



WC01 – Academic Appeals and Complaints Policy

College Policy	
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Introduction

Westerfield College is committed to maintaining the highest standard of academic integrity and fairness. The Academic Appeals Policy provides a clear and transparent process for students' academics, ensuring that their rights are protected and that they receive a fair hearing. This policy outlines the procedures for appealing academic decisions, including grades, academic standing, and other matters.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

1. Ensure fairness, consistency, and transparency in academic decision-making.
2. Provide a clear and accessible process for students to appeal academic decisions.
3. Protect students' rights and interests.
4. Promote accountability and continuous improvement in academic decision-making.

Scope

This policy applies to all Westerfield College students, faculty, and staff involved in academic decision-making, including:

1. Examination (Grade) appeals
2. Academic standing appeals (e.g., probation, suspension, dismissal)
3. Academic integrity appeals (e.g., plagiarism, cheating)

Principles

This policy is guided by the following principles:

1. Natural Justice (fairness, impartiality)
2. Procedural Fairness (clear process, timely decisions)
3. Academic Integrity (maintenance of academic standards)
4. Respect for Students' Rights (protection of student interests)
5. Transparency and Accountability (clear communication, documentation)

Procedure

Definition of key terms

Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction or concern about a decision, policy, or procedure of the school.

Appeals: A request to review a decision made by the college.

Complaint Procedure

- **Informal Resolution:** Students are encouraged to try to resolve their complaint informally by discussing it with the relevant staff member or faculty member.
- **Formal Complaint:** If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, the student may submit a formal complaint in writing to the relevant department.
- **Investigation:** The school will investigate the complaint and respond to the student in writing.

Grounds for appeals

Here are some common grounds for a student complaint appeal:

1. New Evidence

New information or evidence has come to light that was not available during the initial complaint process.

2. Procedural Irregularities

The complaint process was not followed correctly, or there were irregularities in the handling of the complaint.

3. Bias or Conflict of Interest

The person or committee handling the complaint had a bias or conflict of interest that affected the outcome.

4. Inadequate Investigation

The investigation into the complaint was inadequate or incomplete.

5. Unfair or Unreasonable Decision

The decision made in response to the complaint was unfair or unreasonable.

6. Lack of Transparency

The complaint process lacked transparency, and the student was not kept informed of the progress or outcome.

7. Breach of Policy or Procedure

The school's policies or procedures were not followed correctly during the complaint process.

8. Discrimination or Harassment

The student experienced discrimination or harassment during the complaint process.

9. Unsatisfactory Resolution

The resolution offered in response to the complaint was unsatisfactory or did not address the student's concerns.

10. Other Grounds

Other grounds for appeal, such as exceptional circumstances or mitigating factors, may also be considered.

The Academic Appeals Unit

The Academic Appeals Unit, which comprises the Head of School and Pathway Leaders, will moderate all Academic Appeals at Westerfield College.

Summary of the Examination Appeals Process:

Examination Appeals can only be placed once a student's grades are published. Students should be aware that their grades could go down, up, or stay the same after the process.

Students will be able to submit a request for a review of a decision of the Examination Board if they think there was a problem with the assessment of their work, or if their work was affected by circumstances that they were not able to tell the college about at the time of their assessment. The request for review will be dealt with seriously and fairly. Requesting a review will not affect any decisions made about future academic progress, and does not affect student rights. All requests will need to meet the college's criteria.

There are two main reasons for requesting a review of an examination board decision, these are:

1. Material Irregularity

Material Irregularity means that the college made an error which had a significant impact on the assessment and the grade received. This includes where disabled students have not received the agreed level of support that they need.

Simple examples would be that the grade was calculated wrongly or that the college lost some of the submitted work. However, an examination appeal cannot be requested simply because a student disagrees with the grade that was received for work done. Academic judgment is outside of the Appeals process.

2. Extenuating circumstances (which, for valid reasons, were not made known to the examination board)

There may be some difficult circumstances that affect the ability to meet an assessment deadline or that affect performance in assessment. These are normally dealt with through the Extenuating Circumstances (EC) procedure before the exam board meets.

However, students may be able to request a review of the decision if they cannot submit a claim at the time of the assessment (for example, being in a hospital and being unable to communicate with the college). For an EC-based Appeal, we would need confirmation of both the EC at the time of assessment and the way that it prevented the student from engaging with the EC process. The student will be required to explain why they were not able to tell us about the circumstances at the time. Stating they were unaware of the EC process would not be an acceptable reason for failing to apply at the time of assessment.

3. Disability and Reasonable Adjustments

If a student is considered to be disabled or requires reasonable adjustments to access the review process they should contact the College Appeals Unit, who can discuss their needs with them. It may help to have a needs assessment report to help show what adjustments are required. If they have concerns about disclosing disability information on the form, they should please contact their pathway leader.

4. Supporting Evidence

Appropriate evidence will be needed in support of a request for review, particularly if it is based on Extenuating Circumstances. Processing of such a request will be delayed if there is insufficient or incomplete evidence to support the claim. If appropriate evidence is not provided, especially within the specified deadline, such a request for review will be rejected. Medical evidence should be provided in the form of an official signed document from a registered medical practitioner and a clear medical diagnosis must be included. Evidence must be presented in English and only official notarised translations will be accepted. If clarity about the type of evidence required to support a request is needed, pathway leaders should be contacted. The College Appeals Unit will accept scanned evidence in the first instance - they will contact the student as soon as possible if they need to see the originals,

or if they need further pieces of evidence. A copy of any correspondence that relates to the matter should be kept, and a record of any telephone calls or meetings which have taken place.

5. Deadlines

The College will make every effort to keep to the timescales outlined in the procedures and asks that students making an appeal also endeavour to do the same. However, sometimes it may be necessary to seek an extension. If this is the case, the College will contact the student.

Informal Assessment Review

If there is a query about the outcome of an assessment, the student's pathway leader is to be contacted to discuss this. This will provide an opportunity to seek advice as appropriate and an appeal may be requested if the query is not satisfactorily resolved.

Requesting a Review of an Examination Board's Decision

If there is a ground for requesting a review of an Examination Board's decision, the Stage 1 Appeal Form available from the Student Support Services should be completed.

The form and any supporting evidence should be submitted within 10 working days of the results being published. This date can be found on the top of the Results Notification Letter sent by the College. The College Appeals Unit will accept scanned evidence in the first instance -contacts will be made as soon as possible if there is a need to see the originals, or if there is a need for further pieces of evidence.

Requesting a Review of an Academic Appeals Unit Decision

If there is a ground for requesting a review of an Academic Appeal Unit decision, the Stage 1 Appeal Form available from the Student Support Services should be completed.

The form and any supporting evidence should be submitted within 10 working days of the decision by the Academic Appeals Unit. All evidence must be provided at this time.

What Happens Next?

All requests are initially sorted by the College Appeals Unit (CAU). If the CAU feels that you have valid grounds for requesting a review, it will ask the Chair of the Exam Board to review the decision. The Chair will consult with appropriate members of staff and will let you know the new decision within seven working days of the start of the review. If a student is not satisfied with the decision made by the Chair during the Stage 1 Review they may submit a Stage 2 Appeal.

If the College Appeals Unit feels that a request does not meet the grounds for review, the CAU will write to reject it within 10 working days.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years by the Academic Board unless there are changes that necessitate an earlier review.

Version History

No	Revised on	Version	Changes	Approved by	Date of Approval	Revised by