

Personal Circumstances & Academic Appeals Procedure

Version No.	Description	Author(s)	Approval	Effective Date
1.1	Appeals Procedure	J Meredith/ D Thompson	Senate (Jun 2013)	01 Aug 2013
1.2	Appeals Procedure	Jill Kyle	Minor Revision	01 Oct 2016
1.3	Appeals Procedure	M Judge	Senate (Jun 2017)	01 Aug 2017

01/06/2017

Version 1.3

Procedures for the consideration of Personal Circumstances & Academic Appeals.

the place of useful learning

The University of Strathclyde is a charitable body, registered in Scotland, number SC015263

University of Strathclyde
Personal Circumstances & Academic Appeals Procedure

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	2
Academic Judgment.....	3
Advice & Support	3
False Declaration	4
Data Protection Act	4
Graduation.....	4
2. PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES PROCEDURES	4
Timing of Notification of Personal Circumstances	4
Nature of Circumstances that Will be Considered	6
Supporting Evidence	7
3. APPEALS	9
Who can appeal	9
Time Limits	9
Implications for progress or graduation.....	10
4. STAGE 2: ACADEMIC APPEALS TO FACULTY	10
Timing and format of appeals to Faculty	10
Grounds of appeal to Faculty	11
Procedure for Faculty Academic Appeals	12
5. STAGE 3: SENATE ACADEMIC APPEAL	14
Grounds of appeal to the Senate	14
Timing and format of appeals to the Senate	14
Procedure for Senate Academic Appeals	15
6. EXTERNAL REVIEW PROCESS - SPSO	17
7. USEFUL CONTACTS	18
8. APPENDIX A: EXAMPLES OF PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES	1
What would normally be considered	1
Circumstances that will <i>not</i> be Considered	1

Personal Circumstances & Academic Appeals Procedures

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The University's procedures for the consideration of Personal Circumstances & Academic Appeals seek to ensure that all students are treated fairly, are not disadvantaged by circumstances beyond their control and that the standards of the University's awards are maintained. These procedures apply to all new and continuing students from session 2017-18.
- 1.1a Students include:
- (i) All full-time and part-time students on courses delivered wholly by the University, whether on campus or elsewhere by distance learning;
 - (ii) All full-time and part-time students on courses delivered jointly by the University for which the University is the administering institution (as detailed in the Memorandum of Agreement).
- 1.1b Personal Circumstances are defined as circumstances beyond a student's control which may adversely affect their ability to study or their performance in assessment.
- 1.2 An appeal is defined as a request for a review of a decision by an academic body charged with determining student progression and awards. This will be one of a General Board of Examiners, an Honours Board of Examiners, an Integrated Masters Board of Examiners, a Taught Postgraduate Board of Examiners, a Research Examining Committee, hereinafter referred to as 'Board of Examiners'. This Procedure explains how students may lodge an appeal against a progress or award decision of a Board of Examiners and how the appeal will be heard by the University.
- 1.3 The University Senate has overall responsibility for overseeing the Personal Circumstances & Academic Appeals Procedure, with day-to-day responsibility given to the Vice-Principal. Others normally involved in the procedures are:
- (i) Vice-Dean (Academic) or nominee
 - (ii) Head of Department or nominee
 - (iii) Faculty Manager or nominee
- 1.4 The Boards of Examiners are supported by Pre-Boards or Personal Circumstances Boards (PBs or PCBs)¹, which consider student's Personal Circumstances and their impact on performance in assessment and decide whether to recommend any academic dispensation.
- 1.5 The Personal Circumstances & Academic Appeals Procedure consists of three internal stages:
- (i) Personal Circumstances Procedure
 - (ii) Stage 1: Appeal to the Faculty Appeals Committee

¹ For the purposes of this procedure, references to PCBs should be taken to include PBs

(iii) Stage 2: Appeal to the Senate Appeals Committee

- 1.6 If, after all the internal stages have been exhausted, a student is still dissatisfied with the result they may apply to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman for an external review of the handling of their appeal by the University.
- 1.7 Failure to operate to the timescales defined in these procedures or administrative error do not, of themselves, constitute grounds upon which an appeal decision can be deemed to be invalid.

ACADEMIC JUDGMENT

- 1.8 Appeals against how academic judgment has been exercised will not be considered. Academic judgment is a judgment about an assessment, a degree classification, research methodology or course content/learning outcomes. In other words, a student cannot submit an appeal simply because they believe that they deserve a better mark and any such appeal will be rejected. A student who does not understand why they received a lower mark than they had expected, should contact the relevant tutor and ask for feedback.
- 1.9 An appeals committee will not re-mark work, change any mark awarded or pass comment on the marks given. However, it can consider whether the University has correctly followed its own assessment, marking and moderation procedures, and whether there was any unfairness, bias or procedural irregularity in the decision-making process. It can also take account of difficult Personal Circumstances, if there are good reasons why these were not previously made known to the Board of Examiners.

ADVICE & SUPPORT

- 1.10 For advice and support in submitting Personal Circumstances or lodging an Appeal, students are advised to discuss the issue with one or more of the following:
 - Personal Development Advisor
 - Course Director/Year Advisor
 - The Advice Centre
 - Disability Service (in the case of students with a disability)
 - The Advice Hub at the University of Strathclyde Students' Association (USSA).
- 1.11 All of the above are able to advise on the process/procedure and The Advice Centre and The Advice Hub can advise on the best way to formulate an appeal and/or the supporting evidence which might help the student's case. Any such discussions will be confidential and so cannot prejudice the appeal. Students who wish advice on the process may also consult Education Enhancement or the relevant Faculty Office.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

- 1.12 Appeals should be dealt with in accordance with the University's Equality and Diversity Policy. Where a student has declared a disability the University will endeavour where appropriate to ensure that information is available to them in appropriate formats, with reasonable adjustments made to proceedings within the procedure as required.

FALSE DECLARATION

- 1.13 The submission of a false Personal Circumstances claim or appeal will be regarded as making a false declaration in order to receive special consideration by Board of Examiners or Appeals Committee or to obtain extensions to deadlines or exemption from work. This is an offence of academic dishonesty and may result in disciplinary action against the student.

