

Assessment Appeals Policy and Procedures

		This policy is effective from	January 2022
Approval body	Academic Council	Approval date	10 November 2021
Owner	Head of Academic Affairs & Research	Next review date	September 2022

1. Purpose

- 1.1. NCAD is committed to providing an excellent education and student experience. The College supports improvement in educational quality and academic decision-making. However, NCAD 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 College is committed to resolving appeals as quickly as possible with emphasis on local resolution.
- 1.2. This policy chiefly draws on the UCD Academic Appeals Policy, of which the latest version was approved by UCD's Academic Council on 5 May 2016.

2. Principles

- 2.1. The following principles underpin the Assessment Appeals Policy and appeals process:
 - 2.1.1. **Accessible and user-focused:** Easily available and understood, transparent process where outcomes are communicated giving clear reasons for the decisions reached.
 - 2.1.2. **Simple and timely:** Offer opportunities for early resolution and clarity regarding timelines for the process.
 - 2.1.3. **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.
 - 2.1.4. **Supports improvement:** Appeals provide an important source of feedback for NCAD, 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

Appellants

- 3.1. The Assessment Appeals Policy applies to all NCAD-registered students, including students registered to collaborative programmes, and graduands. Ordinarily, students who have

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graduated have thereby indicated their formal acceptance of their academic results and therefore cannot appeal such results.

- 3.2. 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.

Types of appeal

- 3.3. An assessment 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:
 - 3.3.1. An appeal against the result of any assessment of students' academic work. An appeal against the result of a module, or against a component of a module, can only be submitted against a final result as issued by NCAD Exam Board.
 - 3.3.2. An appeal against the decision of the NCAD Exam Board on the award of a research master's degree.
 - 3.3.3. An appeal against decisions on progression in and award of doctoral programmes. A student can appeal the decision of:
 - 3.3.3.1. The Annual Evaluation Panel, or
 - 3.3.3.2. The decision of the NCAD Exam Board on the award.

Grounds for appeal

- 3.4. An assessment appeal will only be considered on the following grounds:
 - 3.4.1. Procedural irregularity: There is evidence of substantive irregularity in the conduct of the assessment process, including where this results in an inappropriate grade assessment.
 - 3.4.2. Extenuating circumstances:
 - 3.4.2.1. There were extenuating circumstances of which the Exam Board was aware but had rejected because the application was late and the Exam Board did not consider the reason why the application was late to be valid.
 - 3.4.2.2. A prior circumstance emerged of which the Exam Board was not aware.
- 3.5. 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 College. Such complaints should be addressed through the Student Complaints Policy and Procedures.
- 3.6. Sometimes a student might be subject to several College procedures. In such cases the Head of Academic Affairs or a person nominated by the Head of Academic Affairs shall decide which procedure takes precedence.

4. Process

- 4.1. NCAD 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.

Early resolution

- 4.2. 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.
- 4.3. 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.
- 4.4. 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.

The process for submitting a formal assessment appeal

- 4.5. Appeals should be submitted to the Assessment Appeals Officer using the appropriate form provided, in accordance with the deadline published at the time of issuing the final result of an assessment (usually within 10 working days). It is recognised that in exceptional circumstances a student may not meet the stated timeframe. In such exceptional circumstances the Assessment 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.
- 4.6. The submission should include all supporting evidence to be presented to the Assessment Appeals Committee in support of the appeal. It is the responsibility 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.
- 4.7. A submission can be disregarded by the Appeals Officer if the submission:
 - 4.7.1. Does not fall within the scope (section 3);
 - 4.7.2. Clearly does not meet any of the grounds for appeal (section 3.4);
 - 4.7.3. Does not provide necessary evidence to support the appeal; or
 - 4.7.4. Is not submitted within the given timeframe.

- 4.8. The appellant should note that:
- 4.8.1. A student (or group of students) can withdraw from the appeals process at any point before the final decision of the Assessment Appeals Committee.
 - 4.8.2. 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.
 - 4.8.3. Disciplinary actions may be taken against a student who submits false or vexatious material as part of their appeal.

School response to appeal

- 4.9. The School will be notified of the appeal as soon as possible, no later than FIVE (5) working days after the submission of the appeal. Normally, the School's response to an appeal should be submitted within TEN (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.
- 4.10. The appellant will receive a copy of all responses and may provide a further response to the Committee within FIVE (5) working days of receipt of the School's response or any other response.

