

3. Appeals Conduct and Complaints

3.1. Academic Appeal Regulations

3.1.1 Academic Appeal Regulations (Taught Programmes)

These regulations should be read alongside the [General Provisions Relating to Academic Appeals, Conduct, Academic Offences, Student Complaints and Fitness to Practise](#).

1. Procedure

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Students may appeal to the Faculty Student Appeals Committee (FSAC) a decision of their School Board of Examiners about progression, assessment and awards, using the FSAC procedures. The FSAC shall consist of the Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor (PVC) (or nominee who is a senior academic) and two colleagues, at least one of whom is an academic member of staff. If the appeal is unsuccessful, students have the right to appeal this decision to the Central Student Appeals Committee (CSAC).

1.1.2 The CSAC is a committee drawn from a panel of senior academics from across the University, which convenes to hear appeals by undergraduate or postgraduate taught students against decisions of the FSAC. A quorum shall normally comprise the Chair plus at least three members, to include, where possible, one male and one female member and normally one representative from each Faculty.

1.1.3 Additional meetings of the FSAC and the CSAC may be arranged on an ad hoc basis, if waiting for the next scheduled meeting would be detrimental to the student's academic progress. The decision to arrange an ad hoc meeting will be made by the Director of Academic Services (or nominee).

1.1.4 Appeals submitted by students from the Institute of Professional Legal Studies, Stranmillis University College, China Queen's College, INTO Queen's or St Mary's University College will be considered by an FSAC in one of the three Faculties on a rotation basis.

1.1.5 Where an appeal is submitted by a student from the Institute of Professional Legal Studies, membership of the CSAC will include one member of the Inn of Court of Northern Ireland and one member of the Law Society of Northern Ireland nominated by the Council of Legal Education.

1.1.6 The process outlined in these Regulations is set out in a flowchart in Annex 1.

1.2 Scope of the Procedure

1.2.1 Any registered undergraduate or postgraduate taught student, or graduate of the University (see Regulations for Students 1.18 and 1.26) may appeal to the FSAC against a decision of the Board of Examiners relating to their progress.

1.2.2 A former student may not lodge an appeal after they have graduated from the University. However, a student may proceed to graduate while submitting an appeal, provided it is submitted within ten working days of the formal publication of the final degree classification. Should a change to a result be required following the appeal, the transcript will be altered accordingly and, where appropriate, an amended parchment issued.

1.2.3 There is no appeal against academic judgement. Academic judgement is a decision of an academic body about a matter, such as assessment, degree classification, research methodology, or course content/outcome. It is a judgement made about a matter where only the opinion of an academic expert will suffice. Marks will not be awarded to compensate for exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances will normally only influence the consequences of assessment decisions, e.g. whether a student is permitted to re-take a failed module. Students will not be permitted to re-sit or re-take passed modules.

1.2.4 The FSAC and the CSAC have the authority to consider and address other issues which may not be a substantive part of the appeal, but come to light as part of either committee's deliberations.

1.3 Decision Against Which an Appeal is Made

Students are not permitted to appeal the same decision of the Board of Examiners on more than one occasion.

1.4 Collective/Representative Appeals

1.4.1 The University will accept appeals from one student ('the Lead Student/') as representative of a group of

named students where the issue(s) raised is the same or substantially the same in each case. Appeals by unnamed students will not be accepted. The Lead Student must provide evidence that they are acting on behalf of and with the consent of the other named students. The Head of Academic Affairs must certify that it is appropriate, expedient and fair that the appeal may proceed as a collective/representative appeal.

1.4.2 If the Head of Academic Affairs certifies that the appeal may be accepted as a collective/representative appeal, then Academic Affairs will deal with the appeal under the appeals procedure in the normal way. In the absence of certification by the Head of Academic Affairs, each student may submit a separate appeal.