DATA PROTECTION ACT

- 1.14 By providing personal information under Personal Circumstances or for an appeal, students are consenting to the University collecting, processing and storing this information. The University handles personal data in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and recognises the importance of correct and lawful processing. Further details of the University's processing of personal data can be found in the Data Protection Statement for Students at http://www.strath.ac.uk/media/ps/cs/copyrightanddataprotection/DP_Statement_for_Students_v3.0.pdf
- 1.15 The University recognises many problems or events may be personal and private, and that students may be reluctant to disclose them to a member of University staff, however students are encouraged to do so for their own benefit. The University will deal with personal information sensitively and will ensure the information is not disclosed unnecessarily.

GRADUATION

- 1.15 **It is important to note that a student who submits an appeal and then graduates before the appeal process is concluded will be taken to have withdrawn the appeal and it will not thereafter be considered (See para. 3.14).**

2. PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES PROCEDURES

TIMING OF NOTIFICATION OF PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

- 2.1 Personal Circumstances may adversely affect a student's ability to study or their performance in assessment. It is recognised that assessment periods can be stressful. However, students need to be able to plan and manage their time and workload to meet deadlines, to cope with a certain level of stress, and to manage their University studies alongside other responsibilities in life. It is also essential to recognise that illnesses and difficult life events do occur, and that it is a normal part of life to have to manage these and continue with work or study.
- 2.2 Students whose attendance or performance has been, or will be, affected by circumstances that are acute, severe and outside their control should inform the University **as soon as they are aware of these circumstances** by recording them on Pegasus under 'Personal Circumstances' and submitting **supporting evidence** as soon as such evidence is available. When a student's performance in examination(s) or other assessment(s) is affected, the circumstances should be notified to Student Business, by completing and submitting a Personal Circumstances Form (PCF), normally within **five working days** of the latest affected examination/assessment or date

of submission of affected assessment. Where an entire semester or examination diet is affected a Personal Circumstances Form should be submitted as soon as possible and **at least one working day** before the relevant meeting of the Personal Circumstances Board (PCB). Notification of Personal Circumstances will not normally be accepted after the PCB has met.

- 2.3 Students should report in advance any circumstances that they anticipate will affect their performance in assessment. Students who know that they will be unable to attend an examination, due to circumstances beyond their control, should submit a completed Personal Circumstances Form, along with supporting evidence in good time.
- 2.4 If a student does not submit Personal Circumstances they will not be considered by the Exam Board. It is the student's responsibility to notify Student Business and to organize and provide the relevant supporting evidence.
- 2.5 Students should clearly state the extent, duration and nature of their Personal Circumstances and how these circumstances affected their performance.
- 2.6 PCBs will consider all Personal Circumstances recorded on Pegasus and all PCFs submitted. These Boards typically consist of representatives drawn from each department/course from which student cases will be considered. These are often Year Co-ordinators/Advisors of Study. All Personal Circumstances that have been recorded on Pegasus or received by Student Business by the deadlines stated above and meet the criteria stated below will be considered by the relevant PCB. Based on the information submitted the PCB will make recommendations to the appropriate Board of Examiners as to whether any academic dispensation should be granted.
- 2.7 PCBs will not make decisions on marks or progress. These are made by the Board of Examiners. The Board of Examiners will take into account the recommendation of the PCB, normally by discounting all or part of an assessment, not by raising a mark.
- 2.8 PCBs are held just before Board of Examiners meetings. Therefore, students should be aware that they will not receive notification of any outcome from the PCB. They will receive notification only of the decision of the Board of Examiners. For students who submit Personal Circumstances during semester one, this notification will normally follow the Board of Examiners meetings in May/June when all marks are confirmed for semesters one and two.
- 2.9 Internal examiners may take account of Personal Circumstances by discounting a component/components of an assessment which constitute no more than 30% in total of the full assessment. Any such adjustment will be recorded by the relevant Department/School in order to prevent Personal circumstances being 'double-counted'.
- 2.10 In considering the effect of Personal Circumstances on the student's performance the following will be taken into account:
 - The severity of the problem and the length of time involved;
 - Any supporting documentary evidence;
 - The student's performance during the period affected and the student's overall and past performance. Whether it is possible to gauge the effect of the Personal Circumstances upon academic performance;

- The type of assessment that was affected;
- How long the student had to complete the work (i.e. date when work set and deadline for submission).

2.11 Students who fail to report Personal Circumstances prior to the Board of Examiners' meeting, without good reason, may not subsequently appeal against that Board's decision on the grounds of Personal Circumstances.

2.12 Responsibilities of Students

- Students are responsible for ensuring that they inform their Department of any circumstances that they consider are affecting their ability to study and/or undertake assessments.
- Students should note that there are defined timeframes for the submission of Personal Circumstances.
- Students are responsible for providing the required evidence demonstrating their personal circumstances.
- Students should make every effort to ensure that they are fit to study and undertake assessment. Where a student feels that there are circumstances that are affecting them adversely it is their responsibility to seek help either within or outwith the University, as relevant, to assist in resolving the problem.
- Students are responsible for ensuring that they are available for all necessary study and assessments.
- Students are encouraged, if appropriate, to register with the Disability Service. Designated Exam Coordinators have responsibility for ensuring that recommended exam arrangements are put in place for students requiring disability adjustments.

NATURE OF CIRCUMSTANCES THAT WILL BE CONSIDERED

2.13 Personal Circumstances will be considered if they have caused significant interference with academic performance. In general, though not exclusively, circumstances will be of a medical or personal nature affecting the student for a significant period of time and/or during the assessment period. These are normally circumstances that prevent the student from submitting a piece of course work, sitting an examination or cause the student to perform significantly less well than they might otherwise have been expected to do (as judged by performance in other work).

2.14 In order to be considered, Personal Circumstances must have significantly affected a student's academic performance, attendance (including examinations) or ability to meet a submission deadline. Boards and appeal committees will have regard to the following factors in considering circumstances:

- the evidence presented to support the claim;
- the possible effect of the circumstances on the studies in question; and
- the student's overall performance on their programme and specific performance in assessments affected by the circumstances.

