



**TRAFFORD &
STOCKPORT**
COLLEGE GROUP

HE Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure

Author:	Head of Higher Education (Quality & Standards)
Consultation:	TSCG Leadership Team
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¹ <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/information/glossary/>

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The HE Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure relates to the provision of higher education programmes delivered at Trafford & Stockport College Group (TSCG). TSCG students undertaking a programme of study awarded by Sheffield Hallam University or University of Huddersfield, may access the regulations here:

[University rules and regulations | Sheffield Hallam University \(shu.ac.uk\)](#)

[Student complaints procedure - University of Huddersfield](#)

Awarding-body regulations take precedence over TSCG procedures where programme - specific rules differ.

- 1.2 This Policy and Procedure explains what to do if you wish to appeal a decision made by one of the following:

- Mid-year Assessment Board
- End of year Assessment Board
- Academic Misconduct Panel

Appeals may only be submitted in relation to formal, confirmed decisions issued by these bodies.

- 1.3 The aim of this Policy and Procedure is to enable students enrolled on to Higher Education programmes at the TSCG to request a review of a published decision of an assessment board particularly as it applies to decisions on student progression, assessment and award. The appeals processes detailed in this document also apply to decisions resulting from investigations into academic misconduct.

This procedure is designed to ensure a fair, transparent and accessible process consistent with the OIA Good Practice Framework (2025) and the UK Quality Code: Concerns, Complaints and Appeals.

The College aims to ensure that academic appeals are normally completed within the OIA-recommended timescale of 90 calendar days, except in complex cases.

- 1.4 A student who wishes to seek a review of a **provisional** mark awarded by a module leader prior to confirmation and ratification of that mark from the appropriate assessment board should, in the first instance, discuss the issue with the module leader. If the student is not satisfied with the response provided, they should be invited to discuss the matter further with the Head of Studies. Students may request reasonable adjustments or support during this stage if required. This informal stage is intended to support early and local resolution, in line with OIA good practice.
- 1.5 The appeals procedure can only be invoked once marks have been made definitive and the assessment board has determined the student's progression or overall award. There is no provision to appeal academic judgement. Academic judgement refers to decisions requiring the academic expertise of a qualified assessor, and cannot be challenged. The grounds on which an appeal can be lodged are set out at Section 5. This may also include allegations of bias or perceived bias, a tendency to treat one person, group, thing or point of view more or less favourably than another, especially in a way to be considered unfair, and can be deliberate or unintentional (OIA, 2025). TSCG recognises its duty to act fairly and ensure that decision making is unbiased.

¹ <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/information/glossary/>

- 1.6 The appeals procedures contained within this document refer only to decisions made by the aforementioned decision-making bodies. Appeal mechanisms for matters relating to Disciplinary, Fitness to Study and admissions decisions are referenced in those policies. Where an issue may fall under more than one procedure, the College will determine the most appropriate route, reflecting the OIA recommendation for reasonable flexibility in overlapping processes.
- 1.7 The Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure should not be used to formally record dissatisfaction with TSCG facilities, services or teaching-related provision. These areas fall within the purview of the Complaints, Compliments and Incidents Procedure. Outcomes of the appeals process cannot be made the subject of a complaint. If a student submits an appeal that is in fact a complaint, they will be signposted to the correct procedure. A complaint regarding teaching or services cannot be used to challenge an academic decision.
- 1.8 This Policy and Procedure has been informed by the Good Practice Framework for the Handling of Complaints and Academic Appeals, published by the Office for the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) (2025 edition, including updated guidance on principles and bias) and the UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Concerns, Complaints and Appeals. This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure continued alignment with updated sector expectations and awarding-body requirements.

2. Scope

The Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure is made for the use of employees and students of Trafford & Stockport College Group, comprising of Trafford College, Stockport College, Cheadle College and Marple Sixth Form. For convenience, and unless otherwise indicated the group of colleges is referred to as 'we', 'our', 'us' or 'the College'. 'You' and 'your' refer to all students of Trafford & Stockport College Group. This definition includes current students and recent former students where the appeals process permits, consistent with the UK Quality Code guidance on concerns, complaints and appeals.