1.5 Late Appeals

Academic Appeals received after the specified deadlines will not normally be accepted. However, late appeals may be considered where a student demonstrates that they were unable to submit an appeal before the deadline due to circumstances beyond their control (e.g. hospitalisation). In such circumstances, students must submit a written statement with supporting evidence (e.g. medical documentation), to explain why they were unable to submit the appeal before the deadline, and why they are only now in a position to submit an appeal, together with the appeal documentation. The statement and any supporting evidence detailing reasons for a late appeal will be considered by the Head of Academic Affairs (or nominee), who will determine:

- i. That the student has evidenced sufficient cause for the late appeal to be accepted; or
- ii. That the student has not evidenced sufficient cause for the late appeal to be accepted and the appeal will not be considered. This decision is final; there is no further internal right of appeal. However, any student who feels aggrieved by the decision may make a complaint of maladministration to the Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsman (see 5).

Suspension of Appeal **1.8.1** The University reserves the right to **suspend progression of an appeal** if the student behaves inappropriately. In such cases the Director of Academic Services (or nominee) will suspend the procedures and will advise the student accordingly, including the consequences of this decision on the appeal and any conditions which must be met in order to reinstate the appeal. The student may also be referred for investigation under the Conduct Regulations.

1.5.2 Where a student is unable to participate in proceedings commenced under these Regulations for medical reasons, medical evidence will be required to confirm that this is the case. In such circumstances, any proceedings will normally be postponed until the student is deemed fit to participate by a medical professional, or the student confirms that they wish to proceed. Students deemed unfit to engage in the procedure will also be deemed unfit to study and will be required to take a period of temporary withdrawal until such time that they are deemed fit to return (see [1.20 of the Regulations for Students](#)).

1.6 Deadlines/Timescales

The University will endeavour to meet all timescales set out in this procedure. It may, however, prove impossible to meet these timescales when key staff are on leave, or otherwise indisposed, or where the complexities of the case warrant extended scrutiny. Where it is not possible for the University to meet the deadlines, for whatever reason, the student will be informed.

1.7 Notification of Decisions

Unless otherwise stated, notification of a decision will be sent to the student and copied to relevant persons normally within eight working days of the decision being taken. If there is a delay in the decision being made, the student will be advised.

2. Stage 1: Faculty Student Appeals Committee (FSAC)

2.1 FSAC Appeal

2.1.1 Students may submit an appeal to the Faculty Student Appeals Committee (FSAC) against the decision of a Board of Examiners on any of the following grounds, using the FSAC Appeal Form:

- i. New evidence has become available which could not have been provided to the Board of Examiners Meeting (via the Exceptional Circumstances Procedure). Evidence that a student chooses to withhold from the Board of Examiners will not normally constitute new evidence
- ii. There has been a procedural irregularity which has had a demonstrable impact on the academic outcome.
- iii. There was inadequate supervision of the thesis/dissertation element of the Postgraduate Taught Programme.
An appeal will not be considered on this ground unless there is good reason to show why such issues were not raised by the student promptly at the time they first arose.

2.1.2 The FSAC Appeal Form must be submitted to the Appeals, Conduct and Complaints Team within ten working days of the University deadline for the publication of results. The ground(s) for appeal, with reasons, must be clearly stated, and supporting evidence must be included with the form. Only appeals submitted on the

correct form and before the deadline will be accepted. Students are expected to have attended their Student Outcome Meeting (or equivalent) to discuss their academic progress.

2.1.3 The student should consult the University's Study Regulations and the relevant Programme Specification to ensure that the outcome they are seeking is permissible and, therefore, an option available to the FSAC.

2.1.4 It is a student's responsibility to ensure that all relevant documents have been included with their Appeal Form and submitted to Academic Affairs before the specified deadline.

2.1.5 Students who submit an appeal against a decision to require them to withdraw from their programme of study may normally, pending the outcome of the appeal, attend such classes or practical sessions as are deemed necessary for their continued progression, provided they have attained the academic prerequisites for attendance. Such attendance will not impact on the outcome of the appeal. Students must notify the Head of School that they will be attending classes or other sessions pending the outcome of an appeal. Where circumstances merit it, the Head of School may refuse permission for the student to attend classes pending the appeal. Students who have submitted an appeal against a decision to require them to withdraw from their programme of study will not normally be permitted to participate in external placements pending the outcome of an appeal.