2.15 Students are reminded that Boards and appeal committees will not consider circumstances which could have been reasonably avoided by the student or where it is not clear that there has

been a significant impact on academic performance. Minor ailments and personal difficulties of the sort faced by many students in the normal course of University life will not be considered.

- 2.16 A list of examples of circumstances that would be considered or dismissed is provided in **Appendix A** which accompanies this procedure.
- 2.17 Actions normally considered by a Board of Examiners include discounting an attempt at an examination or assessment or in a small number of cases adjusting the balance of assessment for a class. Personal Circumstances must have affected the student's performance sufficiently to justify these actions and this gives an indication of the level of interference in academic performance which must be demonstrated when submitting Personal Circumstances and supporting evidence.
- 2.18 Boards will normally disregard circumstances where there is no or insufficient evidence.
- 2.19 Circumstances which affected the student during the semester but did not impact on the examination diet will normally not be considered by the Board. Students whose coursework is affected should request an extension, where appropriate, from Academic staff.
- 2.20 Long Term Conditions/Disabilities affecting the Ability to Study and/or Comply with Examination Requirements
Students who are aware of a disability, long-term medical condition, mental health or other long-term circumstances that are expected to have an impact on their performance should make the University aware of those circumstances at the earliest possible opportunity and should seek relevant adjustments through Student Disability Service and Departmental Disability Contacts (DDCs).

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

- 2.21 All notifications of Personal Circumstances should be accompanied by supporting evidence, wherever possible, in writing, from an appropriate authority. A claim for Personal Circumstances without appropriate supporting evidence is unlikely to be upheld.
- 2.22 Individual circumstances will dictate the nature of the evidence required to support a claim. Normally, students should seek evidence from an **independent person, organisation or support service**. Documents should be originals (not photocopies) signed by an appropriate third party, giving details of the circumstance, its duration, and, where possible, its impact.
- 2.23 If the original document submitted as evidence is not in English, an independent translation must also be provided e.g. from a professional translation service, member of University staff, embassy etc. This translation should not be undertaken by the student, a member of their family or a friend.
- 2.24 It is recognised that there may occasionally be circumstances where a student is unable to obtain independent evidence. This should be explained on Pegasus or via the PCF and the Board may choose to consider the Personal Circumstances at its discretion. The student should speak to The Advice Centre or The Advice Hub for further guidance before submitting their Form.

2.25 Examples of evidence:

- Letter or other document from a medical practitioner (doctor) (for students studying in Glasgow this should be a UK registered medical practitioner).
- Death certificate – where possible an original should be produced but if not a copy will be accepted.
- Letter from solicitor, summons to attend court or attend for jury service; report or written evidence from a police officer (crime numbers on their own are not acceptable).
- Confirmation by a transport official of unavoidable, unforeseen and severe disruption to transport.
- A letter of **confirmation of any matters of fact** relevant to the claim from an academic member of staff, Hall Warden, Chaplain or other religious leader, the Student Counselling Service, The Advice Centre, The Advice Hub or other appropriate independent third party.

2.26 The following will **NOT** normally be accepted as evidence:

- Letters from family members, friends or other students;
- Character references that confirm the good character of the student or how hard they worked but cannot confirm the facts of the claim;
- Self-certificates for missed examinations or assignments;
- Retrospective notes/letters where the Doctor etc. simply reports what the student has told him/her. Please note that evidence such as a doctor's note must have been written at the time you were suffering from the illness – retrospective documentary evidence or a doctor's note which states that the GP has been informed that you were ill on a certain date is not acceptable.
- Medical certificates originating overseas (for UK campus-based students) unless pertaining to an incident that happened overseas
- Bank statements
- Long-term ill-health, specific requirements, disabilities which have been disclosed and assessed by the University. Such conditions can only be considered as personal circumstances if there is demonstrable evidence the condition deteriorated during the specific period relating to the assessment period.

2.27 Dates of evidence must correspond with the circumstances detailed. If a student has missed an assignment through ill health, then the illness must coincide with the preparation, writing or deadline of that assessment. Students who miss an examination or an invigilated test due to illness should seek medical attention as soon as possible. Students who take ill during an examination should inform the invigilator before leaving the examination.

2.28 Boards will normally require a medical certificate from a UK registered medical practitioner for absence from examinations, but if this cannot be provided for good reasons, then the Board will consider a letter of confirmation from an independent third party (not a relative or friend) or other evidence as appropriate.

3. APPEALS

- 3.1 The guiding principles for an appeal are: timeous decision making; openness and transparency of decision-making and proper recording of the reasons for the decision; the impartiality of the decision makers; the possibility of review, and the opportunity for both sides to have their views considered.
- 3.2 The University recognises that some students may have specific needs and will seek to make reasonable adjustments to enable such students to engage with the appeals procedure.
- 3.3 A sub-committee of the Senate will monitor the outcome of appeals across the University to feed into the University's quality assurance and enhancement processes.

WHO CAN APPEAL

- 3.4 All students have the right to appeal against a progress or award decision of a Board of Examiners. This includes students on joint programmes where Strathclyde is the administering institution and on part-time and distance learning programmes.
- 3.5 Where a student is on a course at a partner institution before transferring onto a course at Strathclyde or a Strathclyde validated course delivered wholly by a partner institution, that institution's appeals procedures should normally be followed.
- 3.6 Where an appeal involves parties outwith the University (e.g. placement hosts) and where the student's involvement with that party is the result of a compulsory element of the course, the appeal should be made to the University as described in this document. However, in such cases, it may be necessary also to comply with the appeals procedures of the third party concerned, which may, in particular, have implications for the timescale for dealing with the appeal.
- 3.7 A student may not submit an appeal until formal notification of the results has been given through Pegasus (**but should nevertheless** notify the University of any Personal Circumstances that may have adversely affected their performance as detailed above).
- 3.8 Normally students should initiate the appeal on their own behalf. Exceptionally, an appeal may be made on a student's behalf by his or her nominee. This must be accompanied by a **signed** statement from the student confirming that the nominee is acting on their behalf.
- 3.9 Appeals submitted electronically **must** normally come via the student's Strathclyde e-mail account. Unsigned Forms from unverifiable email accounts will be treated as coming from a third party and will not be accepted unless accompanied by a signed statement as detailed above.

