedures and regulations, may have final appeal with the Awarding Organisation they are registered with. Final appeals to the awarding body must be submitted within 10 working days of receipt of the college response. This will be outlined in the College response.

The following policies and procedures will apply after AccXel internal stages have been completed:

- Pearson: BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment (Internal verification of assessment decisions / Student Appeals) which can be found here: [btec-centre-guide-to-quality-assurance.pdf \(pearson.com\)](https://www.pearson.com/quality-assurance/guide-to-quality-assurance.pdf)

Where the appropriate panel of the AO determines that AccXel has not acted in accordance with the regulations or that a decision is not reasonable then the recommendations will be considered by the Principal. The decision will then be communicated to the student.

Where the AO find that the decision was reasonable and made in accordance with regulations the challenge will be rejected and a completion of procedures letter will be issued.

Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA):

Once you have completed all the internal procedures if you are still dissatisfied with the outcome of your appeal, you may be able to apply for a review of the matter to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA).

You will normally need to have completed the academic appeals procedures before you complain to the OIA (all three stages of the process). If your final challenge (stage three) is not upheld, we will issue you with a Completion of Procedures Letter automatically. If your appeal is upheld or partly upheld, you can ask for a Completion of Procedures Letter if you would like one. You can find more information about Completion of Procedures Letters and when you should expect to receive one on the OIA website.

You must make your complaint to the OIA within 12 months of completing the appeals procedures. The 12-month period will begin from the date of the Completion of Procedures Letter.

Review and Monitoring:

We are committed to ensuring the effectiveness and relevance of the academic appeals policy. Therefore, a systematic and annual review process has been established to assess the policy's performance. The frequency of these reviews, conducted by the Senior Management Team (SMT), will be determined to align with the college's needs, OIA and other external bodies best practices. These reviews will take into account feedback from stakeholders, changes in legal requirements, and emerging trends in academic administration.

Stakeholder feedback is integral to the continuous improvement of the appeals process. A structured feedback mechanism will be in place to gather insights from students, staff, university partners and administrators involved in the appeals process. Feedback surveys, focus group discussions, and other methods will be utilised to collect input. The results of these feedback mechanisms will be analysed to identify areas of strength and improvement, guiding adjustments to the policy and its procedures.

To enhance transparency and accountability, we will implement a robust data analysis and reporting system related to academic appeals. The Quality team will compile and analyse anonymised data regarding the frequency, types, and outcomes of appeals (no personal data will be used for these reports). Regular reports will be generated and shared with the SMT and other relevant committees, providing insights into trends, areas of concern, and the overall effectiveness of the appeals process. This data-driven approach will inform future policy revisions and interventions to better support students and maintain fairness in decision-making.

Confidentiality & Record Keeping:

We are committed to upholding the privacy and confidentiality of all parties involved in the academic appeals process. In line with our GDPR Policy all information related to appeals, including written statements, evidence, and decisions, will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Only individuals directly involved in the appeals process, such as the teachers or Programme Lead, investigators, Reviewers, and relevant administrative staff, will have access to this information.

Accurate and comprehensive record-keeping procedures have been established to document all aspects of the academic appeals process. This includes the submission of appeals, communication between parties, decisions, and any supporting documentation. Records will be securely maintained by the Compliance Lead and be stored on secure servers with restricted access, and physical records will be stored in a secure location. At the end of the designated retention period, records will be disposed of securely and in accordance with our Data Retention Policy. Access to these records will be restricted to authorised personnel involved in the administration of the appeals process.

You have the right to access all the information presented in your academic appeal investigation and this will be given to you upon the completion of stage two and stage three alongside your outcome letter.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion statement:

At the core of this policy is a steadfast commitment to fostering equality, diversity, and inclusion in full accordance with the Equality Act 2010. We are dedicated to eliminating discrimination, advancing equal

opportunities, and fostering an inclusive environment for all members of our community. This commitment extends to every aspect of our academic appeal process, ensuring that it adheres to the legal obligations outlined in the Equality Act 2010.

Policies are inclusive of all AccXel Students, Enquirers and Alumni, regardless of age, civil status, dependency or caring status, care experience, disability, family status, gender, gender identity, gender reassignment, marital status, marriage and civil partnerships, membership of the Traveller community, political opinion, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, socio-economic background, sex, sexual orientation, or trades union membership status.

This policy has been agreed by the AccXel senior management team and agreed. It will be reviewed every year or after significant changes to AccXel's business or staff.

Signed:

Natalie King

Date: 06/01/2025