



Cambridge Muslim College Academic Appeals and Complaints Policy

1. Purpose

This document sets out the policy, and associated procedures, for dealing with academic appeals and complaints, with the aim of ensuring consistent and fair treatment for all.

2. Scope

This policy applies to students and faculty teaching on the College's BA (Hons) Programme.

3. Principles

- 3.1. An academic appeal is a request for a review of a decision related to student progression, assessment and award.
- 3.2. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with either a service provided, or the lack of a service. It must relate to services that a student was led to believe would be provided. A complaint can be raised over a wider range of matters and is not restricted to assessment outcomes. The QAA defines a complaint as 'the expression of a specific concern about matters that affect the quality of a student's learning opportunities'. An example might be dissatisfaction with the time taken to return marked work.
- 3.3. There may be times when what is expressed as a complaint contains within it an appeal and vice versa. In such instances, the College will clarify whether the issue constitutes a complaint or an appeal, in consultation with the student.
- 3.4. The only acceptable grounds for academic appeal are that the College's policy and procedures for moderation have not been followed.
- 3.5. There must be clear evidence of a material administrative error; of the assessment not being conducted in accordance with the regulations for the programme; or some other material irregularity relevant to the assessment decision.
- 3.6. Students do not have the right to an academic appeal if their results are not as good as they had hoped, or worse than they believe they deserve.

- 3.7. An appeal cannot be made on the grounds of unawareness of the published assessment regulations (e.g. word count, submission deadline, etc.).
- 3.8. If the student raises an issue that does not meet the grounds for appeal, the matter may be dealt with as a formal complaint. Even if a complaint is upheld, where there is no right of appeal, an assessment result or a decision of a Board of Examiners cannot be changed.
- 3.9. Where a student's appeal is based on extenuating circumstances, documentary evidence must be provided to support the claim. Retrospective evidence will only be considered if a satisfactory explanation is provided as to why it was not possible to submit the evidence at the appropriate time.
- 3.10. In all cases, the published timeline for making appeals and complaints should be followed (See Appendix 1).
- 3.11. Appeals and complaints submitted after the deadline will not be considered unless there is evidence that a student was prevented from submitting the appeal by the deadline.
- 3.12. The College will aim to respond to any complaint or appeal within published timescales. If there are good reasons for extending the timeframe, the student will be notified of any delays and regularly informed of progress and the student shall similarly notify the College.
- 3.13. The College will keep detailed written records of all formal complaints and appeals.
- 3.14. Students will not be disadvantaged by making a complaint or appeal.
- 3.15. Students may choose to be accompanied by or represented at any meetings by a student representative, relative or friend. This must be someone independent of the circumstances.
- 3.16. Students making appeals and complaints, either informal or formal, are encouraged to seek the support of the student representatives and the College Welfare Team.
- 3.17. The option of appealing to external bodies is only available to students after they have exhausted the College's own complaints or appeals procedures.

4. References

- Appeals Timescale (Appendix 1)
- Academic Appeal / Complaint Form (Appendix 2)
- Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) Guidance (Appendix 3)
- QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education Chapter B9 (Appendix 4)
- Assessment Policy
- Moderation Policy
- Academic Misconduct Policy

- Extenuating Circumstances Policy
- Student Guidance and Support Policy

5. Responsibility

- 5.1. The BA Programme Manager is responsible for the review and implementation of this policy.
- 5.2. It is the responsibility of the College Coordinator (BA) to maintain all documentation in line with this policy.

6. Procedures

- 6.1. Informal Appeals and Complaints
 - 6.1.1. Students are expected to attempt informal resolution methods initially to minimise the extent to which formal procedures need to be followed.
 - 6.1.2. Students contemplating making an appeal or complaint should speak with the BA Programme Manager to ensure they understand why a decision has been made, whether they are likely to have acceptable grounds for appeal, and what outcomes a successful appeal could lead to.
 - 6.1.3. If attempts to resolve the matter informally are not successful, students may submit a formal academic appeal or formal complaint.
- 6.2. Formal Appeals and Complaints
 - 6.2.1. To make a formal appeal or complaint the student completes the Academic Appeal Form or Formal Complaint Form and gives this, with any supporting evidence, to the College Coordinator (BA), according to the timescales below.
 - 6.2.2. The BA Programme Manager determines whether the student has acceptable grounds for an appeal. If there are no acceptable grounds for an appeal, BA Programme Manager will inform the student in writing of the decision, its reasons, and their right to request a review of the decision.
 - 6.2.3. If the appeal meets the criteria for acceptable grounds, the BA Programme Manager shall discuss the appeal with the First and Second Markers to reach an agreement; if agreement cannot be reached, the matter will be referred to the External Examiners for a final decision. In the case of final award appeals, the appeal will be referred to the Examination Board for discussion and final decision. If mitigating circumstances or incorrect following of College procedure have been proven, the appeal will be upheld, and the original assessment decision will be reconsidered.
 - 6.2.4. For both formal appeals and complaints, the BA Programme Manager informs the student in writing of the outcome and the reasons for the decision. If the original decision is upheld, the student will be informed of any further processes which may be available.

