UCQ UNIVERSITY CENTRE QUAYSIDE

Appeals Procedure

Version: 9
Revision date: 18/09/2026
Document Owner/Reviewer: Head of Policy & Governance
Due for review: 18/09/2028

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1. Introduction and scope

This procedure sets out University Centre Quayside's arrangements for considering appeals against decisions made by UCQ.

The procedure is institution-wide and is not limited to higher education academic appeals. Depending upon the nature of the decision, it may apply to students, apprentices, applicants or other individuals who have been directly affected by a formal UCQ decision and have a right of appeal.

This procedure includes arrangements for:

- academic appeals;
- admissions appeals; and
- appeals against other formal UCQ decisions where the relevant policy or procedure provides a right of appeal or where no more specific appeals procedure applies.

Where another UCQ policy or procedure contains a specific appeal mechanism, that mechanism will normally take precedence.

All UCQ staff have a responsibility to ensure that individuals who may have a right of appeal are appropriately informed of the procedure applicable to them.

2. Academic appeals

An academic appeal is a request for the review of a decision concerning a student's academic progress, assessment, progression or award.

Academic appeals will be considered fairly, consistently and confidentially.

A student's mark or academic standing will not be reduced solely because they have submitted an appeal.

2.1 Grounds for academic appeal

A student may submit an academic appeal on one or more of the following grounds:

Significant mitigating circumstances

There were circumstances which materially affected the student's performance, for which supporting evidence exists, which were not known to the Board of Examiners or other relevant academic body when the decision was made, and it was not reasonably practicable for the student to make those circumstances known earlier.

Procedural irregularity

There was a material procedural irregularity in the conduct of an examination, assessment or relevant academic process which creates a reasonable possibility that the outcome may have been different had the irregularity not occurred.

Prejudice or bias

There is evidence of prejudice, bias or a lack of proper assessment by one or more individuals involved in the relevant academic decision.

A student may not appeal solely because their results are lower than they had hoped or because they disagree with the academic judgement of internal or external examiners or a Board of Examiners.

3. Admissions appeals

An admissions appeal is a request for the review of a decision made in relation to an individual's application for admission to UCQ.

An applicant may appeal where:

- there was a material irregularity in the conduct of the selection process;
- there was an irregularity in the processing of the application which may have affected the outcome;
- relevant information which could not reasonably have been provided previously may materially affect the decision; or
- another ground for appeal is expressly provided under the applicable admissions arrangements.

An admissions appeal does not provide a general right to challenge legitimate academic or professional judgement exercised in making an admissions decision.

4. Appeals against other UCQ decisions

This procedure may also be used where an individual has a right to appeal against another formal UCQ decision and no more specific appeal procedure applies.

An appeal may be made on one or more of the following grounds:

- the relevant policy or procedure was not correctly followed;
- the decision was made without due regard to relevant facts, evidence or circumstances;
- there is new evidence which could not reasonably have been provided when the original decision was made;
- there is evidence of bias or a reasonable perception of bias; or
- the decision or sanction was unreasonable or disproportionate in the circumstances.

The purpose of an appeal is to review a decision. It is not normally an opportunity for the matter to be reheard in full simply because the appellant disagrees with the original outcome.

5. Deadlines for appeals

Unless another UCQ policy or procedure specifies a different timeframe, an appeal must normally be submitted within **28 calendar days** of notification of the decision being appealed.

UCQ may consider an appeal submitted outside the normal timeframe where there are good reasons why the appellant could not reasonably have submitted the appeal earlier.

6. Appeals process

The exact route available to an appellant will depend upon the nature of the decision and, where relevant, the programme or qualification concerned.

For academic appeals relating to an OU-validated higher education programme, the process comprises:

Stage 1 – early resolution or clarification, where appropriate;

Stage 2 – UCQ's formal appeals process, including any internal review requested under section 12; and

Stage 3 – review by The Open University where the applicable criteria are met.