TIME LIMITS

- 3.10 Students should note that there are time limits on appeals. Where a student does not submit an

appeal within the appropriate deadline the appeal will not be considered unless the student can show compelling reasons for missing the deadline and these are explained in full and evidenced at the time of submission of the appeal. Appeals received **twelve months or more** after the date of the relevant Board of Examiners **will not be considered in any circumstances**.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRESS OR GRADUATION

Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Students

- 3.11 Where an appeal to Faculty or the Senate is pending, the student will normally be allowed to continue to attend classes in order not to prejudice his or her studies if the Appeals Committee upholds the appeal. However, should the Appeals Committee not uphold the appeal, the student may be required to leave the classes. Students who have been withdrawn will not normally be permitted to attend a placement while an appeal is pending.
- 3.12 A student whose appeal relates to progression to Masters may, at the discretion of the Head of Department (or HASS Course Leader), be permitted to begin their Masters project/dissertation provided that they would potentially have not more than 20 credits to resit (if permitted a further attempt at all outstanding assessments) and on the understanding that they will not be permitted to complete their project/dissertation should the appeal be unsuccessful. The Head of Department's (or HASS Course Leader's) decision on this is final. **Permission to begin the project/dissertation does not equate to progression to Masters and would not constitute grounds for further appeal.**

Research Students

- 3.13 **As there are timescales attached to research degrees, research students will have their registration suspended while an appeal is pending.** If there are taught elements of their course that they have not completed, they may attend these classes subject to the agreement of the Head of Department (or HASS Course Leader) however, all research and related activity would normally be suspended until the appeal is resolved.

Graduation

- 3.14 If a student intends to appeal against an award decision, they **must institute the appeal proceedings before they graduate**. Where an appeal relating to the final award is pending, either at Faculty or Senate level, the student **must not graduate** until the appeal is resolved and the student must notify Student Business of this appeal. Graduation is considered to be acceptance of the award and **an appeal against the classification or nature of the award cannot be raised after a student has graduated**. A student who submits an appeal and then graduates before the appeal is dealt with will be taken to have abandoned the appeal and it will not thereafter be considered.

4. STAGE 1: ACADEMIC APPEALS TO FACULTY

TIMING AND FORMAT OF APPEALS TO FACULTY

- 4.1 The letter, posted on PEGASUS, informing the student of the decision of the Board of Examiners

will specify a deadline for submission of an appeal. All appeals, together with supporting documentary evidence, should be lodged with the appropriate Faculty Office no later than this deadline. For students in HaSS appeals should be lodged with the Academic Quality Support Team.

Business School <http://www.strath.ac.uk/business/aboutus/facultystaff/>

Faculty of Engineering <http://www.strath.ac.uk/engineering/aboutus/>

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences <http://www.strath.ac.uk/humanities/contact/>

Faculty of Science <http://www.strath.ac.uk/science/contactus/>

Appeals submitted electronically should be sent to:

Business School: sbs-appealscomplaints@strath.ac.uk

Faculty of Engineering: eng-appealscomplaints@strath.ac.uk

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences: hass-aq@strath.ac.uk

Faculty of Science: science-appealscomplaints@strath.ac.uk

Appeals should be set out on the Faculty Appeals Form available electronically at <http://www.strath.ac.uk/staff/policies/>. All relevant sections of the Faculty Appeals Form must be completed and all supporting documentation attached. In some circumstances, the University may have to verify evidence provided. The statement on the last page of the Form, giving permission for the University to contact the person or organisation that has provided the evidence to verify its authenticity, should be signed and returned either with the Appeal Form or, if the signature cannot be scanned and the Form is submitted electronically, separately in hard copy.

- 4.2 Where an appeal is based on circumstances which the student might reasonably have been expected to have brought to the attention of the Department or the Faculty before the meeting of the Board of Examiners or to have reported as Personal Circumstances, such as an on-going medical or personal circumstance, the student must provide an explanation of why these were not brought to the notice of the University at an earlier date.
- 4.3 An appeal submitted by the deadline will normally be considered within 30 working days from the published deadline. Any unavoidable delays in addressing the appeal (e.g. the absence of the individual(s) required to provide a response) will be notified at as early a date as possible. An appeal submitted after the appropriate deadline will not be considered unless there are compelling reasons for missing the deadline and these are explained in full and accompanied by relevant evidence at the time of submission. **Appeals received twelve months or more after the date of the relevant Board of Examiners will not be considered in any circumstances.**

GROUPS OF APPEAL TO FACULTY

- 4.4 Appeals against a decision of a Board of Examiners must be made on at least one of the following grounds: (**Please note:** evidence should be provided for all grounds cited.)
- procedural irregularities in the assessment process (including alleged administrative error which could have led the Board of Examiners to reach a different conclusion to that which

they might have reached had the error not been made);

- inadequate assessment, prejudice or bias on the part of the examiners; and /or
- medical, personal or other circumstances which affected a student's performance of which the examiners were unaware at the time of the assessment and which the student was unable to disclose under the Personal Circumstances procedures.

- 4.5 If a claim on grounds of medical, personal or other circumstances forms the basis of an academic appeal, the student will need to demonstrate why they were unable to follow the procedures for submitting a claim for Personal Circumstances in advance of the Board of Examiners.
- 4.6 Before an appeal is made on the grounds of procedural irregularity, including that relating to the consideration of Personal Circumstances, students may contact the Faculty Office for explanation/feedback on the procedure/handling of circumstances. Students should bear in mind where Personal Circumstances will not be considered as detailed above.
- 4.7 Appeals concerning the alleged inadequacy of tuition, supervisory or other arrangements during the period of study will normally be dealt with, initially, as a complaint and the appeal suspended pending the outcome of the complaint investigation. **Such issues should be raised, where possible, in advance of the final assessment, under the complaints procedures.**