The College is committed to ensuring the appeals process is accessible to all students and will provide reasonable adjustments where required, in line with the OIA Good Practice Framework (2025)

3. Policy Statements

3.1 Appointment of a Third Party/Representative

The TSCG expects students to engage fully with this Policy and make your own representations when using the procedures described. Where a student feels unable to do that, they may request that they be permitted to appoint a representative to act on their behalf. They should make their request in writing alongside the submission of their Appeal Form explaining their reasons for their request. If the TSCG accepts the request to communicate through a third-party representative, the student expressly permits the College to:

- Share personal data pertaining to the investigation,
- Channel all communication, including determinant information requests regarding the appeal, through the nominated representative, and,
- Communicate final appeal outcomes to the nominated representative.

Additionally, the student accepts responsibility for any claims made by their representative on their behalf, including the ramifications of any false claims made in their name.

Students may also choose to bring a support person who does not act as a representative

¹ <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/information/glossary/>

but may attend meetings to provide emotional or practical support.

The College will make reasonable adjustments for disabled students who may require assistance in appointing, instructing, or communicating through a representative

3.2 Collective Appeals

It is expected that students will submit an appeal against the outcome of an assessment board's decision which relates to their results only. However, there is provision to make a collective appeal should material error or irregularity (as defined at Section 5.1) be found to have disadvantaged more than one student. Where a collective appeal is made, Trafford & Stockport College Group will request one student is nominated as a spokesperson to act on the group's behalf. In doing this, all correspondence, including outcomes will be through the nominated spokesperson. All students included in a collective appeal must confirm their consent in writing for the nominated spokesperson to act on their behalf. [oiahe.org.uk]

3.3 Vexatious Appeals

The TSCG can reject an appeal at any time if, in the opinion of the Head of Higher Education (Quality & Standards) the appeal is vexatious or frivolous in nature.

An appeal can be characterised as such in a number of ways, for example:

- Appeals that are persistent, obsessive, harassing
- Insistence upon pursuing unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason
- Pursuing meritorious appeals in an unreasonable manner
- Appeals that cause disruption or annoyance
- Remedy and redress that lack any serious purpose or value.

Before determining an appeal to be vexatious, the College will ensure that all reasonable attempts have been made to understand the student's concerns and that no legitimate grounds for appeal have been overlooked. If an appeal is considered to fall within any of the above categories, the Head of Higher Education (Quality & Standards), will write to the student explaining that Trafford & Stockport College Group is terminating further consideration of the appeal, clearly stating the reasons for doing so and issue a Completion of Procedures letter.

3.4 Unacceptable Behaviour

All students have the right to be heard and respected; employees have those rights, too. Communication or actions from appellants or their representatives that are demanding, angry or persistent can result in unreasonable demands or unacceptable behaviour towards employees. Aggressive, offensive or abusive actions or behaviour and unreasonable demands or persistence are all areas of unacceptable behaviour that are managed under this Policy and Procedure. Where unacceptable behaviour occurs, the College will manage the situation proportionately and in accordance with the principles of fairness outlined in the OIA Good Practice Framework (2025).

4. Academic Judgement

- 4.1 Students may **not** appeal against the academic judgement of examiners. Academic judgement refers to decisions that require the academic expertise of a qualified subject specialist and cannot be overturned through the appeals process. It does not include procedural errors, administrative mistakes, or issues relating to bias or perceived bias, which

¹ <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/information/glossary/>

may be considered grounds for appeal.

- 4.2 The OIA define academic judgement as “a judgement that is made about a matter where only the opinion of an academic expert will suffice”. The updated OIA Good Practice Framework (2025 edition) further clarifies that academic judgement does not include matters such as the correct application of procedures, fairness, administrative accuracy, or whether reasonable adjustments were considered, as these may fall within legitimate grounds for appeal.