2.1.6 A student may withdraw an appeal at any time prior to consideration of their appeal by giving written notice to Academic Affairs.

2.2 Sifting/Review Process

2.2.1 If it is not clear that the student has presented sufficient evidence, or a sufficiently compelling case, the student's appeal and any supporting documentation submitted by the student before the FSAC deadline will be considered by two senior members of staff (the Sifting Panel), who shall decide whether:

- i. the student has presented sufficient evidence and / or a sufficiently compelling case to be considered and refer the case to FSAC; or
- ii. the student has not presented sufficient evidence and / or a sufficiently compelling case to be considered and reject the appeal; for example*, where a student
 - a. does not cite a ground of appeal
 - b. clearly does not demonstrate grounds
 - c. fails to submit necessary supporting documentation (e.g. medical evidence) before the FSAC deadline
 - d. requests an outcome which is not within the remit of the FSAC to grant (see 2.1.3).

*The list is not exhaustive.

2.2.2 If the appeal is rejected by the Sifting Panel, the appeal will be reviewed by two senior members of staff (the Review Panel) who will either confirm the sifting decision or overturn the sifting decision. No further documentation will be accepted at this stage and the decision is made on the basis of the evidence presented at the time. The decisions of the Sifting Panel and Review Panel are matters of judgement where only the opinions of those panels will suffice. The decision of the Review Panel shall be final.

2.2.3 The student will be notified in writing, using their University email address, whether or not their appeal will proceed to be considered by the relevant FSAC.

2.3 Response to Appeal

2.3.1 Where an appeal is referred to FSAC, the appeal will be sent to the student's School for a response. A response will also be sought from any other relevant departments e.g. Student Wellbeing, Accessible Learning Support (formerly Disability Services). The decision to refer the appeal for a response prior to consideration by the FSAC should not be taken as an indication that the appeal will be upheld.

2.3.2 In responding to the issues raised in the appeal, the response should include copies of all correspondence relating to the case and other relevant information, as required.

2.4 FSAC

2.4.1 The student appeal, the School response and the response from any other department will be considered by the relevant FSAC which will come to a decision based on the paperwork alone.

2.4.2 The FSAC may:

- i. Dismiss the appeal, with reasons, and confirm the original decision against which the appeal was made
- ii. Refer the matter back to the Chair of the Board of Examiners, with or without recommendation*
- iii. Uphold the appeal in part or in full

* Where matters are referred back to the Chair of the Board of Examiners for consideration, a full meeting of the Board is not required. However, the Chair should normally consult with at least two members of the Board e.g. the External Examiner and the Director of Education, when reconsidering Board of Examiners' decision. A record of decisions made through this process must be kept as an addendum to the minutes of the original Board of Examiners meeting.

2.4.3 In exceptional cases, the FSAC may decide to refer the case to the CSAC for consideration with the student present. There shall be no appeal against a referral to CSAC.

2.4.4 Students will be notified of the outcome of their appeal. Those students whose appeals are dismissed at this stage will be given reasons for the rejection and will be informed of their right to appeal to the CSAC. Students will also be given all copies of information considered by the FSAC to inform the decision.

3. Stage 2: Central Student Appeals Committee (CSAC)

3.1 CSAC Appeal

3.1.1 Students may appeal to the CSAC against the decision of the FSAC on any of the following grounds using the CSAC Appeal Form:

- i. New evidence has become available which could not have been provided to the FSAC (evidence withheld from the FSAC will not normally constitute new evidence).
- ii. There has been a procedural irregularity in the FSAC procedure which has had a demonstrable impact on the outcome.