- 6.2.5. If a student is not satisfied with the outcome of their appeal or complaint due to evidence of procedural irregularities, they may request a review of the decision via the formal Review Request process.
- 6.3. Request for Review of Decision
 - 6.3.1. The student should submit the request in writing, outlining the alleged procedural irregularities in the initial consideration of the appeal or complaint and, where appropriate, including any relevant new information along with the reason why this was not made available previously. They should give this, with any supporting evidence, to the College Coordinator (BA), according to the timescales below.
 - 6.3.2. The BA Programme Manager will nominate a member of staff who was not involved in the original consideration of the case to initiate a review of the decision.
 - 6.3.3. If the decision is that no valid ground for further review has been established, the case will be dismissed, and this will conclude the College's procedures.
 - 6.3.4. Alternatively, the decision may be that grounds for further review have been established, and the case will be referred for review by an Appeals/Complaints Panel. No member of the Panel will have had previous involvement with the complaint or appeal. After considering the evidence, the Panel may decide either to dismiss the review or to uphold the review. In the case of an Appeal review being upheld, the Panel will require the Board of Examiners to reconsider its decision, taking into account such findings that the Panel deems appropriate.
 - 6.3.5. The student will be informed in writing of the outcome, the reasons for the decision and, if the original decision is upheld, any further external process which may still be available.
 - 6.3.6. The BA Programme Manager will issue a Completion of Procedures Letter to the student. There is guidance on the content of a Completion of Procedures Letter on the website of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education www.oiahe.org.uk.
 - 6.4. Appeal to External Bodies
 - 6.4.1. If a student is dissatisfied with the way their appeal or complaint was handled, they may raise the issue with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) by contacting them at: www.oiahe.org.uk. The OIA was set up under the Higher Education Act 2004 to provide an independent student complaints scheme.
 - 6.4.2. In order to appeal to the OIA, the student will need to complete the OIA's own complaint form, which is available from www.oiahe.org.uk, and submit this to the OIA within twelve months of the date of their Completion of Procedures letter.

- 6.5. Whilst the student may wish some details to remain confidential, this may not always be possible without hampering a thorough investigation of the facts. In these circumstances, the College will discuss with the student the best way to approach the submission of evidence.
- 6.6. The complaint or appeal may be withdrawn without causing any bias against the student at any time during the process. In this event, the student must inform the College in writing. Any decision made by the College at the previous stage in the procedure will then be upheld and become the outcome.
- 6.7. Group appeals or complaints are permissible where the same issue affects several students. In such circumstances, the group will be asked to nominate one student to act as a group representative.
- 6.8. All cases of academic appeals and complaints must be reported to the Faculty Board to allow an institution-wide overview.

REVISION HISTORY

Revision #	Effective Date	Description of Change
00	March 2017	New Document
01	25 April 2018	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formatting change 2. Policy number assignment 3. Changes to forms
02	28 November 2018	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appeals and complaints must be reported to the Faculty Board not the Advisor Board.to allow an institution-wide overview. 2. Timescales moved to Appendix 1

Appendix 1 Appeals Timescale

Appeals and complaints must be initiated within the timescales below.

Deadline	Who	Appeal	Complaint
Submit	Student	within 14 calendar days of publishing the mark or grade	within 3 months of the matter first occurring
Acknowledge receipt by email	College Coordinator (BA)	within 7 calendar days	
Investigate	BA Programme Manager	within 1 month of receiving all the relevant information	
Complete the procedure	BA Programme Manager	within 3 months	
Inform student of outcome	BA Programme Manager	within 3 days of outcome becoming known	
Request review of decision	Student	within 14 calendar days of being told the outcome	
Issue a Completion of Procedures Letter	BA Programme Manager	within 28 days of internal processes being completed	
Raise the issue with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education	Student	within 12 months of the date of their Completion of Procedures letter	

This policy has been adapted with reference to All Nations College, with grateful acknowledgment

Appendix 2



Cambridge Muslim College Academic Appeal / Complaint Form

This form is designed for use with the College's Academic Appeals and Complaints Policy. Please ensure that you have read and understood the document before completing this form. This sets out the acceptable grounds for appeal, the procedure, and timescales that will be followed.

The deadline for submitting an appeal is within 14 calendar days of publishing the mark. Appeals submitted after the deadline will not be considered unless there is clear evidence that you were prevented from submitting the appeal by the deadline.

Before submitting a formal academic appeal or complaint you are strongly encouraged to seek advice from the BA Programme Manager. If possible, you should attempt to resolve matters informally.

