

Academic Appeals Policy

2025/26

Contents

Contents	1
Academic Appeals Policy	2
1. Policy	2
1.1 Definition of an Academic Appeal	2
1.2 A Student's Progression Status Whilst an Appeal is Considered	3
2. Appeals Procedure	4
2.1 Informal Early Resolution	4
2.2 Making a Formal Appeal	4
2.3 Possible Outcomes	5

Academic Appeals Policy (2025/26)

Formal academic appeals are not investigated by Oak Hill College. They are submitted to and considered by the University of Durham under its [Academic Appeals policy](#).

For information about the appeals process and how to submit an appeal, contact the Academic Registrar at Oak Hill College in the first instance.

The following information gives outline information on the Durham appeals policy and process.

1. Policy

1.1 Definition of an Academic Appeal

An academic appeal is a request from a student for the formal review of an academic decision affecting that student. The following may be appealed:

- a confirmed decision of the Oak Hill's Assessment Board or the Overarching Durham University Common Awards Board of Examiners, or
- a decision made by Oak Hill that affects a student academically, for example a decision that a student may not progress to the next level of study within a student's academic programme.

The academic appeal process looks at two factors:

1. Was the decision made in accordance with correct procedures within Oak Hill College and/or within the University?
2. Was all the necessary relevant information available to those making the decision?

In order to submit an academic appeal a student will need to provide evidence of at least one of the following points:

- That there might have been a serious error in the way in which the original decision was made. For example, evidence that a procedure was not properly followed or applied, or that the decision-making body acted unreasonably in the circumstances;
- That there exists, or existed, adverse circumstances affecting a student's academic performance and those making the decision were not aware of these adverse circumstances at the time the decision was made. There must be a good reason why these circumstances were not made known at the time (for example, because of a medical diagnosis that was received after marks had already been approved by the Oak Hill College Assessment Board, or because of an error meaning that information should have been presented to the board and was accidentally omitted);
- That the decision-making body took a decision which was not reasonable in all the circumstances.

Appeals against the academic judgement of the Examiners/Assessment Board will not be permitted and appeals made on this basis will be rejected. Durham University defines 'academic judgement' as the professional and scholarly knowledge and expertise that members of staff at Oak Hill College and at the University, as well as external examiners, draw upon in reaching an academic decision.

Matters of academic judgement include (but are not limited to) decisions about the severity of impact of mitigating circumstances on academic performance, decisions about the academic standard attained by students, marks and grades to be awarded for individual pieces of work or modules, and degrees and degree classifications to be awarded, or not.

1.2 A Student's Progression Status Whilst an Appeal is Considered

The module grade (including any provisional grades) and/or the decision of the Assessment Board shall remain in effect until an Appeal Panel determines that it should be rescinded and this outcome is confirmed to the student.

Pending the outcome of an appeal, a student:

1.2.1 Remains responsible for the timely submission of any re-assessed coursework or the re-sitting of any examinations, and will bear the consequences of failing to do so should the appeal not be upheld.

1.2.2 Shall normally be permitted to progress to the next year or stage of their studies, unless other circumstances prevent this:

- **Appeals relating to expulsion for academic misconduct:** The student shall be suspended pending the outcome of the appeal. Written permission from the Principal, at their discretion, will be required for the student to continue to the next stage of study.
- **Appeals relating to a failed placement:** Written permission from the Principal, in consultation with the Director of College Placements, at their discretion, will be required for the student to continue on the same placement or to attend an alternative placement pending the outcome of the appeal. This discretion will only be exercised where the Principal judges that withdrawal from the placement would be against the interests of the placement setting.

During attendance pending the outcome of an appeal, no tuition fees shall be charged to the student. In the event of the appeal being upheld and the student formally reinstated on the programme, the appropriate fees shall then become payable.

1.2.3 Shall inform prospective employers of their final qualification, with the clarification that the decision is subject to review pending the appeal outcome.

