

HEPP05 Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure

PURPOSE

This policy and procedure reflect the expectations and responsibilities of Southern Cross Education Institute – Higher Education (SCEI-HE) and its students in resolving student academic disputes. Through the application of this policy and procedure SCEI-HE will:

- set in place an academic dispute resolution system that is student focussed and helps SCEI (Higher Education) prevent further such disputes
- ensure that all academic disputes are resolved promptly, objectively, sensitively, and confidentially
- ensure that the views of each student involved in an academic dispute process are respected and that no party to the process is discriminated against or victimised at any stage of the process, and
- ensure that SCEI-HE applies a consistent response to the academic dispute process.

SCOPE

This Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure applies to appeals by students against academic issues such as: 1. the outcome of a review of grade; 2. penalty for academic misconduct and plagiarism; 3. refusal of an application for course credit; 4. failure to maintain satisfactory academic progress.

All other grievances and complaints are considered under Student Grievances and Appeals Policy.

DEFINITIONS

Academic disputes	Disputes regarding academic decisions include, but are not limited, to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● academic progress decisions ● assessment matters ● a decision of a member of academic staff that affects an individual student or a group of students ● content or structure of academic programs or nature of teaching ● issues related to authorship or intellectual property
Formal Appeals	A formal appeal can take place if an academic dispute or outcome of a review of grades cannot be resolved informally. Formal appeals are dealt with initially by the Academic Director.
Review of Grades	A process for requesting a review of a grades forms part of the Assessment Policy and Procedure. Students should make use of this process in the first instance if they wish to request a review of a grade. Students who are dissatisfied with the outcome of a review of a grade may utilise the formal appeal section of this policy.
SCEI-HE	Southern Cross Education Institute - Higher Education

POLICY

1. Disputes may arise which relate to academic decisions. SCEI-HE makes provision for those academic decisions which are subject to dispute to be reviewed. Students may appeal SCEI-HE's decisions on:
 - 1.1. the outcome of a review of grade;
 - 1.2. a penalty for academic misconduct and plagiarism;
 - 1.3. the refusal of an application for course credit;
 - 1.4. the failure to maintain satisfactory academic progress.
2. The following principles apply with respect to any dispute about an academic decision, whether dealt with formally or informally.

- 2.1. The policy will always be readily available to students and staff. It is published on SCEI-HE's public website. Students are entitled to access the academic dispute procedures set out in this policy regardless of the course in which they are enrolled.
- 2.2. All disputes will be resolved as quickly as possible.
- 2.3. The timeframes specified in these procedures should always be followed unless there are exceptional circumstances. If the timeframe is to be exceeded, the student must always be informed of the length of, and the reason for, the delay.
- 2.4. All disputes must be treated confidentially at all stages in the dispute resolution process. Access to information about a dispute must be restricted to those staff who need to be informed so that they may be properly involved in the dispute resolution process.
- 2.5. The fact that a student has made a complaint or appealed a decision under these procedures will not disadvantage the student in any way, especially by way of subsequent victimisation or discrimination.
- 2.6. Academic disputes will be handled in an unbiased manner and will take into account the principles of procedural fairness.
- 2.7. Any person involved in an academic dispute process will be allowed the support and advice they need to participate effectively. While a conciliatory approach is preferred and encouraged, it may be appropriate, in some circumstances, that the student and/or staff member has another person speak on his or her behalf.
- 2.8. In order to facilitate the resolution of academic disputes, it is important that staff establish and maintain proper records and documentation once a complaint becomes formal.
- 2.9. Staff are also advised to keep notes of any informal discussions with students. Copies of documents which are provided to students should be kept, as well as a record of the date on which the documents were provided.
- 2.10. Students have a right of supervised access to all documents concerning their appeal. This right does not apply to any documents for which SCEI-HE claims legal professional privilege.
- 2.11. Given the nature of many academic disputes, SCEI-HE expects that most concerns will be resolved informally. This form of resolution provides an opportunity for open and direct dialogue between the student and academic staff member. Furthermore, informal resolution normally provides the most time effective mechanism for resolving academic disputes.
- 2.12. The academic dispute resolution process will be free of charge to the student.

PROCEDURE

There are four stages in the process associated with the resolution of an academic dispute. Each stage represents an increase in the formality with which the dispute is managed. The stages of the process are:

- Stage 1 - Informal resolution between the student and academic staff member
- Stage 2 - Appeal to the Course Coordinator
- Stage 3 – Formal written appeal to the Academic Director
- Stage 4 - External appeal to a relevant body

When escalating a dispute, a student must present evidence that the previous determination either lacked academic judgement or did not follow due process.

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution between student and academic staff member

When a student has an academic dispute, he or she should first discuss the matter with the academic staff member concerned. If the student has any concerns about raising the matter with this person, then he or she should discuss the matter with Student Welfare and/or the Course Coordinator.

SCEI-HE expects that in most cases the discussion of the dispute with the relevant staff member will result in a prompt resolution of the matter which both parties will find acceptable.

If this informal approach to dealing with the student's grievance does not lead to an acceptable resolution within 14 days of the matter being raised, then a more formal process for resolution of the matter can be pursued at the discretion of the student.

Stage 2 – Appeal to the Course Coordinator

Additional appeals on academic grounds must be made directly to the Course Coordinator.

If the academic dispute has not been settled to your satisfaction with the class teacher, the student may take their academic dispute to the Course Coordinator. You may wish to inform the Student Welfare Officer that you are unsatisfied with the class teacher's decision in the matter and intend to escalate the appeal.