3.1.2 Students cannot appeal directly to the CSAC without first appealing to the FSAC.

3.1.3 The CSAC Appeal Form must be submitted to the Appeals, Conduct and Complaints Team within five working days of the outcome of the appeal to FSAC. Only appeals submitted on the correct form and before the deadline will be accepted. Appeal Forms must be completed in full and students must address the ground(s) of appeal they have cited. Appeal Forms which are not fully completed will not be accepted and will not be considered by the CSAC.

3.2 Sifting / Review Process

If it is not clear that the student has presented sufficient evidence and / or a sufficiently compelling case, the student's appeal and any supporting documentation submitted by the student before the CSAC deadline will be considered in accordance with the Sifting/Review process (see 2.2).

3.3 CSAC Meeting

3.3.1 Students are required to attend to present their appeal in person before the CSAC. In normal circumstances, the student will be given at least five working days' notice of the date and time of the meeting which they are asked to attend.

3.3.2 The student is required to confirm their attendance at the meeting of the CSAC. If the student fails to confirm attendance within the specified time, the appeal will be deemed to be withdrawn by the student.

3.3.3 If a student fails to attend, without showing good cause to the satisfaction of the Chair of the CSAC, then the appeal will be considered on the papers in the student's absence. In this event, the student shall not have grounds for a further appeal, or for seeking a further hearing, solely on the basis of their non-attendance at the earlier meeting.

3.3.4 Where the student establishes 'good cause' to the satisfaction of the Chair, then the hearing may be re-scheduled unless the student has indicated that they wish the case to be considered by the CSAC on the basis of the paperwork alone, in their absence.

3.3.5 The CSAC may request that the Chair of the FSAC (or nominee) attends the meeting of the CSAC or provides a written response to the student's appeal. The CSAC may also require a representative(s) of the relevant School or other relevant department to attend the meeting. If the Chair of the FSAC (or nominee) or the School or other representative is unable to attend, the CSAC may proceed in their absence.

3.3.6 Where all parties are in attendance, the student, the Chair of the FSAC (or nominee) and the School representative(s) shall be present while the other presents evidence. The CSAC shall not be required to inspect examination scripts, dissertations or other elements of assessed coursework. The CSAC reserves the right to request additional information required in order to reach a decision.

3.4 CSAC Decision

3.4.1 The CSAC may:

- i. Dismiss the appeal, with reasons, and confirm the original decision against which the appeal was made
- ii. Refer the matter back to the Chair of the Board of Examiners, with or without recommendation*

iii. Uphold the appeal in part or in full.

* Where matters are referred back to the Chair of the Board of Examiners for consideration, a full meeting of the Board is not required. However, the Chair should normally consult with at least two members of the Board e.g. the External Examiner and the Director of Education, when reconsidering Board of Examiners' decisions. A record of decisions made through this process must be kept as an addendum to the minutes of the original Board of Examiners' meeting.

3.4.2 CSAC decisions shall be final and shall be binding on both the School and the student.

4. Central Monitoring and Record Keeping

4.1 Minutes of the CSAC meeting, including an individual note of each decision, shall be taken as a formal record of the meeting and retained.

4.2 The Director of Academic Services shall make an annual report on academic appeals to the relevant academic governance committee. Individual students shall not be identified in the report.

5. Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman

Upon notification of the University's final internal decision, a student may make a complaint about maladministration in the application of these regulations to the [Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman](#) (NIPSO) within six months of notification of the University's final decision.

6. Further Information

6.1 For further information, please visit <http://www.qub.ac.uk/dasa/AcademicAffairs/AppealsComplaintsandMisconduct/AcademicAppeals/>.