The student's entitlement to continue on the programme shall remain in effect until the date of the letter formally notifying them of the final appeal outcome (i.e., dismissal of the appeal or confirmation of a revised Assessment Board decision). This letter will also confirm whether the student may continue their studies.

Students will receive regular communication from the Academic Registrar regarding the progress of their appeal. Appeals will be handled with appropriate confidentiality, and the College expects that both students and staff will treat the appeals process, and each other, with respect.

2. Appeals Procedure

2.1 Informal Early Resolution

Wherever possible, the student should make every effort to discuss the problem with the module tutor and/or any other appropriate member of academic staff before making a formal appeal.

Either at the informal stage or at Stage 1 (or where applicable, during Stage 2), the student may be advised that, rather than pursuing an appeal, the matter can be dealt with through another process, such as applying for a concession or submitting a request for Serious Adverse Circumstances to be considered at Oak Hill College's next Assessment Board. This will depend upon each student's individual circumstances.

2.2 Making a Formal Appeal

If a student feels that the case has not been resolved informally, they must present their appeal, in writing, to the Common Awards team at the University of Durham. There are two stages to the formal appeals process.

2.2.1 Stage 1

The written appeal should comprise a completed Appeal Form (available from the Common Awards team) together with the grounds for the appeal and any other supplementary evidence, e.g., medical notes. The Formal Stage 1 Appeal '*Common Awards Appeals Proforma*' can be accessed [here](#). Once completed, the form should be sent to common.awards@durham.ac.uk within 21 days of the decision which you are appealing against. This timeframe may be extended only within exceptional circumstances.

The student should inform the Academic Registrar at Oak Hill College that they have submitted an appeal to the University.

The appeal will be considered by the Chair of the Common Awards Management Board or the Deputy Chair or another member of University staff designated by the Chair.

The member of University staff considering the appeal will contact those who were involved in making the decision that is being appealed, for example, the Chair of the Oak Hill Assessment Board, or the Chair of any relevant academic committees. Other staff at Oak Hill may be contacted if further information about the decision-making process is required.

Within 42 days of the appeal being made (normally considerably sooner than this), the member of University staff considering the appeal will produce a brief report setting out whether,

having looked at all the information, the appeal is to be upheld or not and the reasons for this decision.

The student will then be notified of the outcome of the formal appeal. Oak Hill College will also be notified.

2.2.2 Stage 2

If a student is dissatisfied after the completion of Stage 1, they can request that their appeal be referred to the University's Senate Academic Appeals Committee (SAAC).

The student must request this within 14 days of receiving notification of the outcome of Stage 1 of the formal appeals process. The Common Awards Team at the University will supply the student with the form needed to complete to do this.

The request for a student's appeal to be referred to SAAC must be based on at least one of the following grounds:

- that they have evidence that parts of the relevant documented procedure were not applied correctly during Stage 1 of the appeals process and that this procedural defect was significant enough to have materially affected the decision made at Stage 1.

Or

- that there is substantial and relevant new information that was previously unknown to the student, or which for a valid reason they were unable to disclose during Stage 1 of the appeals process and that the information is significant enough to have materially affected decision made at Stage 1.

The SAAC will consider an appeal referred to them and communicate with the student about the progress of their appeal within 28 days. Students can find out more about this process in Durham University's detailed guidance on academic appeals.

If a student is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 2, once this stage is complete, they may refer the case to the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator \(OIA\)](#). The OIA is an independent body set up to review student complaints about higher education providers in England and Wales.

2.3 Possible Outcomes

If an academic appeal is upheld it will normally be sent back for reconsideration by the body that made the original decision (for example, the Oak Hill Assessment Board could be asked to look at their decision again in light of the findings of the appeal process). This does not necessarily mean that the original decision will be reversed or altered. Normally marks for work will only be changed if there was an error in recording or processing them.

Author	Academic Registrar Acting Vice-Principal (Teaching & Learning)
Date of Approval	28/08/25
Approving Committee	Teaching & Learning Committee
Status	Approved
Previous Reviews	N/A
Next Review	July 2026 or earlier if required