For academic appeals relating to an OU-validated higher education programme, UCQ will normally complete Stage 2 within **41 calendar days of receipt of the formal academic appeal**. This timeframe includes any internal review undertaken under section 12.

Where there are good reasons for delay, the appellant will be informed and kept updated on progress and any revised timeframe.

For other appeals, the timescales set out in this procedure or in the relevant underlying UCQ procedure will apply.

7. Lodging an appeal

An appeal must be submitted in writing using the prescribed UCQ Appeals Form and sent to the Appeals Officer at **appeals@ucq.ac.uk**.

The appeal should include:

- the appellant's name and student or applicant number where applicable;
- the decision being appealed;
- the ground or grounds of appeal;
- relevant supporting evidence;
- the outcome sought; and
- details of any other person who may hold relevant information.

Where reasonable adjustments are required, UCQ may agree an alternative means of submitting the appeal.

The appellant is normally responsible for obtaining and providing evidence in support of their appeal.

8. Initial review

The Appeals Officer or an appropriate nominee will conduct an initial review to determine whether the appeal is eligible for formal consideration.

The appeal must normally:

- have been submitted in the required form;
- identify one or more permitted grounds;
- have been received within the applicable timeframe; and
- present reasonably arguable grounds supported by relevant information or evidence.

Where an appeal is not eligible, the appellant will be informed in writing of the decision and reasons.

Where appropriate, the appellant will also be informed of any applicable right to request a review of that decision or pursue another procedure.

9. Formal consideration of the appeal

Where the appeal is eligible, it will be referred for formal consideration.

Board of Governors, or another body or individual authorised under the relevant UCQ procedure, will appoint an appropriate investigating or reviewing person who has no material conflict of interest or prior involvement in the decision being appealed.

The reviewer will consider the available evidence, determine whether further information is required and reach a reasoned decision.

The investigating member will normally reach a decision within **10 calendar days** of the appeal being referred to them.

The 10-calendar-day period relates to the formal consideration by the investigating member. For academic appeals relating to OU-validated higher education programmes, the overall Stage 2 process remains subject to the 41-calendar-day timeframe set out in section 6.

10. Outcome

The appeal may be:

- dismissed; or
- upheld in whole or in part.

Where an appeal is upheld, the decision-maker will identify the action required to remedy the matter.

Where the appeal concerns an academic decision, the person considering the appeal will not substitute their own academic judgement for that of the appropriate academic body. Where necessary, the matter may instead be referred back to the appropriate body, such as the Board of Examiners, for reconsideration.

11. Action following formal consideration

The appellant will receive a written outcome setting out:

- the decision;
- the reasons for the decision;
- any action required by UCQ or the appellant;
- any applicable right to request an internal review;

- the grounds for review; and
- the timeframe and process for requesting that review.

12. Internal review within UCQ

An appellant who considers that their appeal has not been properly considered may request an internal review by the Chair of Board of Governors or an appropriate independent nominee.

The request must normally be submitted within **7 calendar days** of notification of the formal appeal outcome.

A review may be requested where:

- there was a material procedural irregularity in the formal appeal process;
- the outcome was unreasonable in light of the evidence considered; or
- new evidence is available which could reasonably have affected the outcome, and which could not reasonably have been provided earlier.

The internal review will not normally rehear the original appeal. Its purpose is to consider whether the formal appeal was conducted properly and fairly and whether the resulting decision was reasonable.

The reviewer may uphold the original decision, vary the outcome where they have authority to do so, or refer the matter for reconsideration by the appropriate person or body.

The appellant will normally be notified of the outcome within **7 calendar days**.

For academic appeals relating to an OU-validated higher education programme, **this internal review forms part of UCQ's Stage 2 process and is included within the overall 41-calendar-day timeframe. It is not the Stage 3 review undertaken by The Open University.**

Following completion of the internal review, there is no further internal right of appeal within UCQ.

13. Transitional arrangements

Appeals submitted before the implementation date of this version of the Procedure will continue to be considered under the version of the Procedure in force at the date the appeal was submitted.