1. Have you checked the College Academic Appeals and Complaints Policy?
2. Have you completed all sections of this form?
3. Have you included all supporting documents (if appropriate)?
4. Please pass this completed and signed form to the College Coordinator (BA).

Contact information	
First name	
Family name	
Preferred telephone number	
Preferred email address	

Do you have a disability or specific learning difficulty you would like us to be aware of when considering your complaint?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, please give details of adjustments that will assist you.
I am making a:	<input type="checkbox"/> Complaint <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal
What informal steps have you taken to resolve your complaint/appeal? Please provide information about who you have already discussed your complaint/appeal with, and when.	
What was the outcome of your informal discussions? Please indicate why you are still unsatisfied.	

<p>I am making an academic appeal relating to: (what academic decision do you feel was wrong or unfair?)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Assignment mark</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Examination mark</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Module mark</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Final Award</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other</p>
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<p>I am making an academic appeal based on: (The following reasons are the only permissible grounds for academic appeal)</p>	
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<p><input type="checkbox"/> There has been a material administrative error (eg failure to apply the College regulations in calculating the final mark)</p>	<p>State clearly the precise nature of the error</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> The assessment was not conducted in accordance with the regulations for the programme</p>	<p>State clearly in what way</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Unfair or inconsistent application of the College's published grading criteria</p>	<p>State clearly the precise nature of the error</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Incorrectly informed of the required assessment or deadline</p>	<p>State clearly the precise nature of the error</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Some other material irregularity relevant to the Board of Examiner's decision has occurred</p>	<p>State clearly the precise nature of the irregularity</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> You have material evidence in support of a claim that your performance in the assessment was adversely</p>	<p>Material evidence is information that might have the potential to change a decision, although this cannot be guaranteed. State the evidence and explain why this information was not given to the College at the correct time.</p>

<p>affected by extenuating circumstances (illness or other factors) which you were unable or, for valid reasons, unwilling to divulge before the Board of Examiners reached its decision</p>	
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<p>I am making a complaint based on:</p> <p>Please set out your points clearly and concisely. This should be a factual statement of the circumstances and reasons for your complaint/appeal. Be specific, regarding Who? What? When? And Where? Please attach additional sheets if necessary.</p>

<p>List any documents you are attaching to support your appeal/complaint</p> <p>For example, independent medical evidence, reports by professionals, financial information or witness statements. You must explain why any additional supporting evidence was not submitted previously. Without a reasonable explanation, further evidence will not be accepted.</p>

Appendix 3

Admissions Complaints and Appeals and the Law

Introduction

The College is committed to understanding its responsibilities as an HE provider under consumer protection law. In creating this policy, the College has referred to the compliance advice *UK higher education providers – advice on consumer protection law*, published by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), which sets out minimum standards that apply to various aspects of an HE provider's dealings with students.

Complaints

The College has a legal obligation to ensure that its complaint handling processes and practices are accessible, clear and fair to students.

The College must ensure that:

- its complaints procedure is easily located and accessible to applicants, for example on its website
- applicants are provided with information about the College's complaints process before they accept an offer of a course
- applicants and students are provided with clear and accurate information about the College's complaint handling procedures in writing and (where applicable) verbally
- where a programme is in partnership with, or awarded by, another HE provider it should be clear where responsibility for complaint handling lies
- accurate details of any external complaint or redress scheme that students can access should be provided
- where students raise concerns at an informal level, they should be informed that they can make a complaint under the College's formal complaints process if the matter is not satisfactorily resolved
- it follows any guidelines published by any third-party redress or complaint schemes of which the College is a member
- staff are trained in and follow the complaint handling procedures in practice.

The College should also ensure that its complaints handling processes are fair, which is more likely to be achieved where it:

- sets out clear and reasonable timescales in which students can expect to hear back about their complaint at each stage of the process
- sets out clear and reasonable timescales relating to how long students will be given to respond to any requests for further information
- does not create unreasonable barriers for students pursuing a complaint
- provides the ability for students to escalate the matter if they are unhappy and, where the regulatory framework allows it, ultimately to appeal if the matter is not satisfactorily resolved.

Appendix 4

QAA UK Quality Code

The QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education Chapter B9: Academic appeals and student complaints, states the following Expectation and Indicators:

Expectation

Higher education providers have procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities; these procedures are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement.

Indicators

1. Higher education providers provide opportunities for students to raise matters without risk of disadvantage.
2. Higher education providers have procedures which encourage constructive engagement with the appeals and complaints process and which offer opportunities for early and/or informal resolution.
3. Higher education providers have accessible appeals and complaints procedures.
4. Clear and accurate advice and guidance is available for students making an appeal or complaint, and for staff involved in handling or supporting appeals and complaints.
5. Academic appeals and complaints are conducted in a timely and fair manner.
6. Higher education providers ensure that appropriate action is taken following an appeal or complaint.
7. Higher education providers monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their appeals and complaints procedures and reflect on the outcomes of those procedures for enhancement purposes.