Academic Appeals and Review Statement
LSBF Undergraduate and Postgraduate Academic Programmes

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NOTE:
This policy does not apply to academic appeals lodged against assessment decisions on LSBF taught Higher National (HND/HNC) programmes, for which separate procedures are in place.

It also does not apply to non-academic complaints, or appeals against refunds, admissions, disciplinary procedures or attendance monitoring/compliance issues.
1. **Introduction**

1.1. The London School of Business and Finance (LSBF) delivers undergraduate and postgraduate academic study programmes in collaboration with a number of validating partner institutions. LSBF is obligated by the conditions of these partnership agreements to ensure that its policies and procedures are compliant with validating partner stipulations and align with any specified requirements or timeframes. The processes that LSBF keeps in place for handling academic appeals therefore vary depending on the programme of study and the partner institution validating the award.

1.2. This document gives a general overview of what students can expect from LSBF when making an academic appeal, and what may be expected of them.

1.3. Students on externally validated academic programmes at LSBF will receive clear and accurate advice regarding the specific academic appeals processes and requirements relating to their course of study via their programme handbooks and/or during inductions. Where applicable students will be signposted to validating partners’ Academic Appeals policies.

1.4. Whilst individual processes for handling academic appeals vary between different programmes, the core principles governing LSBF’s approach to handling academic appeals on postgraduate and undergraduate degree programmes are universal; LSBF, in executing any partner-specified academic appeals process, will seek to ensure that:

   1.4.1. all academic appeals are handled in manner which is fair, objective and timely to facilitate speedy resolution;

   1.4.2. no student will suffer disadvantage as a result of making an academic appeal;

   1.4.3. specific procedures are readily accessible to students, taking into account equality and diversity issues and barriers to access;

   1.4.4. training is available for staff conducting appeals procedures;

   1.4.5. where possible and to maintain impartiality, staff dealing with any stage of escalation of an academic appeal will not have been involved in any of the previous stages, except in an advisory capacity where required;

   1.4.6. appropriate action is taken following an appeal process, and such actions are recorded monitored and reviewed for the purpose of supporting continued enhancement.

1.5. In addition to its partners’ requirements, LSBF’s approach to academic appeals is informed by the Quality Assurance Agency’s Quality Code for Higher Education (Chapter B9). The Quality Code is the definitive reference point for all UK higher education institutions and sets out how academic standards are established and maintained, and how learning opportunities are assured and enhanced.

1.6. A copy of this policy can be accessed under the LMS section on MyPage for all current students on postgraduate or undergraduate academic programmes.
2. **Definition of an Academic Appeal**

2.1. LSBF defines an academic appeal as ‘a request for a review of a decision of an academic body charged with making decisions on assessment, student progression and awards.’

2.2. The academic bodies charged with making those decisions are usually the external examination boards presiding over student progression on postgraduate or undergraduate academic degree courses.

**Grounds for Making an Academic Appeal**

2.3. All students registered on academic programmes with LSBF have the right to appeal against the results of assessments provided they do so only on grounds specified by validating partner institutions. In the absence of those being available one or more of the following grounds can constitute grounds for appeal:

   i. Procedural or administrative errors; where the process leading to the decision has not been carried out correctly. This would include arithmetical or other errors of fact, or bias in the operation of the procedure;

   ii. Defects or irregularities in the conduct of assessments or in written instructions or in advice relating to the assessments which were not known to the Examination Board, when such defects, irregularities or advice are shown to have had an adverse effect on the student's performance;

   iii. Exceptional personal circumstances which were not known to the Examination Board, and where the student can show good reason why such circumstances could not have been made known to the Examination Board when the student was assessed, and which are shown to have had an adverse effect on the student's performance.

2.4. Appeals which question the academic judgement of examiners, or appeals on any grounds other than those stipulated, shall not be admissible and the appellant will be informed accordingly in writing.

3. **Making an Academic Appeal**

3.1. The following section gives a generic overview of what students can expect from an appeals process regardless of their programme of study. Specific guidance for individual programmes on timescales, deadlines, forms, contact mailboxes and other specific instructions are given in programme handbooks and/or communicated to students during inductions.