PROCEDURE FOR FACULTY ACADEMIC APPEALS

- 4.8 The Faculty Office will send out an acknowledgement within five working days of receipt of an appeal during the semester and ten working days outwith semesters, normally by email to the student's Strathclyde email account. The student will be notified of any unavoidable delays in addressing the appeal (e.g. the absence of the individual(s) required to provide a response) at as early a date as possible.
- 4.9 On receipt of the documentation, the Faculty Manager, or nominee, in consultation with the Vice Dean (Academic) or nominee, will judge whether there are grounds for appeal. If not, the student will be informed in writing that the appeal will not be considered because there are no grounds.
- 4.10 If there are grounds for appeal, the Faculty Office will send a copy of the appeal documentation to the relevant Head of Department/School (or nominee) to comment on the appeal. These individuals may consult colleagues, including any staff named in the appeal, or otherwise investigate the appeal as appropriate.
- 4.11 Where an appeal alleges inadequate assessment, bias or prejudice on the part of the Head of Department/HaSS Course Leader acting as an examiner, the Vice-Dean (Academic) may consult colleagues or investigate the appeal as appropriate. In particular, they will wish to consult any colleague named in the appeal.
- 4.12 If the Department/School does not oppose the appeal at this stage, the Vice Dean or nominee may take the decision to uphold the appeal on behalf of the Faculty Appeals Committee and the student will be notified by the Faculty Office. The Vice Dean or nominee may, however, (for example because the appeal raises a matter of general importance or to achieve consistency

within the Faculty) refer the matter to the Faculty Appeals Committee, together with the information that the Department/School is not opposing the appeal.

- 4.13 Where the Department/School wishes to oppose the appeal, the written appeal, together with the written comments of the Head of Department/School and the Vice-Dean (Academic), where appropriate, will be considered at the meeting of the Faculty Appeals Committee.
- 4.14 Neither the Student nor the Department/School/Course Team has a right to appear before the Faculty Appeals Committee. The case at Faculty level is judged on the basis of the written appeal received from the student, the written Departmental/Course Team response to the student's case, plus supporting evidence and other background information relevant to the student's academic performance.
- 4.15 Appeals Committees at Faculty level will be set up taking care to ensure impartiality in membership with regard to the individual appeals under consideration. Any member of staff who has previously been involved in a particular case cannot be involved in the decision-making process regarding the outcome of an appeal and should leave the room while that case is being considered.
- 4.16 The Faculty Appeals Committee should take care to consider and respond to all the grounds for appeal presented by the student and, if appropriate, explain why certain grounds were not considered on the basis of relevance.
- 4.17 A Faculty Appeals Committee does not have the authority to alter marks or Honours classification.
- 4.18 It may, on occasion, request that a Board of Examiners reconsider a case in light of new information or that a piece of work be re-assessed. However, it is more usual that an attempt at an assessment would be discounted or a student offered the opportunity to repeat one or more classes, with no penalty, as it is impossible to quantify the effect a specific set of circumstances may have had on an individual's performance.
- 4.19 The student will be informed in writing of the decision of the Faculty Appeals Committee by the Faculty Office within seven working days of the decision being made. The Student will be provided with an explanation of the Faculty Appeals Committee's decision(s) and with a copy of the written comments of the Department/School and/or the Vice-Dean (Academic) which were considered at the meeting of the Faculty Appeals Committee, for information.
- 4.20 The Faculty Office will retain a record of appeals, including one copy of all relevant paperwork and minutes of the Faculty Appeal Committee meetings, for six years after the outcome of the appeal. All other copies of the Faculty Appeal papers will be destroyed once the appeal process has run its course.
- 4.21 When an appeal points to procedural irregularities in the assessment process, appropriate recommendations to address these will be made to the Head of Department/School or the Director of the appropriate service area.

5. STAGE 2: SENATE ACADEMIC APPEAL

GROUNDINGS OF APPEAL TO THE SENATE

- 5.1 A student has the right of appeal to the Senate following an unsuccessful or only partially successful appeal to the relevant Faculty Appeals Committee on one or more of the following grounds: (**Please note:** evidence should be provided for all grounds cited.)
- i. substantial new information which was not available, for good reason, at the Faculty Appeal stage;
 - ii. bias or prejudice on the part of those who dealt with the appeal at the Faculty Appeal stage;
 - iii. breach of the Student Appeals procedure;
- 5.2 An appeal to Senate against a decision of a Faculty Appeals Committee can only be made on the grounds above. **Senate will not re-consider an appeal that has been dismissed by the Faculty unless there are grounds to do so.**
- 5.3 If a claim on grounds of substantial new information forms the basis of an appeal, the student will need to demonstrate why they were unable to submit the information as part of their Faculty appeal.

TIMING AND FORMAT OF APPEALS TO THE SENATE

- 5.4 An appeal to the Senate may be lodged only after notification has been given of an unsuccessful appeal to the relevant Faculty Appeals Committee.
- 5.5 All appeals to the Senate, together with any supporting documentary evidence, must normally be lodged with the Student Experience and Enhancement Services Directorate within a period of **three weeks** from the date on the letter informing the student of the outcome of the appeal to the relevant Faculty. Appeals received after this period will be accepted only where a valid reason is given for submission after the deadline.
- 5.6 Appeals to the Senate should be set out on the Student Appeals Form, available electronically at <http://www.strath.ac.uk/staff/policies/academic/> and should be addressed to Student Experience and Enhancement Services, Education Enhancement, University of Strathclyde, Room 2.64, McCance Building, 16 Richmond Street, Glasgow G1 1XQ or emailed to appealsandcomplaints@strath.ac.uk. Appeals submitted electronically **must** come via the student's Strathclyde e-mail account.
- 5.7 All relevant sections of the Appeals Form must be completed and all available and appropriate supporting documentation (e.g. medical certificates) attached. As well as explaining in full the grounds on which the appeal is being made, the student should also state the outcome(s) sought (e.g. a further attempt at failed examinations). In some circumstances, the University may have to verify evidence provided. The statement on the last page of the Form, giving permission for the University to contact the person or organisation that has provided the evidence to verify its authenticity, should be signed and returned either with the Appeal Form or, if the signature cannot be scanned and the Form is submitted electronically, separately in hard

copy.