5. Grounds on Which an Appeal Can be Made

5.1 Material Error or Irregularity

There has been an error or irregularity in the process of assessment or by which an Academic Conduct Panel has considered outcomes. Examples might include being examined outside of approved regulations or an academic conduct panel failed to follow its own procedures.

Other examples may include the incorrect application of marking criteria, administrative errors such as incorrect data entry, or failures to follow published Assessment Board processes. The OIA Good Practice Framework (2025) emphasises that such procedural irregularities may constitute legitimate grounds for appeal.

5.2 Mitigating Circumstances Not Known

There were mitigating circumstances or exceptional factors that the student was unable to disclose for good reason(s), before the deadline for receipt of applications to the mitigation panel. Where this is the case, the student must support their claim with supporting evidence, such as medical reports, which verify the reasons the student could not disclose the circumstances but also validate the original claim of mitigation.

However, mitigating circumstances may be accepted where a student was prevented from disclosing relevant information due to serious personal, medical, safeguarding, or capacity-related barriers. In such cases, supporting evidence must explain both the impact and the reason disclosure was not possible at the time.

The TSCG accepts that in some cases, students may feel embarrassed when disclosing their circumstances and their impact on the ability to complete study, however this is not a valid reason for not divulging mitigating circumstances. TSCG considers applications for mitigation in confidence with a small, discreet panel whose role it is to establish the merits of the claim only.

Students may request reasonable adjustments to support the disclosure of sensitive circumstances, such as having a support person present or providing information in an alternative format. This reflects the OIA's expectation that providers ensure accessible and supportive processes for students with disabilities or complex personal needs.

6. Academic Appeals Procedure

There is a three-stage process, students need to follow when pursuing an academic appeal. It is expected that students will complete each stage before moving on to the next. There may be occasion where it is necessary to escalate appeals which will be managed on a case-by- case basis. The College aims to complete all stages of the academic appeals process within the OIA-recommended timescale of 90 calendar days, except

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where cases are complex or require additional evidence.

Stage 1: Initial Concern or Query

Before submitting a formal appeal, students should discuss their concerns with their Course Leader or the Head of Studies for their department. If a student has a concern about the decision of an academic conduct panel, they should discuss their concerns with the relevant Chairperson in the first instance. Students can access impartial advice from student support or their student representatives and may request reasonable adjustments or accessible formats at this stage if required, in line with OIA guidance on supporting disabled students. Where a concern appears to relate to both an appeal and a complaint, the College will determine the most appropriate process, following OIA guidance on managing overlapping issues. Students are encouraged to raise their initial concerns in a timely manner as all formal appeals should be received by Trafford & Stockport College Group within 14 days of the decision of the Assessment Board.

6.1 Stage 2: Formal Appeal

If after completing actions described at Section 6.1 the student decides to submit a formal appeal, they should complete an Academic Appeals Form (Appendix 1) and forward it to: HESupport@TSCG.ac.uk. It is important that all sections of the form are completed within the time period permitted for appeals to be submitted. The written appeal must be received in the inbox within 14 days of the date that the results were released to the student.

The Appeal Form should be supported by all available evidence to substantiate the claims made. The appellant is responsible for providing any evidence that they wish to be considered. Digital copies of evidence are acceptable, although Trafford & Stockport College Group reserves the right to require paper copies to be provided for verification purposes. Students who require reasonable adjustments when gathering or submitting evidence will be supported, and alternative formats will be accepted where appropriate. Claims that cannot be verified with independent evidence are likely to be dismissed.

A member of the HE Student Support Team will acknowledge receipt of the appeal and convene an Appeals Panel to hear the formal stage of the appeal. To avoid any conflict of interest, members of the panel must not have been party to any preceding decision that may have initiated the appeal. Panel members must also confirm they have no conflicts of interest and no actual or perceived bias, in line with OIA guidance on impartiality and the perception of bias.