3.2. All academic appeal procedures will normally involve three internal stages with additional recourse to external review. Appellants should note that the assessment decision will remain in force until formally overturned by the appeal process.
3.3. The general stages of any academic appeal are as follows:

3.3.1. Stage 1: Informal consultation – Raising a query

In the first instance the student is advised to discuss the matter informally with a member of staff directly involved in the assessment decision, such as a module tutor or lecturer, who will clarify the rationale behind the decision. If the matter remains unresolved the student should contact their Administration or Student Liaison Officer to invoke the formal academic appeals procedure specific to their programme.

3.3.2. Stage 2: Formal review of an assessment decision

Students wishing to make a formal academic appeal against an assessment decision (based on any of the reasons given in 2.3) should contact their Administration team who will guide them through the correct procedure for their particular programme of study and impart any specific timescales or deadlines which apply. The student will also be advised at this stage of any required evidence they need to provide to substantiate their appeal. Claims which cannot be substantiated with independent evidence are likely to be dismissed.

The assessment decision will then be reviewed by a senior programme academic or the Academic Registrar in accordance with the award validating partner’s specific procedures. The senior programme academic or the Academic Registrar will provide a recommended course of action to the Examination Board responsible for making the original assessment decision, who will in turn reach a decision whether to uphold, partially uphold, or reject the appeal. The decision of the Examination Board will be communicated to the appellant within 21 days.

3.3.3. Stage 3: Panel hearing

Appellants who are dissatisfied with the outcome of their formal review will have recourse to a third and final internal stage of escalation through the LSBF’s complaints procedures where evidence exists that the formal review of the assessment decision was not conducted in accordance with correct procedure.

The Complaints Officer will contact the Academic Registrar, who will convene a panel of senior academics not previously involved with the case. The Academic Registrar, having been involved in the formal review stage, will contribute to this panel in an advisory capacity only in order to maintain impartiality. The panel will assess whether the formal review decision was flawed and consider whether remedial action is required. Panel hearings will be minuted by a designated officer.

Where the panel finds compelling evidence that the formal review stage had not been correctly undertaken, a recommendation to reconsider the case will be communicated to the Examination Board along with the substantiating evidence. The final decision to uphold, partially uphold, or reject the appeal must be sanctioned by the award’s validating partner and will therefore remain with the Examination Board.

This concludes LSBF’s internal procedures.
3.3.4. **External review by validating partner**

An appellant should make an appeal to the programme’s award validating partner only after the previous internal stages have been completed. As with previous stages, the eligibility for and means of raising an appeal with a partner may vary in accordance with the partner’s requirements. Appellants will be advised by their administration or can consult their programme handbooks.

In such circumstances LSBF will comply fully with the requests and requirements of the validating partner institution to facilitate the appellant’s right to external review.

Where such an appeal is upheld or partially upheld, the programme’s award validating partner will communicate its findings to LSBF and the appellant. These will be reviewed by the Examination Board and any outstanding actions will be implemented with the timeframe specified by the award validating partner.

3.4. **Where the outcome of an appeal indicates that other students’ work may potentially be compromised by the same issue, LSBF will take appropriate action to protect the interests of other students and the integrity of the qualification. In such circumstances an action plan and general communique will be coordinated by the Head of Studies or the Academic Registrar.**

4. **Review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator**

4.1. LSBF subscribes to the independent scheme for the review of student complaints and appeals; if a student remains unsatisfied with the outcome of the complaint or appeal following the completion of procedures, then they may be eligible to request a review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA), for which a Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter will be required.

4.2. Eligibility for a case to be reviewed by the OIA extends only to students on higher education courses leading to awards from a body with UK degree awarding powers or higher national (HND/HNC) qualifications awarded by Pearson or the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

4.3. The OIA’s list of what constitutes a ‘higher education’ course for these purposes is available on its website: [http://www.oiahe.org.uk/glossary.aspx#hecourse](http://www.oiahe.org.uk/glossary.aspx#hecourse)

4.4. When LSBF’s internal complaints and appeals procedures and those of the award’s validating partner (if applicable) have been exhausted, a Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter will be issued to the student. The CoP letter will:

- confirm that all internal escalation and review stages have been completed;
- give a specific date as to when the matter is considered to be closed;
- summarise the case and state clearly the final outcome;
- enclose any additional information on the case, including review panel reports;
- advise the student how to contact the contact the OIA and the timescale for doing so.

