

Academic Appeals Policy

1. Introduction

Francis James is committed to maintaining high academic standards with fair academic assessment decisions and delivering a positive learner experience. Assessment Boards make decisions on assessment outcomes, student progress and award outcomes. We recognise that, on occasion, learners may wish to question academic decisions. This policy sets out the principles and procedures for academic appeals against academic decisions.

2. Purpose and Scope

1. Academic Appeals: This policy applies to appeals against assessment board decisions relating to:
 - Assessment outcomes, progression decisions and award classifications.
 - Extenuating circumstances or mitigation request outcomes.
 - Other academic decisions that affect a learner's progression or final award.
2. Exclusions:
 - Complaints about admissions decisions when applying to study with Francis James.
 - Complaints that fall under separate institutional policies and processes when you are on a course (e.g. complaints against services provided by Francis James, course delivery, teaching or administration, academic misconduct or harassment, bullying or disciplinary issues).
 - Matters outside Francis James' control (e.g. personal disputes between learners, wider government policy).

3. Principles

1. Fairness: All academic appeals will be handled in a fair, unbiased and timely manner, respecting the rights of all parties.
2. Transparency: Procedures and decisions will be clearly documented, and learners will be informed of progress at each stage.
3. Accessibility: Information regarding this policy will be widely accessible, and reasonable adjustments will be made in applying this policy for learners with disabilities or additional learning needs.
4. Confidentiality: All cases will be treated confidentially, and records will be managed in accordance with Data Protection legislation.
5. No Detriment: Learners will not suffer reprisals or disadvantage for raising a genuine academic appeal in good faith.

4. Definition

- Academic Appeal: A request for a review of an academic decision made at an assessment board (e.g. an assessment outcome, progression outcome or award classification) on valid grounds, such as procedural error or extenuating or mitigating circumstances.

5. Grounds for Academic Appeals

Valid grounds for an academic appeal typically include:

1. Procedural irregularity: A significant error or omission in the assessment or decision-making process.
2. Extenuating circumstances: New or previously undisclosed circumstances that could not have been reported earlier for valid reasons and were unknown to the Assessment Board.
3. Evidence of bias or prejudice: Where the learner can demonstrate that the academic decision was influenced by bias.

An appeal cannot be based solely on disagreement with the academic judgment of markers and examiners or the marking standards applied.

6. Academic Appeals Procedure

1. Stage 1: Informal Resolution
 - Learners are encouraged to discuss their concerns informally with the relevant lecturer, programme support officer or programme leader. This may include, for example, what you may consider as missing or incorrect marks or grades
 - Many issues can be resolved quickly at this stage, without escalating to a formal appeal.
2. Stage 2: Formal Appeal Submission
 - If unresolved, the learner must submit a Formal Academic Appeal Form (available on the Francis James website and on Moodle) within the published timeframe (usually 10 working days from the results publication or decision date).
 - The submission should include clear grounds for appeal and all relevant evidence (e.g. medical certificates, proof of circumstances).
3. Stage 3: Appeal Review and Outcome
 - A designated Appeals Panel, composed of senior academic staff not directly involved in the decision being appealed, reviews the evidence.
 - The panel may request additional information or interviews with relevant parties.
 - A decision is normally communicated in writing within 20 working days of receipt of the completed appeal form.
 - Possible outcomes include:
 - Appeal Upheld (with appropriate remedies, e.g. re-mark, re-assessment opportunity or reconsideration by the original Assessment board or Chair).
 - Appeal Rejected (with reasons provided).
4. Stage 4: Review of Decision
 - If the learner remains dissatisfied, they can request a review of the Panel's decision (usually 10 working days from receipt of the Stage 3 outcome) on limited grounds (e.g. new evidence or procedural flaw).
 - A senior official (or a designated reviewer) will re-examine the process.
 - The outcome of this review is final, and a Completion of Procedures Letter will be issued (usually 20 working days from the receipt of a Stage 4 review request).
 - Following this final internal stage, the learner may then escalate the matter externally if desired.

To make an internal Academic Appeal you will need to complete the Academic Appeal Form, which you can find on the Francis James website.

8. External Review

If a learner exhausts the internal processes and remains dissatisfied, they may escalate the issue to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) within 12 months of receiving the Completion of Procedures Letter, which is issued by Francis James at the end of their processes. The OIA offers an independent review of the complaint or appeal decision.

9. Monitoring and Oversight

- Monitoring: Francis James maintains records of all appeals and complaints to identify trends, highlight areas for improvement and ensure policy effectiveness.
- Reporting: An annual report on the volume, nature and outcomes of academic appeals is presented to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee to inform continuous quality enhancement.
- Review: This policy is reviewed annually or as needed, ensuring ongoing compliance with OfS requirements and alignment with good practice.

10. Data Protection and Confidentiality

- All personal data related to appeals and complaints is handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).
- Information is only shared with individuals involved in resolving the matter, unless disclosure is required by law or regulatory obligations.

11. Policy review

- This policy will be reviewed annually by Francis James to ensure continued fairness and accuracy, and consistency with other institutional policies and procedures.

Written By	Revision Date	Revision Number	Approved By	Review Date
K Tucker	31/12/2024	1	 S Graham	31/12/2025
H Barratt	28/07/2025	2	 S Graham	08/07/2026