- 5.8 Education Enhancement will obtain copies of all documentation relating to the Faculty Appeal from the relevant Faculty Office including the Student Appeal Form which was considered by the Faculty Appeals Committee, the response received from the Faculty Appeals Committee, all evidence submitted and the written comments of the Head of Department/School and/or the Vice-Dean (Academic) which were submitted to the Faculty Appeals Committee.
- 5.9 An acknowledgement of receipt by Education Enhancement will be sent out within five working days during the semester and ten working days outwith semesters, usually by email to the student's Strathclyde email account. An appeal submitted by the deadline will normally be considered within 30 working days of its receipt. Any unavoidable delay by the University in addressing the appeal (e.g. due to the absence of the individual(s) required to provide a response) will be notified at as early a date as possible.

PROCEDURE FOR SENATE ACADEMIC APPEALS

- 5.10 On receipt of the documentation, the Vice-Principal of the University (or nominee), in consultation with Education Enhancement, will judge whether there are grounds for appeal (as specified at para 5.1 above). If not, the student will be informed, in writing that the appeal will not be heard because there are no grounds, and will be advised of the independent External Review Process (see below).
- 5.11 If a relevant ground of appeal has, in the opinion of the Vice-Principal (or nominee), been appropriately set out, a copy of the appeal documentation will be sent to the Faculty who will be asked to provide comments and any additional documents or other evidence that may be relevant.
- 5.12 If, as a result of additional information contained in the appeal to the Senate, the Faculty does not wish to oppose the appeal, the Vice-Principal (or nominee) may take the decision to uphold the appeal on behalf of the Senate Appeals Committee and the student will be notified by Education Enhancement. The Vice Principal (or nominee) may, however, still refer the matter to the Senate Appeals Committee if he considers this appropriate.
- 5.13 Where the Faculty wishes to oppose the appeal, then the Senate Appeals Committee will normally be convened within thirty working days of the receipt of the appeal by the Education Enhancement. A Hearing of the Senate Appeal will only take place where the Vice Principal (or nominee) is satisfied that a relevant ground of appeal has been appropriately set out and where resolution cannot be obtained with the Faculty.
- 5.14 The Senate Appeals Committee is convened by the Vice-Principal, Associate Deputy Principal or other senior academic officer and consists of the convener and two other members selected from academic members of Senate. Any staff member who has previously been involved in a particular case (in whatever capacity) is prohibited from serving as a member of the Senate Appeals Committee convened to hear the particular case. Members cannot hear appeals from students in their own Faculty.
- 5.15 At least ten working days before the hearing is due the student will be notified in writing of the

date, time, venue and other arrangements for the hearing, the constitution of the Committee and the details of anyone invited to attend the hearing. The student will also be provided with a copy of all papers that it is intended should be presented to the Senate Appeals Committee, including written comments from the Faculty.

- 5.16 The student has the right (but is not required) to submit supplementary written material in response to these papers and, if they wish to introduce new grounds, must do so in writing. Any such material must be submitted to Education Enhancement not less than five working days before the hearing, to allow members of the Senate Appeals Committee to include it in their preparation for the hearing.
- 5.17 The student has the right to attend the hearing of the appeal, and the right to be accompanied or represented at the hearing by a person of their choice. If the student is unable to attend, or chooses not to attend, their representative may do so on their behalf. The student must notify the Education Enhancement of the name of any individual who will be accompanying him or her to the meeting or representing him or her at the meeting. Where a student is unable to attend a hearing on the original date, the University will attempt to reschedule the hearing to enable the student and/or their representative to attend although this may result in the hearing taking place outwith the 30 working day period. If the student cannot attend on the alternative date or gives notice of less than 1 working day of their inability to attend, the hearing will go ahead in their absence.
- 5.18 The convener of the Senate Academic Appeals Committee will ensure that the student is given adequate opportunity to explain the ground(s) of appeal, challenge or question the evidence presented in the papers and is afforded every reasonable opportunity to present their appeal and respond to any issue raised either in the papers or at the hearing of the appeal.
- 5.19 A senior member of the Department/School/Faculty concerned, and/or other relevant person(s) (hereafter referred to as the Departmental representative), will normally be invited to attend the Senate Appeals Committee hearing to provide information on matters such as practices, precedents, and academic requirements relating to the student's course of study. None of these individuals should have been involved in the decision-making process regarding the outcome of the Faculty appeal, nor should they have been implicated in the appeal itself, nor so far as is practicable should they have been involved in the original decision.
- 5.20 The student, any accompanying person or representative and the Departmental representative will be admitted and remain present throughout the whole of the time that the Senate Appeals Committee is receiving evidence. The guiding principles for the hearing will be those stated in paragraph 1.6 above.
- 5.21 Procedure at the appeal will be determined by the convener but the normal sequence during the hearing is as follows:
- The Senate Appeals Committee meets in private to clarify which issues arising out of the appeal papers members wish to raise with the parties before inviting the student and accompanying person or representative and the Departmental representative to join the meeting;
 - The student – or representative - is invited to speak to the relevant aspects of the appeal;

- The members of the Committee put questions to the student (or their representative) and, if necessary, the Departmental representative;
- The Departmental representative is invited to make such comments as are considered necessary or appropriate;
- The student (and/or representative) is invited to sum up the appeal;
- The student, and accompanying person or representative and the Departmental representative are asked to leave the hearing and will not normally be required to return.
- The Committee meets in private to reach a decision.

Normally the student will receive formal written notification of the Committee's findings and recommendations within ten working days of the date of the appeal being heard. The student will be provided with an explanation of the Committee's decision, and, if their appeal was not upheld, will be advised of the External Review Process (see below).

- 5.22 When an appeal indicates that there are procedural issues which need to be addressed, appropriate recommendations will be made to the Dean of the appropriate Faculty or the Director of the appropriate service area.
- 5.23 Education Enhancement will retain a record of appeals, including one copy of all relevant paperwork and minutes of the Senate Appeals Committee meeting for six years after the case is closed. Anonymised minutes of all hearings will be forwarded to the University's Senate.