The applicable timescales, including the timeframe for requesting a review by The Open University, will remain those set out in that version of the Procedure.

14. Academic and admissions appeals – awarding organisations

Where an academic or admissions appeal concerns a programme or qualification awarded or validated by an external awarding organisation, a further route may be available once UCQ's internal procedures have been exhausted.

The availability, scope and grounds of any external appeal will depend upon the requirements of the relevant awarding organisation.

Students should refer to the information relating to their programme or contact UCQ for guidance.

15. Open University Stage 3 review

For students studying on an OU-validated programme, a further right to request review by The Open University may be available where:

- the appeal relates to an OU-validated programme;
- all applicable UCQ internal procedures have been exhausted;
- there are reasonable grounds to believe that UCQ's procedures and regulations for dealing with the appeal were not implemented correctly or fairly; and
- in the case of an academic appeal, the appeal concerns progression from one stage of the programme to the next or a final award.

For the purposes of the OU framework:

Stage 1 is early resolution or clarification where appropriate.

Stage 2 is UCQ's formal appeals process, including the internal review under section 12 where requested.

Stage 3 is review by The Open University.

Following issue of UCQ's COIP letter, an eligible appellant will have **21 calendar days from the date of the letter** to request a review by The Open University.

16. Office of the Independent Adjudicator

UCQ is a member of the independent Scheme operated by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA).

An eligible student who has completed the applicable internal and, where relevant, awarding-body procedures may be able to ask the OIA to review their complaint about the outcome of UCQ's appeals process.

The OIA normally requires a complaint to be submitted within **12 months of the date of the applicable Completion of Procedures Letter**.

The OIA route is subject to the OIA's Rules and does not apply to every individual or every type of appeal considered under this procedure.

17. Office for Students Freedom of Speech Complaints Scheme

The Office for Students (OfS) operates a free speech complaints scheme. Under that scheme, the OfS can review complaints about freedom of speech from non-student members, staff, applicants for academic posts and actual or invited visiting speakers. The scheme is free to use.

Where an eligible individual considers that a matter arising through an appeal engages freedom of speech or academic freedom, they may be able to make a complaint under the OfS scheme.

The scheme is not available to students.

Further information about eligibility and the complaints the OfS can review is available from the OfS.

18. Monitoring and review

UCQ will maintain appropriate records of formal appeals and internal reviews.

Appeals will be monitored to identify recurring issues, procedural weaknesses and opportunities to improve UCQ's policies, decision-making and student or stakeholder experience.

Relevant themes and actions will be reported through UCQ's governance arrangements as appropriate.

This procedure will be reviewed periodically and following significant changes to applicable regulatory, awarding-body or external requirements.

19. Document history

ISSUE NO.	DATE	PAGE	REVIEWER	DETAIL OF AMENDMENT
9	18/09/2026	All	Tara Henderson	Periodic review completed. Document completely revised to reflect updated Open University requirements and the introduction of the OfS Freedom of Speech Complaints Scheme. Scope clarified to confirm the procedure applies to academic, admissions and other formal UCQ appeals and is not limited to higher education. The appeals process has been revised to distinguish UCQ's internal review arrangements from the OU Stage 3 review for OU-validated provision. Formal Stage 2 timeframe updated to 41 calendar days for OU-validated HE academic appeals, and the timeframe for requesting an OU review reduced from 28 to 21 calendar days. Transitional arrangements added for existing cases, with updated external escalation information covering awarding organisations, the OIA and the OfS Freedom of Speech Complaints Scheme.

20. Initial equalities impact assessment

Department	All
Completed by	Tara Henderson, Head of Policy & Governance
Date of initial assessment	20/03/2021
Date of latest review	18/09/2026
Area to be assessed	AC-001 Appeals Procedure
Existing or new policy/procedure	Existing
What evidence has been used to inform the assessment and policy?	**External guidance and requirements:** OIA Good Practice Framework: Handling Complaints and Academic Appeals; QAA UK Quality Code and relevant guidance on concerns, complaints and appeals; Open University Validation Partnerships Guidance: Complaints and Academic Appeals, Version 1.0, June 2026; Office for Students Freedom of Speech Complaints Scheme Rules and associated guidance. **Internal guidance and requirements:** UCQ Equality and Diversity Policy; relevant UCQ governance requirements and consultation through the appropriate UCQ approval process.

