

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH – MAPPING TO THE UK QUALITY CODE ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

Theme – Concerns, Complaints and Appeals

Expectations for standards

Expectations for quality

- Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student’s achievement to be reliably assessed.
- From admission through to completion, all students are provided with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.

Core practices for standards

Core practices for quality

The provider has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students.

Common practices for standards

Common practices for quality

The provider reviews its core practices for quality regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/concerns-complaints-and-appeals>

The guiding principles given here are not mandatory for any provider. They are a concise expression of the fundamental practices of the higher education sector, based on the experience of a wide range of providers. They are intended as a framework for providers to consider when establishing new or looking at existing higher education provision. They are not exhaustive and there will be other ways for providers to meet their requirements.

Guiding Principle	Mapping to the University’s policies and/or practices	Additional notes
1. Concerns, complaints and appeals are used to improve the student experience.	Student Appeal Regulations - https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/studentappealregulations.pdf .(for decisions ratified before 1 August 2020) https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/newappealregs2020.pdf (for decisions ratified after 1 August 2020) Students have the right of appeal against Boards of Examiners decisions, decisions taken in relation to proceedings under the Code of Student Conduct, Exclusion decisions, Fitness to Practise decisions (where applicable) and Support for Study decisions. Annual Reports detailing appeals processed, along with thematic analysis of those, are sent to the Senate Quality Assurance Committee each year, where themes and trends are discussed, along with any required actions arising. Data contained within these reports is dictated by the Senate Quality Assurance Committee.	

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	<p>The Student Appeal Committee reports annually to the Senate Quality Assurance Committee, detailing the volume and nature of the appeals dealt with in the previous academic session, and highlighting any issues of concern or significance.</p> <p>Complaint Handling Procedure – https://www.ed.ac.uk/university-secretary-group/complaint-handling-procedure</p> <p>In common with the other Scottish HEIs, the University uses the model Complaint Handling Procedure (CHP) as prescribed by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). ‘Learning from’ complaints is one of the SPSO’s underpinning principles and is fully endorsed by the University. Learning points arising from complaints – whether upheld or not – are fed back to Schools and support services etc. as appropriate.</p>	
<p>2. Concerns, complaints and appeals procedures are accessible and inclusive.</p>	<p>Student Appeal Regulations - https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/studentappealregulations.pdf (for decisions ratified before 1 August 2020) https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/newappealregs2020.pdf (for decisions ratified after 1 August 2020) These regulations apply to all students or recent students of the University who wish to submit an appeal, and to all staff who deal with or respond to student appeals. These regulations also outline how the process operates at each stage.</p> <p>All information regarding the appeal procedures - https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/appeals</p> <p>As a matter of course, should individuals require documentation in differing formats, University policies or regulations contain contact details for obtaining these.</p> <p>Appeals can be submitted by post, as outlined in the Student Appeal Regulations.</p>	

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	<p>Complaint Handling Procedure – https://www.ed.ac.uk/university-secretary-group/complaint-handling-procedure The CHP applies to students and recent students, applicants for admission and members of the public. Full information about the procedure is available on the link above.</p> <p>Part 5 of the CHP provides guidance for complainants, and section 24 of the document covers adjustments. Complaints can be submitted in person, by phone, by email or by post.</p>	
<p>3. Information is clear and transparent.</p>	<p>Information on Appeal procedures - https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/appeals</p> <p>Includes ‘What is an appeal?’ (https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/appeals/what-is-an-appeal), how to submit an appeal ‘Submitting an appeal’ (https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/appeals/submitting), where people can ask for specific advice ‘Where to get Advice’ (https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/appeals/where-to-get-advice), information about the timescales at play ‘Timescales’ (https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/appeals/timescales) and information about the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO) (https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/appeals/scottish-public-services-ombudsman)</p> <p>Appeals – Guidance for Students - https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/appealguidanceforstudents.pdf</p> <p>Complaint Handling Procedure – https://www.ed.ac.uk/university-secretary-group/complaint-handling-procedure The CHP includes information on what is covered by the CHP (and what is not); how to submit a complaint; where to get advice before doing so (https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/support_and_advice/the_advice_place/); and</p>	

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	<p>the timescales for submitting a complaint and within which responses should be given by the University</p>	
<p>4. People raising concerns or making complaints or appeals are treated with dignity and respect, and their well-being is properly considered.</p>	<p>Student Appeal Regulations - https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/studentappealregulations.pdf (for decisions ratified before 1 August 2020) https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/newappealregs2020.pdf (for decisions ratified after 1 August 2020) Information is given within regulations regarding ensuring avoidance of conflicting interests and any possible bias stemming from this in consideration of appeals. Appeals will never be considered by staff from the same School as the appellant in order to ensure impartiality. Where information is requested in relation to appeals from members of University staff, staff are reminded that this should be factual and objective. Any correspondence sent during appeal proceedings is marked as confidential.</p> <p>Sources of support and advice are available on the Appeal webpages - https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/appeals/where-to-get-advice as are contact details for appropriate members of staff.</p> <p>'If things go wrong' pages - https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/policies-regulations/if-things-go-wrong</p> <p>Complaint Handling Procedure – https://www.ed.ac.uk/university-secretary-group/complaint-handling-procedure</p> <p>The CHP covers the need to avoid conflicts of interest. Stage 1 complaints are handled at local level by the unit in which the issue has arisen; Stage 2 investigations are carried out by suitably trained staff from a different area of the University to ensure that bias or conflict of interest are avoided. Investigation reports are marked as confidential and shared only on a 'need to know' basis; learning points from complaints are anonymised before being disseminated to appropriate areas. Where necessary, adjustments are made to the procedure to take account of any particular</p>	

