Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure

Ownership Details and Review Schedule of Policy

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Review cycle	1 Year
Next Review Due Date	13 February 2027
Policy owners	Principal
Approving Body	Senate
Lead Contact	Head of HE r.soomro@sirm.ac.uk
Applicable to	Registered students and applicants who have accepted an offer of a place on a course of study with SIRM College
Relevant/Applicable OfS Conditions of Registration/requirements	B1, B2, B4, C1, E2, E3
Other relevant / applicable legislation/requirements	UK Quality Code for Higher Education OIA Good Practice Framework Equality Act 2010 Data Protection Act 2018

DOCUMENT CONTROL

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Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure

1. Introduction

SIRM College recognises that there may be circumstances in which a student wishes to request a formal review of an academic decision. This may relate to an assessment result, progression decision, or final award.

This Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure ("the Policy") sets out the grounds on which academic appeals may be made and the processes through which they are considered fairly, consistently, and in line with the principles of natural justice, the UK Quality Code, and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) Good Practice Framework.

This Policy forms part of the contractual relationship between the student and the College and should be read in conjunction with the Academic Regulations, Student Terms and Conditions, Programme Information, and related policies.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all registered students on higher education programmes delivered by SIRM College, including those delivered in partnership with awarding or validating bodies.

Where a programme is subject to the academic regulations of an awarding or validating partner, those regulations take precedence in matters of academic standards and awards. This Policy governs the handling of academic appeals unless otherwise specified.

3. Definitions

Academic Appeal

A request for a review of a decision of an academic body charged with making decisions on assessment, progression, or awards.

Academic Judgement

A decision made by appropriate academic staff on the academic merit of a student's work or performance. Academic judgement cannot be challenged through an academic appeal.

4. Grounds for Academic Appeal

An Academic Appeal may only be made on one or more of the following grounds:

- A material administrative or procedural error in the assessment or decision-making process
- A procedural irregularity or evidence of bias that has adversely affected the decision
- Exceptional circumstances which the student was unable, for valid reasons, to disclose at the appropriate time and which have impacted academic performance

Appeals may not be made on the basis of disagreement with academic judgement.

5. Principles

Academic appeals will:

- be considered fairly, impartially, and in a timely manner;
- be based on relevant evidence;
- not normally result in the amendment of academic judgement or automatic uplift of marks;
- be handled in accordance with this Policy and applicable data protection legislation.
- Students may seek independent advice and support when preparing an academic appeal and may be accompanied by a friend, family member, or other appropriate representative.

6. Time Limits

All time limits are stated in calendar or working days as specified. Late submissions will not normally be accepted unless there is clear evidence that the student was prevented from meeting the deadline due to circumstances beyond their control.

- Late appeals will be considered in accordance with the following approach:
- Appeals submitted within a short period after the deadline may be accepted at the discretion of the Quality Manager, where there is clear evidence of a valid reason and acceptance would not compromise fairness or the timely operation of the procedure.
- Appeals submitted beyond this period will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances and must be approved by the Principal or their nominee.

All decisions relating to late appeals will be recorded to ensure consistency and to support monitoring and review.

7. Stage One Academic Appeal Process

7.1 Eligibility

Academic Appeals may only be submitted on the grounds set out in the *Grounds for Academic Appeal* section of this Policy.

7.2 Submission

A Stage One Academic Appeal must be submitted within **21 calendar days** of the formal publication of the decision being appealed.

Appeals must be submitted using the prescribed Academic Appeal Form and must include:

- the ground(s) relied upon;
- an explanation of how the ground(s) affected the decision;
- all supporting evidence available at the time of submission.

Where supporting evidence is not available at the point of submission, this must be clearly indicated. Any outstanding evidence must normally be submitted within **10 calendar days** of the appeal submission. The appeal will not normally proceed to formal consideration until either the evidence has been received or the deadline for submission has passed. Evidence submitted after this deadline will not normally be considered unless an extension has been agreed in advance.

7.3 Initial Screening

The Quality Manager (or nominee) will conduct an initial screening to confirm that the appeal:

- has been submitted within the required timeframe;
- is complete;
- falls within the permitted grounds.

Appeals that do not meet these requirements will not proceed, and the student will be notified in writing with reasons.

The Quality Manager (or nominee) is responsible for the administrative management of the academic appeals process, including initial screening, evidence management, and procedural oversight.

An appeal will be considered accepted for formal consideration once it has passed initial screening and has been confirmed as complete.

7.4 Consideration

Appeals accepted for consideration will be reviewed by the Academic Appeals Board.

No member of the Academic Appeals Board shall have had any prior involvement in the teaching, assessment, or decision being appealed.

The Board will normally consider appeals based on written evidence.

The Academic Appeals Board will normally consist of at least three members of academic and/or professional services staff. The Board will be chaired by a senior member of staff who has had no prior involvement in the case. All members must be independent of the original decision-making process.

7.5 Outcomes

Where an appeal is upheld, outcomes may include:

- correction of an administrative or procedural error;
- the setting aside of an assessment attempt and the provision of a further attempt;
- a deferral or extension of assessment;
- reconsideration by an appropriate academic body;
- other academic remedies deemed appropriate.

Outcomes will not normally include a change of academic judgement.

7.6 Communication

Students will normally receive a written outcome within **20 working days** of the appeal being confirmed as complete and accepted for consideration.

8. Stage Two Academic Appeal Review

8.1 Requesting a Review

A request for a Stage Two review must be submitted within **10 working days** of the Stage One outcome.

Stage Two is not a re-hearing. Reviews may only be requested where:

- there has been a procedural irregularity or evidence of bias in the handling of the Stage One appeal;
- the Stage One decision was not reasonable based on the evidence available;
- new evidence has arisen that could not reasonably have been provided earlier.

8.2 Consideration

The Stage Two review will be conducted by the Principal or a senior nominee independent of the Stage One process. The reviewer must not have had any prior involvement in the case.

8.3 Outcomes and Finality

The reviewer may uphold the Stage One decision or refer the matter for further appropriate action.

The Stage Two decision represents the **final internal decision of the College**.

Students will normally receive the outcome within **20 working days** of the review request being confirmed as complete.

9. Completion of Procedures

Upon completion of Stage Two, students will be issued with a **Completion of Procedures Letter**.

This enables referral to the **Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)** within **12 months** of the date of the letter.

10. Conduct and Correspondence

Unreasonable, abusive, or persistent correspondence may result in proportionate restrictions on further communication and, where appropriate, closure of the appeal following due process.

11. Monitoring and Review

This Policy will be reviewed annually. Academic appeals data will be monitored and reported through the College's governance structures to support consistency, enhancement, and quality assurance.

Oversight of this Policy forms part of the College's governance framework, with Senate maintaining oversight of academic standards and the Board of Governors maintaining oversight of institutional risk.

The College will maintain a formal record of all academic appeals, including outcomes and any actions taken. These records will be used to support monitoring, consistency, and continuous improvement.