

ACADEMIA CEREBRA

ACADEMIC APPEALS & STUDENT COMPLAINTS POLICIES

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1. Academic Appeals Procedure

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator and the Quality Assurance Agency defines an academic appeal as 'a request for a review of a decision of an academic body charged with making decisions on student progress, assessment and awards.'

Students may use this procedure where they consider that the following grounds may apply:

- a material error had occurred in the conduct of their assessment;
- other material irregularity in the conduct of their assessment had occurred and that the error, conduct or irregularity was of such a nature as to cause reasonable doubt as to whether their result might have been different had it not occurred.

Students may also appeal against the final decision made using one or more of the following grounds:

- that there was mitigation for their actions that they did not submit prior to the final decision being made;
- that appropriate proceedings were not conducted in accordance with the relevant regulations or that some other material irregularity had occurred and that the conduct or irregularity was of such a nature as to cause reasonable doubt as to whether the final decision might have been different had it not occurred;
- that there is new evidence that they were not, for valid reasons, able to submit at an earlier stage of the process;
- that the penalty imposed was disproportionate, or not permitted under the procedure.

In all cases that are considered through the formal and the review stages of the process, consideration will always be given whether there is evidence of bias or perception of bias, and whether the outcome is reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances. The following are not normally considered to be legitimate grounds for an academic appeal:

- to challenge the academic judgement of Academic Board in reaching a decision on progression or on the final level of award, based on the marks, grades and other information relating to students' performance;

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- to pursue allegations that poor teaching, supervision or guidance affected performance. Students may find that if they have specific concerns about the services the School provides for their wider learning opportunities, including teaching and supervision, that it would be better to make a complaint rather than an academic appeal. Students are encouraged to disclose any disability they feel may be relevant to their case. The staff will ensure that in managing the operation of this procedure for such students, any reasonable adjustments are made to ensure the students are well supported. However, students cannot use this procedure to request alternative assessment methods that have not been previously identified in a Personal Learning Plan. A disability does not exempt students from demonstrating achievement in the learning outcomes required.
- for the programme, although an alternative means of assessment may be specified in a Personal Learning Plan.

1.1 Timescale

A student may make a formal academic appeal within 14 calendar days of publication of grades or after the occurrence happened.

A student who has left the School may also make an academic appeal within the same timescale. Students are encouraged to contact Academic Staff before beginning a formal academic appeal.

1.2 Process and Outcome

The formal review of the Academic Appeal will be completed within 30 calendar days. This 30-day period will begin when a case is received by the Head of Academic Registry. Summary decisions of the Academic Board, giving the outcome of the appeal with brief details, will normally be sent to students within 7 calendar days of the meeting of the Board.

A complete report of the decision will normally be sent within 28 calendar days of the summary decision. This will identify the evidence used, the findings of fact, the regulations applied, the reason for the Board's decisions, any remedy that has been identified, and instructions on what to do next.

The student will be given 14 calendar days in which to request a review. If the student does not request a review within that time, the decision of the Academic Board will be confirmed as the final outcome.

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2. Student Complaints Procedure

AC recognises there may be occasions where students wish to raise legitimate complaints relating to their course, or the facilities and services provided by the School. It is important for both students and staff to know that such complaints will be dealt with seriously, transparently, and without fear of recrimination. To ensure this, AC has in place a Student Complaints Procedure which details the process and parameters for making a complaint, alongside how complaints may be responded to.

This procedure is designed to ensure that all student complaints are heard and responded to in a manner that is fair, transparent, timely and based on the consideration of relevant evidence. It will safeguard, as far as is reasonably practicable, the interests and well-being of any student making a complaint and of AC staff who may be named or otherwise involved in a complaint.

2.1 Principles and Scope

Through this policy, the School commits to:

- treat complaints with the seriousness they deserve;
- deal with complaints in a timely manner;
- ensure that complainants will not be disadvantaged as a result of making a complaint;
- handle complaints in confidence and only give people the information that is required to investigate and resolve the complaint properly;
- answer all aspects of a complaint and ensure that the response is clear.

2.2 What is covered by the Complaints Procedure?

AC Student Complaints Procedure covers learning opportunities for registered students and actions by the School or failures by it to act on services it provides for its students or which are provided by others on its behalf.

All information submitted in relation to complaints shall be dealt confidentially, and only disclosed as necessary to progress the complaint. All parties (including students) are expected to honour the confidentiality of complaints. All personal information shall be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Policy.

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The School confirms that making a complaint in good faith about any aspect of the learning opportunities or services it provides for students will not compromise or otherwise affect their standing with the School, prejudice their progress, or how they are treated by it or its staff.

A complaint may include, but is not limited to:

- perceived failure by AC to follow an appropriate administrative process or satisfactorily apply an institutional policy;
- perceived failure of AC to meet obligations outlined in Programme / Student Handbooks;
 - concerns about the quality of facilities, learning resources or services provided by AC;
- concerns about organisations or contractors providing a service on behalf of AC (including placement providers);
- perceived deficiencies in academic provision (e.g. scheduling of classes; amended submission dates; submission procedures for assessed work; inconsistent advice; provision of feedback; quality or frequency of supervision);
- perceived deficiencies in standards of service, for example, support facilities or administrative services;
- perceived misinformation about an academic programme;
- dissatisfaction with the level and availability of pastoral support;
- inappropriate behaviour or conduct by a member of staff or contractor;
- allegations of harassment, bullying, or victimisation.

Where a student submits multiple complaints relating to the same issue, the School reserves the right to treat the matter as a single complaint. Students may also note that they can forward a copy of their full complaint to the British Accreditation Council (www.the-bac.org).

2.4 Suspension or Termination of a Complaint

If a student's complaint overlaps with other School regulations or policies, advice should be sought about how to progress the complaint, if at all. The progress of a complaint through any stage of this procedure may be suspended for a reasonable period.

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The School may, in exceptional circumstances, terminate a complaint at any stage where a student's behaviour in relation to the complaint or investigation is deemed unacceptable or disruptive, or where a complaint is deemed to be vexatious or malicious. In such cases, the School may also invoke the disciplinary procedures in the Student Code of Conduct.

Examples of unacceptable or disruptive behaviour could include (but not limited to):

- audio/visual recording of meetings without written permission;
- threatening, intimidating or abusive behaviour towards any member of staff connected with the investigation process;
- any attempt to interfere with the investigation process;
- sending excessive communications, via any medium, to the school team;
- providing false or manufactured evidence or information as part of the investigation process.

In the event of the potential complaint termination, students will be given 14 days' notice with a final chance to respond. The decisions regarding a formal Student Complaints will be remitted to the Academic Board and to the Head of Academic - and scaled up to the Executive Director if need arises.