

STUDENT COMPLAINTS AND ACADEMIC APPEALS PROCEDURE

This procedure needs to be taken in conjunction with standard complaints and appeals procedures of University of Chester.

By ‘complaint’ we understand ‘an expression of specific concern raised by one or more students about the standard of the provision provided by the College, in relation both to the service it offers and to student learning opportunities’. See further,

<http://www.oiahe.org.uk/rules-and-the-complaints-process.aspx>;

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/uk-quality-code-for-higher-education-chapter-b9-academic-appeals-and-student-complaints#.VmguIoR3X8s> (p. 4).

An ‘academic appeal’ in this context is a request by a student, or group of students, to review a decision relating to a mark or set of marks awarded, progression, or awards.

Complaints

As a Christian institution that takes its commitment to its students very seriously, we aim to respond quickly to concerns raised by students and expect that, in the large majority of cases, complaints can be dealt with amicably and in a spirit of fellowship and cooperation.

Minor complaints and suggestions for general improvements would normally come through the Student Representatives, and would be discussed at our regular Student Faculty Meetings. We welcome any such feedback as part of our commitment to continued enhancement of our provision and of the student learning experience.

Where there are causes of concern that cannot be dealt with adequately or appropriately through Student Representatives, we ask students to raise those concerns informally, as soon as possible, with either the College Dean (primarily for issues relating to the campus and to student life more generally) or the Academic Dean (primarily for academic related issues, including complaints about members of faculty). The College Dean and Academic Dean will do all they can to resolve the issues of concern – in consultation with each other, with the Principal, and with other members of staff as appropriate.

Please note: if the complaint involves either the College Dean or Academic Dean, the initial complaint should be made to the other, whatever the subject.

If concerns remain, then a student may make a formal complaint, in writing, to the Board of Governors (BoG) giving as much detail as possible about the issue(s). The formal complaint would normally be sent, in the first instance, to the Academic Dean, to be passed on to the BoG. The complaint will be discussed by members of the BoG, and the student will be contacted within two weeks of the receipt of the complaint, to discuss the matter further. A formal response, outlining proposed action, will be given to the student within two weeks, from the time of that second contact with the BoG (or its nominee). Where appropriate the BoG (or its nominee) will consult with, and if necessary refer the complaint to, relevant outside bodies. Where a complaint involves one or more members of the BoG, those members will not be involved in dealing with the complaint.

If the student is still not satisfied with the response, he or she should notify the BoG. Within two weeks of that notification, the BoG will nominate an appropriately qualified independent adjudicator to investigate the complaint(s) further. The adjudicator will contact the student within two weeks of being nominated, and, if necessary, arrange a meeting. The adjudicator will also talk to the BoG and relevant College personnel. Within one week of those discussions, the adjudicator will give a verdict, in writing, to the student and to the BoG, as to whether or not the complaint was justified, and what further action should be taken. The BoG will, normally, accept the decision of the adjudicator, and respond accordingly.

Please note that in any meetings with the student to discuss matters further, whether formal or informal, the student is welcome to have a friend present. Whilst we hope it will not be necessary, if at any stage the student wants to seek legal representation (and particularly if the student wants to have a legal representative present at any meetings), the College or BoG (depending on the stage of the complaint) needs to be informed so as to be able, if necessary, to seek its own legal representation.

Full written records will be kept at each of the formal stages. They will be kept confidential.

Once the complaints procedure has been completed, the BoG will send a Completion of Procedures letter to the student. This letter will confirm that all complaints procedures have been correctly followed, and will indicate what action is to be taken, or why the complaint has been rejected.

Where a student feels unable to make the complaint directly, he or she may nominate a representative. Where several students are bringing a complaint, the group, too, should nominate a representative. The above procedure, including the time frame will apply to representatives.

If all attempts to resolve the matter internally are still deemed unsatisfactory, a student may appeal directly to the University of Chester. The University's primary role in these cases is to check that correct procedures by Mattersey Hall have been followed. Further details are available via the Chester Portal (https://ganymede2.chester.ac.uk/view.php?title_id=229147).

Mattersey Hall regards complaints as an important part of student feedback, and, notwithstanding, and without prejudice to, the outcome of any specific complaint, issues and concerns raised by students will be reflected on by College management and, where appropriate, used as part of our regular monitoring and review process, for enhancement purposes. We affirm, too, that there will be no discrimination in the case of students who make a complaint or mount an appeal, whether or not it is successful.

Academic appeals

Any student who is concerned about the grade given for an assignment may discuss this with the tutor for that module. If it is found that there has been an irregularity, which may include ambiguity in the assessment instructions or tutorial guidance, then this may be communicated, with the tutor's agreement, to the Academic Dean and then, where appropriate, to the staff member performing the monitoring or second marking of the module. This may occasionally lead to the raising or lowering of marks. Please note, though, that there is not ground for appeal against a marker's academic judgement. If a student is dissatisfied with the outcome, he or she may lodge an official complaint (see above).

Once a mark has been finalised, any appeal must take place in line with the appeals procedure of the University of Chester. Again, though, appeals are possible only on the basis of procedural errors, such as incorrect assessment information being provided, administrative errors such as incorrect calculation of results, or extenuating circumstance that for some reason could not be declared in advance in the usual way. If marks have not yet been agreed by a Module Assessment Board (MAB), it may be possible to settle these matters internally; if the marks have been agreed at a MAB, students must use the formal Appeals Procedure must be used. Guidance notes are provided in Section 10, 'Academic Appeals', of the *Quality and Standards Manual, Handbook F – Requirements Governing the Assessment of Students*. This can be downloaded from the University of Chester website: <https://www1.chester.ac.uk/social-responsibility/academic-quality-support-services/academic-regulatory-information/quality-and>

Issues relating to progression and awards need to be taken up in an appeal directly to the University of Chester.

Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)

Mattersey Hall subscribes to the independent scheme for the review of student complaints. Students who are dissatisfied with the outcome of our internal procedures, may be able to apply for a review to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). Further details of how to proceed with the complaint will be included in the Completion of Procedures letter. For further information, see <http://oiahe.org.uk/making-a-complaint-to-the-oia/how-to-make-a-complaint.aspx>

Consumer Protection Law

Students are further protected by relevant consumer protection legislation. Mattersey Hall College is committed to student well-being and will do all that it can to comply with its obligations in this area. A guide to consumer rights for students is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-guide-to-consumer-rights-for-students>.

Revised March 2019