

Appeals Policy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The School of Professional Studies (SPS) is committed to giving students an opportunity to challenge choices that affect their advancement, evaluation, and degree results in order to safeguard the academic integrity of the School's awards and ensure fair and impartial evaluations for students and reliable results.
- 1.2. The purpose of the policy is to ensure that appeals are handled fairly, transparently, consistently, and within a reasonable timeframe, while maintaining the academic standards and integrity of SPS and its partner organisations.

2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy applies to all students enrolled on programmes delivered by SPS, including those delivered in partnership with awarding or delivery organisations through collaborative or franchised arrangements.
- 2.2. The policy applies to appeals relating to academic decisions, including assessment outcomes, progression decisions, academic misconduct outcomes, and decisions relating to withdrawal or termination of studies where an academic element is involved.
- 2.3. The policy does not apply to complaints relating to non-academic matters, which will be considered under the Complaints Policy. Matters relating solely to disciplinary procedures or fitness to practise may also be managed under separate procedures where appropriate.

3. Advice and Guidance

- 3.1. Students are advised to consult any of the following sources for guidance both before and while using this procedure:
 - Student Support Services
 - Personal Academic Tutors
 - Appropriate Supervisors

4. Grounds for Appeal

- 4.1. An appeal may only be submitted on one or more of the following grounds:

- A student may appeal where there is evidence of procedural irregularity in the conduct of an assessment, examination, investigation, or decision-making process that may have materially affected the outcome
- A student may also appeal where there are exceptional mitigating circumstances affecting academic performance that the student was unable to disclose at the appropriate time for valid reasons
- An appeal may additionally be considered where there is evidence that a decision was unreasonable or disproportionate based on the available evidence
- Appeals that simply challenge academic judgement will not normally be accepted. Academic judgement includes the professional and scholarly judgement applied by academic staff in assessing the quality of work or determining academic standards

5. Group, third-party and anonymous appeals

- 5.1. A third party appealing on behalf of a student is not permitted to use this process.
- 5.2. Students may file an appeal as a group appeal when the concerns highlighted in the appeal have an impact on several of them. In such cases, the group should choose one student to serve as the group representative in order to manage the development of the appeal. In such circumstances, we will typically only get in touch with the designated student representative, who will be required to coordinate with the other students throughout the process.
- 5.3. Even though the student will often receive a copy of correspondence (unless the student requests otherwise), we will only work with the one person authorised to represent the student in matters of appeal.
- 5.4. Even if a student has designated a third party to represent them, they will still be asked to participate in the process as needed to provide for a thorough and complete review of the appeal.

6. Frivolous or Vexatious Appeals

- 6.1. SPS anticipates that students will not make purposeless or unnecessary appeals. Frivolous or vexatious appeals might involve, but are not restricted to:
 - Persistently pursuing non-meritorious appeals and/or unachievable outcomes
 - Persistence on pursuing what might be a meritorious appeal in an excessive way
 - Persistently making appeals that are obsessive, intrusive, or repeated

- 6.2. If SPS decides to decline an appeal because it is frivolous or vexatious, the student will be given a written explanation of the decision. We may take action under the Disciplinary Procedure when a student makes an appeal of this sort or provides misleading information.

7. Victimisation Statement

- 7.1. Any student who makes an appeal or attempts to use this system will not, subject to the aforementioned, face any negative consequences during their time at SPS as a result of the steps they took to pursue an appeal.
- 7.2. While an appeal is being heard, a student may continue to attend classes and use School resources without it having any bearing on the outcome of the appeal.
- 7.3. As a result, any student filing an appeal should ordinarily keep up with their coursework, including retake preparation.

8. Confidentiality, Record keeping and Data protection

- 8.1. SPS will exert all reasonable efforts to restrict the disclosure of information to those who must evaluate or respond to the case in a manner consistent with conducting a fair procedure and putting any recommendations into practise after taking an appeal into consideration. However, if a student specifies another faculty or staff member, that person or those people will typically have the right to respond to the appeal.
- 8.2. Students will be updated on all relevant evidence and decision-making justifications throughout the process. A report summarising the discussion and the reasoning behind the judgement will be given for each case that the Appeals Panel considers.
- 8.3. In accordance with its requirements under data protection law, SPS will treat the appeals records related to the proceedings using the SPS's pertinent privacy notices and data protection policy.
- 8.4. We will keep track of appeal results to facilitate, analyse and address any systemic problems found.

9. Informal Resolution

- 9.1. Before submitting a formal appeal, students are encouraged, where appropriate, to seek clarification or informal resolution through discussion with the relevant academic department or support services.
- 9.2. Informal resolution may help clarify misunderstandings or address concerns without the need for formal proceedings. However, students retain the right to submit a formal appeal within the required timeframe.

10. Appeals with Partner Organisations

- 10.1. Where programmes are delivered in partnership with awarding organisations, SPS will work collaboratively with those partners to ensure that appeals are handled appropriately and in accordance with relevant regulations and partnership agreements.
- 10.2. Where responsibility for academic decisions rests with our partner organisations, appeals may be considered jointly or referred to the partner organisation in accordance with agreed procedures.
- 10.3. SPS will cooperate fully with partner organisations during the investigation and resolution of appeals, and will ensure that students are informed clearly about the applicable process and decision-making responsibilities.
- 10.4. Details on the appeals processes will be made available in the Student Handbook, relevant to each course and partner organisation.

11. Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)

- 11.1. Higher education students who believe their appeal has not been properly or fairly handled by SPS or the awarding organisation can request for an independent review to be conducted by the OIA, <https://www.oiahe.org.uk>, where such requests are eligible for review, the OIA will investigate in accordance with its rules.
- 11.2. Referral to the OIA must be made within 12 months of the date of the Completion of Procedures Letter, and should be submitted using the OIA's complaints form, which can be found here: <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/contact-us/>

Version History

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1.0	First Approved Version	September 2025	Governing Body