The panel will consist of:

- Independent Head of Studies (Chair)
- Head of Higher Education (Quality & Standards)
- A lecturer from another curriculum area

Possible outcomes:

- Uphold the appeal and amend the record of the student accordingly
- To dismiss the appeal
- Request additional evidence and to seek clarity on unclear evidence from students and others relevant to the investigation. This is to ensure a well-informed judgement is reached in good time.

Where additional evidence is requested, students will be given a clear deadline and explanation of why the information is needed, ensuring transparency and proportionality in

¹ <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/information/glossary/>

line with OIA principles

6.2 Stage 3: Review

If a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of their appeal, they may request a review of the decision taken. Students wishing to do this must do so in writing within 7 days of the date of the appeal outcome. The request for review should be labelled as such and forwarded to HESupport@TSCG.ac.uk.

The review will be conducted by the Assistant Principal Higher Education and Higher Skills (or nominee) with reference to at least one of the following three reasons, which the student must specify and provide supporting evidence and explanation. The reviewer must not have had prior involvement in the original decision-making or appeal panel and must confirm that no conflict of interest exists.

1. That the procedures described in Section 6.2 were not followed,
2. That the outcome was unreasonable,
3. New material evidence has become available which the learner was unable to provide earlier in the process.

The review process will not reconsider the academic judgement itself but will focus solely on whether procedures were followed, whether the decision was reasonable, or whether new evidence meets the required threshold, consistent with OIA expectations. Students will receive written confirmation of the review outcome, including clear reasons for the decision and information on next steps.

If the Chair considers that there are grounds for the appeal decision to be revised, they will refer the matter back to the Head of Higher Education (Quality & Standards) who will reconsider the evidence presented and seek counsel and advice from senior staff where necessary.

7. Completion of Procedures

- 7.1 The College is a member organisation of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA).
- 7.2 Once all stages of the College's Academic Appeals procedure have been exhausted, the student on a Higher National programme will be issued with a Completion of Procedures letter confirming that all internal procedures have been completed. The Completion of Procedures letter will explain the final decision, the reasons for that decision, and the date on which internal procedures were concluded, in line with OIA expectations for clarity and transparency.

At this point, outcomes in relation to progression and award outcomes are implemented. Once the College's internal processes have been followed, students on a university validated programme may if they so choose, take their complaint to the validating partner institution who will then be responsible for the issue of a Completion of Procedures letter.

Students should be aware that the format and timing of the COP letter may differ depending on the validating university's regulations, as each awarding body follows its own approved COP-letter template under the OIA scheme.

- 7.3 Students are advised to contact the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the final stage of the complaints procedure.

¹ <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/information/glossary/>

Students may only submit a complaint to the OIA once they have received a valid Completion of Procedures letter from the College or validating partner institution, as the OIA cannot consider a case without this document. The OIA will determine whether the student's complaint is eligible for consideration under its rules.

Students may request alternative formats, support with submitting an OIA complaint, or reasonable adjustments when engaging with the OIA Scheme, in line with the OIA's accessibility commitments.

- 7.4 All applications to the OIA must be made within twelve months of the date of the Completion of Procedures letter issued by the College.

The OIA does not have discretion to extend this deadline under normal circumstances; therefore, students should ensure they submit their complaint promptly.

- 7.5 The OIA's Good Practice Framework is available here:
<https://www.oiahe.org.uk/resources-and-publications/good-practice-framework/>

8. Participation of Students While Appeal is Under Consideration

- 8.1 If a student's appeal is still being considered under the processes described in Section 6 at the start of an academic year or mid-way through the year and the decision being appealed prevents a student from progressing normally, they may attend the programme and undertake assessments.

Students should be informed in writing of the conditions of their temporary attendance, including any limitations on access to assessments, progression decisions, or formal results, in line with OIA expectations for clarity and transparency.