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	<p>concerns; this arises most commonly in relation to timescales where, for example, a student may wish to pause consideration of a complaint for a period in order to concentrate on an academic deadline.</p> <p>The Expected Behaviour Policy sets out expectations for behaviour by parties involved in appeals, complaints and student conduct procedures and specifies how we will manage cases where behaviour is problematic https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/expectedbehaviourpolicy.pdf</p>	
<p>5. Concerns, complaints and appeals processes are proportionate and allow for cases to be resolved as early as possible.</p>	<p>Student Appeal Regulations - https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/studentappealregulations.pdf (for decisions ratified before 1 August 2020) https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/newappealregs2020.pdf (for decisions ratified after 1 August 2020)</p> <p>Timescales - https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/appeals/timescales</p> <p>Complaint Handling Procedure – https://www.ed.ac.uk/university-secretary-group/complaint-handling-procedure</p> <p>The CHP places a strong emphasis on ‘early resolution’ (one of the SPSO’s ‘Principles of Good Complaint Handling’), and the University resolves around 99% of cases at Stage 1 ‘Frontline resolution’.</p>	
<p>6. Concerns, complaints and appeals procedures are fair and impartial.</p>	<p>Student Appeal Regulations - https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/studentappealregulations.pdf (for decisions ratified before 1 August 2020) https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/newappealregs2020.pdf (for decisions ratified after 1 August 2020) Information is given within regulations regarding ensuring avoidance of conflicting interests and any possible bias stemming from this in consideration of appeals. Appeals will never be considered by staff from the same School as the appellant in order to ensure impartiality. Judgements on whether grounds for appeal</p>	

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	<p>have been established is the responsibility of the relevant sub-committees of the Appeal Committee or relevant Appeal Committees themselves.</p> <p>Complaint Handling Procedure – https://www.ed.ac.uk/university-secretary-group/complaint-handling-procedure The CHP covers the need to avoid conflicts of interest. Stage 1 complaints are handled at local level by the unit in which the issue has arisen; Stage 2 investigations are carried out by suitably trained staff from a different area of the University to ensure that bias or conflict of interest are avoided.</p>	
<p>7. Confidentiality and anonymity are appropriately assured.</p>	<p>Boards of Examiners who are required to reconvene following an upheld appeal must conduct their business in line with the provisions of the Taught Assessment Regulations https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/taughtassessmentregulations.pdf which detail anonymity and confidentiality requirements.</p> <p>Appeal submissions and case considerations are received, acknowledged and processed from a private, password protected and encrypted mailbox, and stored in restricted access drives. Only staff with business requirements for access to this information can access it.</p> <p>Correspondence and electronic letters and reports are appropriately marked as Private & Confidential and sent in secure format.</p> <p>Privacy Notice for Appeal procedures - https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/appealsprocessprivacynotice.pdf</p> <p>Appeal files are destroyed five years following the completion of the case. In some circumstances, the University may retain this information for longer where a case may be relevant to an ongoing relationship between an individual and the University.</p>	

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	<p>Complaint submissions and case considerations are received, acknowledged and processed from a private, password protected and encrypted mailbox, and stored in restricted access drives. Only staff with business requirements for access to this information can access it. Correspondence and electronic letters and reports are appropriately marked as Private & Confidential and sent in secure format.</p> <p>Privacy Notice for Complaint procedures – https://www.ed.ac.uk/university-secretary-group/complaint-handling-procedure/privacy-notice</p> <p>Complaint files are destroyed five years following the completion of the case. In some circumstances, the University may retain this information for longer where a case may be relevant to an ongoing relationship between an individual and the University.</p>	
<p>8. Concerns, complaints and appeals are resolved in as timely a way as possible.</p>	<p>Appeals: Timescales (https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/appeals/timescales)</p> <p>Complaint Handling Procedure – https://www.ed.ac.uk/university-secretary-group/complaint-handling-procedure</p> <p>Timescales set by the SPSO are covered within the CHP. Whilst the majority of Stage 1 cases are resolved speedily (within the 5 working days specified by the SPSO), Stage 2 investigations generally take longer than the SPSO’s indicative timescale of 20 working days due to the need to conduct interviews and produce agreed notes from each interview prior to writing a report which addresses all issues raised by the complainant.</p>	<p>Appeals: the SPSO expects procedures relating to appeals/complaints/investigations to have indicative timescales, and that these be adhered to. The University aims to have each appeal considered by a sub-committee of the relevant Appeal Committee in the first instance, with the appellant informed of any outcome, within 30 working days of having received the appeal.</p>