**Note:** The CoP letter will be issued by the award’s validating partner institution.
4.5. **Should** a student decide to take their case to the OIA, their Scheme Application form must be received by the OIA **within 12 months** of the date of the CoP letter. The OIA will make a decision in accordance with its rules as to whether or not the request is eligible for review.

4.6. The OIA will communicate its findings to the student and to LSBF, who will act on them accordingly and within the specified timescale. Further information on the rules pertaining to the student complaints scheme can be found here: [http://www.oiahe.org.uk/media/100294/oia-rules-july-2015.pdf](http://www.oiahe.org.uk/media/100294/oia-rules-july-2015.pdf)

5. **Responsibility**

5.1. Responsibility for the update, implementation and monitoring of policy governing academic appeals rests with the Academic Board. The Academic Board will additionally monitor the effectiveness of appeals handling, the substance of academic appeals and appeal outcomes in order to drive continuous quality enhancement.

5.2. The design, creation and maintenance of specific academic appeals procedures and templates is the responsibility of the award’s validating partner institution, except where this duty has been formally deferred to LSBF within the terms of its partnership agreement.

5.3. Responsibility for submitting an academic appeal in the correct manner, in time and with all required supporting evidence rests solely with the student/appellant. The appellant is additionally responsible for their own punctual attendance and representation should this be requested of them at any stage during their appeal.

5.4. **Responsibility for the processing of academic appeals is assigned as follows:**

   5.4.1. Informal consultation is the responsibility of module tutors, lecturers and/or administrators/ student liaison officers directly involved with the assessment(s) in question.

   5.4.2. Acknowledging receipt of appeals, processing appeals through different stages and guiding appellants on correct procedure is the responsibility of the programme’s student administrators /student liaison officers / examinations officers (as determined by the programme’s management).

   5.4.3. Formal review of an assessment decision is the responsibility of the Academic Registrar in conjunction with Examination Board responsible for the original decision.

   5.4.4. Coordinating responses to complaints about the formal review of an assessment decision is the responsibility of the Student Relations / Complaints officer.

   5.4.5. Convening and chairing a panel of academics not previously involved in the appeal to review the formal appeals process is the responsibility of the Academic Registrar.

   5.4.6. Formal review and panel hearing findings are communicated to the appellant by the persons conducting them OR a delegated officer.
5.4.7. The programme’s award validating partner institution is responsible for deciding whether an external review is to be conducted following the exhaustion of LSBF’s internal procedures and conducting said review.

5.5. Implementation of actions arising from any stage of the academic appeals process is the responsibility of the programme’s Administration and/or Exams and Assessments teams. Ratification of these actions rests with the programme’s Examination Board.

5.6. Issuance of the Completion of Procedure letter is the responsibility of the award’s validating partner institution.

5.7. Monitoring of appeals and resolution times is undertaken by senior academic management reporting to the Academic Board in order to inform development and quality enhancement.

5.8. The College is responsible for the protection of Appellants’ personal information in accordance with its obligations under the Data Protection Act (1998). Appellants’ personal information will be shared internally on a strictly need-to-know basis. This information will be kept securely on file by LSBF for a minimum of 18 months.

6. **Unreasonable Demands or Persistence**

6.1. Whilst it is understood that an appellant may be experiencing anxiety as the result of the circumstances surrounding their appeal, they are expected nonetheless to conduct themselves in a reasonable manner and in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

6.2. Students or appellants are expected not to engage in making academic appeals which are of a petty or harassing nature, or make unreasonable demands of the persons processing the appeal.

6.3. Examples of unreasonable demands on the part of the appellant may include: requesting responses within an unreasonable timeframe; insisting on seeing or speaking to a specific member of staff; continual phone calls, emails or letters; repeatedly changing the substance of the appeal, or raising unrelated concerns.

6.4. Where the appellant is considered to be acting unreasonably they will be told why this unacceptable and given the opportunity to modify their behaviour. If the unreasonable behaviour continues, LSBF will take the appropriate measures, including referring students to the disciplinary procedures and terminating consideration of the appeal.
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