If you decide to appeal the assessment grade with the Course Coordinator, you must make this request within ten (10) days of receiving the grade for your assessment.

The Course Coordinator will view the evidence associated with the academic dispute and make a decision that will result in one of the following:

- You will be given an opportunity to re-sit an alternate exam, or given time to re-write the assignment or assessment piece in question.
- The coordinator may cross-mark your assessment to determine whether the original assessment and grade were fair and accurate
- The Coordinator may make an assessment that suggests a strategy for additional preparation for assessments at a tertiary level
- The Coordinator may decide that the original grade is justified and that a re-sit or additional/alternate assessment is not warranted.

If the student is unsatisfied with the decision made by the Course Coordinator, an appeal can be made, in writing, to the Academic Director.

Stage 3 – Formal Written Appeal to the Academic Director

The student may make an appeal to the Academic Director by completing the form: HEFOR08 Appeal of Academic Assessment Form, and submitting it to Student Welfare, or to the Course Coordinator. The form will be passed to the Academic Director. This application must be made within five (5) days of the decision received from the previous appeal to the Course Coordinator.

The Academic Director, upon reviewing the evidence for the appeal, may make a decision on the appeal or, convene a panel of academic staff unconnected with the original or subsequent assessment and appeals (that is, not the original class teacher or the Course Coordinator) to help assess the student's case for re-assessment, re-sitting an alternate exam or re-submitting a fresh assignment.

The panel may consist of: teachers familiar with the subject material, general teaching academics, student welfare officers, members of SCEI-HE's Academic Board or from the Teaching and Learning Committee.

The Academic Director will start the process of considering the appeal within 10 working days of receiving the HEFOR08 Appeal of Academic Assessment Form and will acknowledge receipt of the appeal in writing to the student. The Academic Director will ensure all steps are taken to resolve the appeal within 20 working days.

In considering the appeal, the Academic Director may arrange a meeting with the student to further explore the nature of the dispute.

After consideration of the written evidence presented in the HEFOR08 Appeal of Academic Assessment Form, and a copy of the assessment piece in question, the panel will make a decision on the appeal. The decision will result in one of the following:

- The assessment is re-evaluated
- The student is granted another attempt to achieve a Pass grade (exam re-sit, re-submission of assignment etc.)
- The Course Coordinator's decision is upheld and the original grade is confirmed

If the final decision adversely affects the student's course progression, the Panel may make recommendation:

- That the student applies for a period of course deferment, during which remedial courses of study, designed to better prepare and equip the student for tertiary study, will be identified and recommended. After completion of such a course, the student will be better prepared to re-commence the enrolled course.
- If the standing grade is likely to result in a Fail grade for the subject, the student may apply to re-enrol in the subject when it is next delivered. This may result in additional course fees and a variation to the student's study visa, if International

If the appeal is upheld, the Academic Director will immediately notify relevant staff of the actions required for a resolution.

All parties involved in the dispute will be provided with a written report on the steps taken to resolve the issue within 20 working days of the commencement of the process.

If the appeal is not upheld, then all parties concerned will be provided with a written explanation detailing the reasons for that decision.

The Academic Director will retain a written record of the appeal and its outcome.

There is no financial cost to students for internal appeals.

Stage 4 - External Appeal

In the event of the student remaining dissatisfied with the result or conduct of SCEI (Higher Education)'s internal procedures, the student has a right to seek an external appeal from bodies such as:

- The Victorian Ombudsman <https://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/Complaints/Got-a-Complaint>
- The Overseas Students Ombudsman <https://www.ombudsman.gov.au/How-we-can-help/overseas-students>
- The Resolution Institute's Expert determination service <https://www.resolution.institute/>

SCEI-HE will pay 50% of financial expenses incurred to students from external appeals processes.

Record Keeping and confidentiality

Records of all disputes and the outcomes of disputes dealt with according to these procedures will be maintained for a period of at least five (5) years. All parties to a dispute will be allowed access to these records, upon written request to the Academic Director or the Student Administration Manager.

All records relating to academic appeals will be treated as confidential and will be kept separately to the student's file in a secure environment in accordance with SCEI-HE's Records Management and Privacy policies.

A copy of the statement of the findings at each stage of the process will be provided to the student.

A register of academic appeals will be maintained on SCEI-HE's Student Management System.

For each academic dispute, the following is recorded:

- details of the parties involved
- the documents lodged
- details of the complaint/appeal
- details of the resolution or other outcome

Communication to staff and students: This policy document will be made available to all students, and to those seeking to enrol in a course of study with SCEI-HE.

If a student chooses to lodge a formal academic appeal, their enrolment will be maintained during the resolution process.

Nothing in this policy and procedure limits the rights of students or persons seeking to enrol with SCEI-HE to take action under Australia's Consumer Protection laws. Also, these procedures do not circumscribe an individual's rights to pursue other legal remedies.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

HEFOR08 Appeal of Academic Assessment Form
HEPP02 Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure
HEPP03 Student Complaint and Grievance Policy and Procedure
HEPP04 Assessment Policy and Procedure
HEPP31 Examinations Policy and Procedure
HEPP33 Records Management Policy and Procedure
HEPP34 Privacy Policy

LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 (Cwth)
Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015

RESPONSIBILITIES

- The Academic Director/Compliance Manager is responsible for ensuring adherence to this policy and procedures.
- The Course Coordinator is responsible for ensuring adherence to this policy and procedures.

Author	Academic Director
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