1. Describe the aims, objectives or purpose of the policy/procedure

This procedure sets out UCQ's arrangements for reviewing formal decisions through an appeal process.

It applies to academic appeals, admissions appeals and other formal UCQ decisions where a right of appeal exists or where no more specific appeals procedure applies. It is therefore not limited to higher education academic or admissions decisions.

The procedure is intended to provide a fair, consistent and transparent mechanism through which an eligible individual can request review of a formal decision on defined grounds. It also sets out UCQ's internal review arrangements and, where applicable, routes to awarding organisations and external review bodies.

2. Which stakeholders/groups are intended to benefit from this policy/procedure?

All stakeholders who may have a right of appeal against a formal UCQ decision, including students, apprentices, applicants and other individuals directly affected by a decision to which an appeal right applies.

3–5. Assessment of protected characteristics

Protected characteristic	Negative impact	How the procedure furthers or prevents the aims of the Equality Act	Can any negative impact be justified?
Age	No effect	Appeal rights and grounds are applied consistently regardless of age, with decisions based on the relevant circumstances and evidence.	Not applicable
Disability	No effect	Reasonable adjustments and alternative arrangements may be made where appropriate to enable disabled appellants to access and participate effectively in the appeals process.	Not applicable
Sex	No effect	Appeals are considered against defined grounds and evidence irrespective of sex.	Not applicable
Gender reassignment	No effect	The procedure provides equal access to appeal and review mechanisms and requires information to be handled appropriately and confidentially.	Not applicable
Marriage and civil partnership	No effect	Appeal rights and processes apply consistently irrespective of marriage or civil partnership status.	Not applicable
Pregnancy and maternity	No effect	The procedure allows relevant individual circumstances to be taken into account, and reasonable flexibility may be provided where necessary.	Not applicable
Race	No effect	Appeals are considered objectively against defined grounds and evidence regardless of race.	Not applicable
Religion or belief	No effect	The procedure provides equal access to appeal and review mechanisms regardless of religion or belief and requires impartial decision-making.	Not applicable
Sexual orientation	No effect	Appeal rights and processes apply consistently regardless of sexual orientation, with decisions based on relevant grounds and evidence.	Not applicable

Overall assessment: No disproportionately negative impact on any protected characteristic has been identified. The procedure provides safeguards through defined appeal grounds, impartial consideration, confidentiality, reasonable adjustments where appropriate and an internal review mechanism.

6. Has there been any consultation/engagement with the appropriate protected characteristics?

No specific consultation with protected characteristic groups was considered necessary as no disproportionately negative impact has been identified.

The procedure has been reviewed against relevant equality, regulatory, awarding-body and external good-practice requirements and will remain subject to ongoing review through UCQ's governance arrangements.

7. What action(s) will you take to reduce any disproportionately negative impact, if any?

None required.

UCQ will continue to provide reasonable adjustments and appropriate support where required. Equality implications will continue to be considered through monitoring and periodic review of appeals and the operation of the procedure.

8. Should this policy/procedure proceed to Full Impact Assessment?

No.

No high or disproportionately negative impact on any protected characteristic has been identified.

Assessor signature:	**Approved by:** **Michelle Elliott**	**Date approved:** 18/09/2026

Appendix A - UCQ Appeals Form

Applicant Appeal

Name of applicant: _____

Student No. (if applicable): _____

Applicant signature: _____

Relevant programme (if applicable):_____

Date of decision: _____

Section 1: Result or decision for which the appeal is being made

Section 2: The ground(s) for appeal

Section 3: Evidence in support of the appeal

Section 4: Information of any other person(s) who has/have relevant information