6. EXTERNAL REVIEW PROCESS - SCOTTISH PUBLIC SERVICE OMBUDSMAN

- 6.1 If a student remains dissatisfied with the outcome of an appeal to the Senate they have the right to apply to a public agency, the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO) for an independent review of the handling of their appeal by the University. The SPSO will consider the way in which the University handled the appeal in the context of its internal procedures. The SPSO will not address issues of academic judgment.
- 6.2 The SPSO is the final stage for complaints about most organisations that provide public services in Scotland, including Universities. Their service is independent, free and confidential. The SPSO can be contacted directly at 4 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH2 7NS or **Freepost SPSO**, Tel: 0800 377 7330.
- 6.3 The SPSO cannot normally look at complaints more than 12 months after the student first became aware of the issue concerned or that have been or are being considered in court.
- 6.4 Further information is available at: <http://www.spsso.org.uk/>

7. USEFUL CONTACTS

The Advice Hub

- 7.1 The Advice Hub is the University of Strathclyde Students' Union's free, independent advice and support centre. The friendly staff can help students with academic appeals, complaints, personal issues and much more. The Advice Hub is located on Level 5 (access via Level 6) of the Union building. Appointments can be made in person Monday to Friday between 9-5pm or students can drop in from 10am-4pm.
- 7.2 The Advice Hub can be contacted by email ussa.advice@strath.ac.uk, by telephone on 0141 567 5040 or online at <http://www.strathstudents.com/advicehub>.

The Advice Centre

- 7.3 The Advice Centre staff can provide information and advice on a number of matters and can advise on the Personal Circumstances & Academic Appeals Procedure but **cannot** assist students in writing appeals.
- 7.4 The Advice Centre can also be contacted by email - infoandadvice@strath.ac.uk or by telephone on 0141 548 4273. Telephone lines are staffed from 9am-5pm Monday to Friday.

The Disability Service

- 7.5 The Disability Service can provide information, advice and assistance to disabled students, disabled applicants, and University staff working with and for disabled students and applicants.

Disability Service

Room 4.41 Graham Hills Building 50 George Street G1 1QE
telephone:0141 548 3402 f:0141 548 2414
disabilityservice@strath.ac.uk

8. APPENDIX A: EXAMPLES OF PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

WHAT WOULD NORMALLY BE CONSIDERED

The following are **examples** of circumstances that would normally be considered by PCBs. Students should note that this is not a complete list. Students may experience a range of Personal Circumstances which are not listed below but which have a significant effect on academic performance. When submitting a Personal Circumstances Form, students should explain not only the nature of their circumstances but the way in which their academic performance has been affected.

- Serious illness, physical or mental, or accident which can be verified, including sudden and unexpected deterioration of a long term condition;
- Hospitalisation during or immediately before the assessment period or for a significant period during the semester;
- Bereavement – loss of a *close relative/significant other;
- Funeral of a relative or close friend occurring on the day of an examination;
- Serious illness of a *close relative/significant other,
- Unexpectedly becoming the sole or main carer for a relative/significant other**;
- Family break up;
- Being a victim or witness of a significant crime;
- Exceptional and unforeseen travel circumstances **beyond the student's control** which prevented them from attending an examination or other scheduled assessment;
- **Severe and unforeseen** financial problems (e.g. failure of a bank; withdrawal of funding for a reason outwith the student's control);
- Impact of Forced Marriage; and
- Jury Service - which should be notified to the University as soon as possible

**Close relative is normally defined as a child, partner, parent or sibling or a relative responsible for raising the student but Boards may use their discretion depending on the circumstances of the student concerned*

*** In such cases, students should inform the University of their caring status. Consideration will be taken where it has been recognised that the student's performance has been affected.*

CIRCUMSTANCES THAT WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED

Students should note that PCBs will not consider circumstances which students are expected to cope with as part of a properly managed workload or would not normally have a significant impact on academic performance. Boards will also normally disregard circumstances which the student could reasonably have avoided, where the student could have taken measures to reduce their impact or are no different from the circumstances facing a significant number of other students. The following are examples of circumstances which would **not** normally be considered:

- Minor illness or ailment such as sore throats, minor colds, headaches, etc.
- A short-term problem or illness which occurred during the year and is deemed not to have had an overall effect on the student's performance;

- Long term illness or disability, where reasonable adjustments have already been made for assessments or could have been made if the University had been made aware of the problem at the proper time;
- Circumstances which have already been fully catered for by the granting of an extension for submitting coursework or assignments;
- General pressure of work;
- The timetabling of examinations, for example 'Bunching' of examinations or coursework deadlines;

- Being unaware of the dates or times of submission deadlines or examination(s);
- Missing an examination due to misreading the timetable or oversleeping;
- An inability to prioritise and schedule the completion of several pieces of work over a period of time;
- Inadequate planning to cope with last-minute delays and missing deadlines because of computer difficulties, or transport difficulties;
- Losing work not backed up, failure of a single data source;
- Failure to make alternative travel plans when disruptions were advised in advance;
- Normal employment commitments, changing job or taking on overtime work;
- Failure of cultural acclimatisation;
- Representing the University or country at a sporting event where the Department/Faculty has not been notified in advance;
- Holidays or wishing to attend important family events such as weddings. Funerals are an exception to this;
- Financial issues other than those mentioned above; and
- Not being aware of the Personal Circumstances Procedure.

APPENDIX B – FAQs and Flow Chart of Process

APPENDIX B: Personal Circumstances and Academic Appeals

Frequently Asked Questions

The following questions should be read in conjunction with the [University's Personal Circumstances and Academic Appeals Procedure](#)

Q: What is an Academic Appeal?

A: An academic appeal is a request for a review of a decision by an academic body at the University of Strathclyde charged with determining student progression and awards.

Q: Who can submit and appeal?

A: All full-time and part-time students on courses delivered wholly by the University, whether on campus or elsewhere by distance learning; OR

All full-time and part-time students on courses delivered jointly by the University for which the University is the administering institution (as detailed in the Memorandum of Agreement).

Q: What can I appeal against?

A: Appeals can be made against the final decision of the Assessment Board regarding academic results, award or progression.

Appeals can also be based on circumstances which the student might reasonably have been expected to have brought to the attention of the Department or the Faculty before the meeting of the Board of Examiners or to have reported as Personal Circumstances, such as an on-going medical or personal circumstance. In these cases an explanation of why these were not brought to the notice of the University at an earlier date must be provided.

Q: How do I appeal?