Review of an appeal by the Assessment Appeals Committee

- 4.11. The Assessment Appeals Committee shall meet three times per year, as needed, to consider Assessment Appeals.
- 4.12. The Assessment Appeals Committee will be formed and will meet to consider assessment appeals in accordance with the Terms of Reference for the Assessment Appeals Committee.
- 4.13. 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.
- 4.14. The Committee will normally reach a conclusion by consensus or by simple majority in one meeting in accordance with the published schedule for Assessment Appeal meetings.
- 4.15. The Assessment Appeals Officer should keep an official record of the Committee conclusion.

Outcomes of formal assessment appeal process

- 4.16. 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.
- 4.17. The determination of the Assessment Appeals Committee will be given in writing no later than FIVE 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 College.

4.18. The Assessment Appeals Committee may:

- 4.18.1. Uphold the appeal and instruct the relevant Exam Board 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.
- 4.18.2. Not uphold the appeal and confirm the original decision.
- 4.18.3. Make recommendations to the College to improve College policy, procedures or other documentation.

Complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman

- 4.19. If a student is not satisfied with the College appeals process, they can submit a complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman, or to the Office of the Ombudsman for Children if the student is 17 years old or younger.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

All Faculty and Staff

- 5.1. All faculty and staff responsible for assessment should be aware of the College'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.

Students

- 5.2. Students should:
 - 5.2.1. Ensure that they are familiar with the content of any relevant College 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;
 - 5.2.2. Seek feedback from the relevant assessor;
 - 5.2.3. Prepare and provide sufficient evidence to support their appeal; and
 - 5.2.4. Take all necessary actions in regard to progressing in their studies in case the appeal is not successful.

Assessors and examiners

- 5.3. Assessors, such as module co-ordinators, examiners and supervisors, should:
 - 5.3.1. Facilitate timely feedback on assessment results;
 - 5.3.2. Inform students of clear assessment criteria, and the manner in which students may obtain feedback on their results, including arrangements around the return of assessed work following the release of final module results; and

- 5.4. Ensure a request to amend a student record is actioned as quickly as possible should an administrative error be discovered.

Head of School

- 5.5. 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:
 - 5.5.1. Timely feedback mechanisms are in place and assessed work and outcomes are 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 collect their assessed work and receive feedback;
 - 5.5.2. Support is available to students who wish to raise concerns; and
 - 5.5.3. Faculty and staff within the School engage with the appeals process and respond to appeals, when formal appeals are made against assessment results.

Assessment Appeals Officer

- 5.6. The Assessment Appeals Officer:
 - 5.6.1. Manages formal assessment appeals received by the Academic Affairs office;
 - 5.6.2. Provides procedural advice to students wishing to submit an appeal and to faculty and staff responding to appeals;
 - 5.6.3. Ensures that appeals submitted include necessary details and supporting evidence;
 - 5.6.4. Liaises and communicates with students, Schools and the Assessment Appeals Committee;
 - 5.6.5. Ensures a case record is maintained; and
 - 5.6.6. Escalates any observations on the process highlighted by the Assessment Appeals Committee; and produces information and reports to the Academic Council.

Student Services and Admissions

- 5.7. Student Services and Admissions (SS&A) has a key role in implementing the final decisions on assessment appeals. SS&A also supports the NCAD Exam Board. SS&A should:
 - 5.7.1. Provide final results to students on published dates;
 - 5.7.2. Update student records in a timely manner following a valid request for amendment; and
 - 5.7.3. Advise students on any amendment to results once implemented.

Relevant College decision-making bodies

- 5.8. The NCAD Exam Board is the only decision-making body responsible for the decisions that can be appealed under this policy.

Assessment Appeals Committee

- 5.9. The Assessment Appeals Committee is the final arbiter in formal assessment appeals cases. The Committee should:
- 5.9.1. Consider appeals transparently and independently; and
 - 5.9.2. Communicate its decisions in a timely and clear manner to students, Schools, and other College members.

Academic Council

- 5.10. The Academic Council has oversight of the implementation of the assessment appeals process and the review of the Assessment Appeals Policy and related procedures, and reports to AN Bord annually.