- 8.2 Students who chose to attend will not be notified of any results of assessed work.

Any assessed work submitted during this period will be marked in the usual way and retained securely, to ensure that, if the appeal is upheld, the student's progress can be confirmed without disadvantage.

- 8.3 Students who choose to attend will be enrolled conditionally and should be aware of the financial implications of choosing this option. If a student's appeal is upheld, they will be enrolled unconditionally and resume their programme of study as previously.

This includes potential impacts on tuition fee liability, maintenance funding, and eligibility for student finance support, which may continue to be affected until the appeal is resolved. Students should seek advice before opting for conditional enrolment.

- 8.4 In cases where appeals are rejected students will be withdrawn from the programme.

Students will receive written confirmation outlining the reasons for the withdrawal and will be issued a Completion of Procedures letter, enabling them to refer the matter to the OIA if they wish.

¹ <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/information/glossary/>

Appendix 1: STAGE 2: ACADEMIC APPEALS FORM

Appellant's Details

Name	
Course title	
Year of study	

Outcome of Stage 1: Local Resolution of Concern

When and with whom did you raise your initial concern or query?	
Summarise the advice you were given at Stage 1 (attach written evidence).	

Stage 1 Confirmation: ☐ Yes – I confirm I completed Stage 1.

Details of Assessment Outcome Being Appealed

Provide details of the outcome(s) being appealed, including unit numbers/titles and assessment names.	
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Type of decision being appealed: ☐ Assessment ☐ Progression ☐ Award ☐ Misconduct

Grounds for Appeal

Academic judgement cannot be appealed.

Material error/irregularity (including bias/perceived bias): <i>Describe the error in the assessment process (including any bias or perceived bias):</i>	Evidence attached:
Mitigating circumstances not known at the time: <i>Describe your mitigating circumstances and why you could not report them earlier:</i>	Evidence attached:

Evidence Confirmation: ☐ Yes – I understand evidence must be independent.

Accessibility Needs

Accessibility Needs: Tell us if you need any adjustments to help you complete this form or take part in the appeal.	
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Outcome Sought

What outcome are you seeking?	
Why is this the appropriate outcome?	

[Suggest New Form](#)

Declarations

Accuracy Declaration: I confirm information is true.

Signature:

Date:

Conflict of Interest: ☐ I acknowledge panel must be free of conflict.

14-Day Deadline Confirmation: ☐ Yes

Submission Details

Submit completed forms to: HESupport@TSCG.ac.uk

Appeals are only considered when all evidence is submitted.

Appendix 1: Stage 2: Formal Appeal Form

STAGE 2: ACADEMIC APPEALS FORM	
Appellant's Details	
Name	
Course title	
Year of study	
Outcome of Stage 1: Local Resolution of Concern	
When and with whom did you raise your initial concern/query about the outcome of assessment under Stage 1 of this Policy?	
Please summarise the date and advice you were given at Stage 1 of this Policy. Please provide copies of any written advice.	
Details of Assessment Outcome that is Being Appealed Against and Outcomes Sought	
Please provide details of the assessment outcome(s) you are appealing against. Please include unit numbers, titles, specific assessments within units and, where relevant, progression or final award decisions.	

Please confirm on what basis you are appealing against the assessment outcome as referenced in Section 5.1 and 5.2 Please also confirm the evidence you are providing to corroborate the grounds for appeal. There are no grounds on which you can appeal academic judgement – please refer to Section 3 of this Policy and Procedure for more information.	Claim on the basis of material error or irregularity as defined in Section 5.1 of the Appeals Procedure:	List of evidence to support each claim, which should be attached / included with this submission:
	Claim on the basis of mitigating circumstances not known to the Assessment Board as defined in Section 5.2 of the Appeals Procedure:	List of evidence to support each claim, which should be attached / included with this submission:
What outcome are you seeking?		

Please forward completed forms and documentation to HESupport@TSCG.ac.uk