A: Appeals to the Faculty (Stage 1) should be set out on the Faculty Academic Appeals Form available electronically at <http://www.strath.ac.uk/staff/policies/academic/> All relevant sections of the Faculty Appeals Form must be completed and all supporting documentation attached. Appeals to Senate (Stage 2) should be completed on the Senate Academic Appeals Form available at <http://www.strath.ac.uk/staff/policies/academic/>

Q: Where do I submit the appeal to?

Appeals to the Faculty should be submitted to the relevant Faculty:

Business School: sbs-appealscomplaints@strath.ac.uk
Faculty of Engineering: eng-appealscomplaints@strath.ac.uk
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences: hass-aq@strath.ac.uk
Faculty of Science: science-appealscomplaints@strath.ac.uk

Senate Academic Appeals forms should be submitted to appealsandcomplaints@strath.ac.uk

Q: On what grounds can an appeal be made?

A: Grounds of appeal against the decision of a Board of Examiners must be made on the following grounds:

- Procedural irregularities in the assessment process (including alleged administrative error which could have led the Board of Examiners to reach a different conclusion to that which they might have reached had the error not been made);
- Inadequate assessment, prejudice or bias on the part of the examiners; and /or
- Medical, personal or other circumstances which affected a student's performance of which the examiners were unaware at the time of the assessment and which the student was unable to disclose under the Personal Circumstances procedures.

Q: How long do I have to submit an Academic Appeal?

A: The letter, posted on PEGASUS, informing you of the decision of the Board of Examiners will specify a deadline for submission of an appeal to the Faculty (Stage 1). For appeals to Senate (Stage 2), the Senate Appeal form together with any supporting documentary evidence, must normally be lodged with the Student Experience and Enhancement Services Directorate within a period of three weeks from the date on the letter informing you of the outcome of the appeal to the relevant Faculty.

Q: How long will it take for my appeal to be resolved?

A: Stage 1 (Academic Appeal to Faculty): An appeal submitted by the deadline will normally be considered within 30 working days from the published deadline. Any unavoidable delays in addressing the appeal (e.g. the absence of the individual(s) required to provide a response) will be notified at as early a date as possible. An appeal submitted after the appropriate deadline will not be considered unless there are compelling reasons for missing the deadline and these are explained in full and accompanied by relevant evidence at the time of submission. Appeals received twelve months or more after the date of the relevant Board of Examiners will not be considered in any circumstances.

Stage 2 (Academic Appeal to Senate): An appeal submitted by the deadline will normally be considered within 30 working days of its receipt. Any unavoidable delay by the University in addressing the appeal (e.g. due to the absence of the individual(s) required to provide a response) will be notified at as early a date as possible.

Q: What happens after I submit an appeal?

A: For Appeals to Faculty (Stage 1)

- The Faculty Office will send out an acknowledgement of the appeal, notifying you of any unavoidable delays in addressing the appeal (e.g. the absence of the individual(s) required to provide a response) at as early a date as possible.

- The Faculty will consider whether there are grounds for appeal, following the process outlined in Section 4 of the Personal Circumstances and Academic Appeals Procedure.
- If it has been judged that there are no grounds for appeal you will be informed in writing that the appeal will not be considered because there are no grounds.
- In cases where it is judged that the appeal should be heard by the Faculty Appeals Committee, you will be informed in writing of the decision taken by the Faculty Appeals Committee within seven working days of the decision being made.

For Appeals to Senate (Stage 2)

- The Vice-Principal of the University (or nominee), in consultation with Education Enhancement, will judge whether there are grounds for appeal (as specified in Section 5 of the Personal Circumstances and Academic Appeals Procedure).
- If no grounds are found you will be informed in writing that the appeal will not be heard, and will be advised of the independent External Review Process.
- In cases where the Vice-Principal (or nominee) decides to uphold the appeal on behalf of the Senate Appeals Committee, you will be notified by Education Enhancement.
- A Hearing of the Senate Appeals Committee will only take place where the Vice Principal (or nominee) is satisfied that a relevant ground of appeal has been appropriately set out and where resolution cannot be obtained with the Faculty.

Q: What are the possible outcomes of an appeal?

A: Possible outcomes of an appeal could be:

- **Upheld** It may be that your appeal is upheld or **partially upheld** with a recommendation, for example to treat an attempt as void, allow an attempt to be discounted, or to allow you to proceed with your studies. However, each case is dealt with on a case by case basis and there is no defined list as to what the recommendation will be. Please note that an upheld appeal does not guarantee that your mark will change, or that the outcome of a Board of Examiners will change. It is not University policy to adjust results where an appeal is upheld, but to give you a chance to perform to the best of your academic abilities.
- **Dismiss/Reject** your appeal. Your Academic Appeal may be rejected for various reasons: if it was submitted out of time; if it was not made on one of the permitted grounds; or if you have not provided appropriate evidence to support it. Please note this is not an exhaustive list.
- **Refer** your appeal to the Faculty Appeals Committee (Stage 1)
- **Return** your appeal because your form was incomplete, incorrect, not accompanied by supporting evidence, or the grounds for your appeal were not clear

Q: Can I continue on my course if I have an ongoing appeal?

A: Where an appeal to Faculty or the Senate is pending, you will normally be allowed to continue to attend classes in order not to prejudice your studies if the Appeals Committee upholds the appeal. However, should the Appeals Committee not uphold the appeal, you may be required to leave the classes.

Q: Where can I get advice on submitting an academic appeal?

A: The detailed procedures are available at:

[University's Personal Circumstances and Academic Appeals Procedure](#)

1.10 For advice and support in submitting Personal Circumstances or lodging an Appeal, students are advised to discuss the issue with one or more of the following:

- Personal Development Advisor
- Course Director/Year Advisor
- The Advice Centre
- Disability Service (in the case of students with a disability)
- The Advice Hub at the University of Strathclyde Students' Association (USSA).

Q: I have received the outcome of my Senate appeal and I am still not satisfied. What can I do?

A: If you are not happy with the outcome of the appeal process then you could refer your case to be reviewed by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman ([SPSO](#)). The SPSO will normally only look at your case once you have completed the internal appeals process.

Personal Circumstances and Academic Appeals Summary

(This flow chart provides a summary. For full details consult the full procedure.)