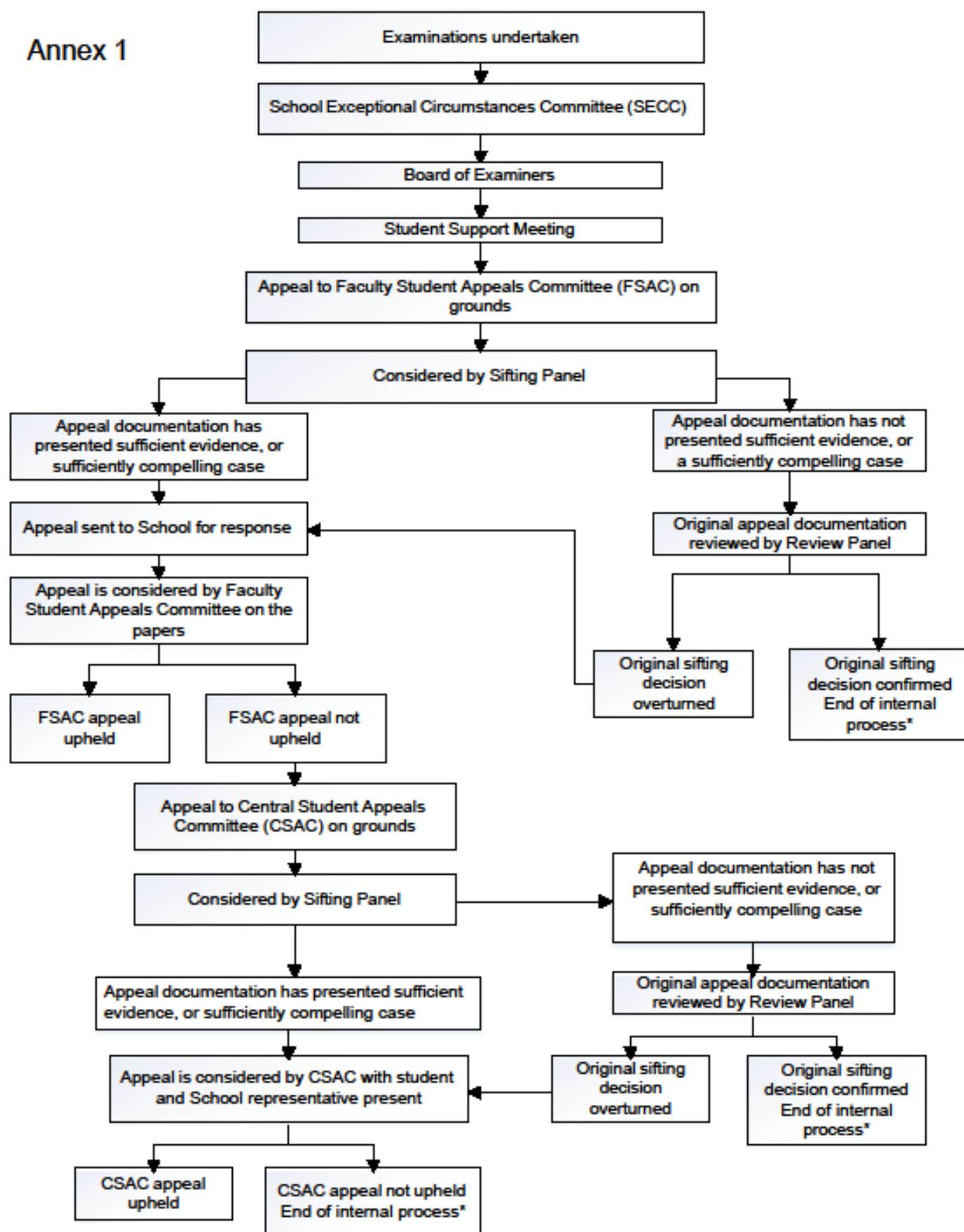
6.2 Advice on these regulations may be obtained from the Appeals, Conduct and Complaints Team (email: appeals@qub.ac.uk).

7. Forms

The FSAC and CSAC Appeal forms can be found at: <https://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicStudentAffairs/AcademicAffairs/AppealsComplaintsandMisconduct/AcademicAppeals/TaughtProgrammes/GuidanceforStudents/>.

Academic Appeal Regulations (Taught Programmes)

Annex 1



* No further right of appeal internal to the University, however, a student may make a complaint about maladministration in the application of these regulations to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman <https://nipso.org.uk/nipso/about-us/who-we-are/> within six months of notification of the University's final decision.