

Student Complaints Policy and Procedure Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The University is dedicated to ensuring that all students receive a high quality experience and welcomes comments and suggestions throughout the academic year. However, if you are dissatisfied with any University service, you may decide to make a complaint.

2. Guiding Principles

- 2.1 Through the *Student Complaints Procedure* below, the University aims to investigate complaints in a timely, transparent and fair manner.
- 2.2 The University will seek to resolve the matter at the earliest possible opportunity.
- 2.3 Complaints that require particularly swift action will be identified quickly.
- 2.4 The University will investigate fairly and thoroughly.
- 2.5 Each party to a complaint will be given an opportunity to present their case.
- 2.6 If there are allegations of a criminal offence, the University may suspend its own investigations until the outcome of any criminal proceedings are known.
- 2.7 All complaints will be treated with the utmost confidentiality as far as reasonably practicable.
- 2.8 No student will be disadvantaged as a result of making a complaint. However, if it materialises that a complaint was not genuine, the University may consider disciplinary procedures.

3. Who can complain?

- 3.1 This procedure applies to all registered students of the University of Buckingham.
- 3.2 It also applies to those who have left or graduated within the 3 months prior to lodging the complaint.
- 3.3 Where the complaint involves a group of students, all correspondence must be handled by one designated student representative.
- 3.4 Anonymous complaints will not be considered.
- 3.5 Complaints lodged by third parties will not be considered.

4. What complaints are not covered by the Student Complaints Procedure:

- 4.1 **Academic Appeals:** If you are seeking a review of a decision about student progression, assessment or awards, please refer to the *Academic Appeals – Policy and Procedure*
- 4.2 **Bullying and Harassment:** Any concerns relating to bullying and harassment should be raised through the *Student Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy* and *Non-Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure*

5. Sources of advice and information

- 5.1 Before making a complaint, you may wish to seek advice from one of the following departments who can explain the procedure to you:
 - a) Personal Tutor
 - b) Registry
 - c) Students First
 - d) The Student Conduct Manager's Office

Procedure

6. Informal Stage

- 6.1 In most cases, it may be possible for issues to be addressed at an early stage by discussing them with a member of staff in the department concerned. For example, if you have an academic concern, this can be discussed with your Personal Tutor, Subject Tutor, Programme Director or Research Supervisor; if you have a concern about your accommodation, this can be discussed with your Residential Assistant or the Accommodation Officer.
- 6.2 If you do not feel able to raise it with one of these staff members, you may wish to discuss it with a member of staff from Students First or the Student Conduct Manager's Office.
- 6.3 Issues must be raised within one month of taking place and the staff member will aim to resolve the issue, where practicable, within 2 weeks.
- 6.4 Any delay to this timing will be communicated to you by the staff member you have consulted.
- 6.5 You are advised to keep a record of any informal contact with staff.
- 6.6 Staff will keep a record of action taken in response.

7. Formal Stage

If your concerns remain unaddressed after the informal stage, or if resolution is not possible due to the complexity or seriousness of the case, you can lodge a formal complaint as follows:

- 7.1 The Student Complaints Form must be completed and submitted to the Student Complaints Officer (student-complaints@buckingham.ac.uk), together with evidence that you have previously raised the issue informally.
- 7.2 The Student Complaints Officer will check the eligibility of the complaint to ensure that the *Student Complaints Procedure* is applicable.

Eligible complaints:

- 7.3 You will be provided with written acknowledgement by the Student Complaints Officer of receipt of your complaint within 5 days of submitting your form.
- 7.4 The complaint will be delegated to an appropriate member of staff for investigation.
- 7.5 You may be invited to a meeting to discuss the complaint where an administrator will be present to take notes.
- 7.6 If you wish, a fellow registered student or a member of staff may attend the meeting with you.
- 7.7 The University seeks to resolve all formal complaints **within one calendar month** of receipt of a Student Complaints Form.
- 7.8 Any delay to this timing will be communicated to you.
- 7.9 You will be notified of the outcome by the staff member investigating your complaint in a Completion of Investigation Letter, detailing the decision and an explanation for it.

Ineligible complaints:

- 7.10 You will be directed to the relevant procedure which may include the *Academic Appeals – Policy and Procedure* or the *Student Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy*
- 7.11 Malicious or vexatious complaints will not be considered.
- 7.12 If a complaint is deemed to be malicious, frivolous, vexatious or ineligible, the Registrar and Director of Professional Services will inform the student.
- 7.13 In such circumstances, the student will have the right of appeal to the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Pro Vice Chancellor or Vice-Chancellor.
- 7.14 Such appeals must be made in writing to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice Chancellor or Vice Chancellor within 14 days of the decision of the Registrar and Director of Professional Services.
- 7.15 Any delay to this timing will be communicated to you.
- 7.16 The decision of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice Chancellor or Vice-Chancellor will be final.

8. Review Stage

- 8.1 If you are unsatisfied with the outcome of the investigation into your complaint, you have the right to ask for a review of your case **within 2 weeks** of receiving your Completion of Investigation Letter.
- 8.2 You will need to complete The Student Complaints Request for Review Form and submit it to the Student Appeals and Complaints Officer at student-complaints@buckingham.ac.uk.
- 8.3 No new grounds may be raised, but new evidence can be submitted.
- 8.4 You may be invited to a meeting to discuss the complaint where an administrator will be present to take notes.
- 8.5 If you wish, a fellow registered student or a member of staff may attend the meeting with you.
- 8.6 The Registrar and Director of Professional Services will review the case **within one month**.
- 8.7 Any delay to this timing will be communicated to you.
- 8.8 She may uphold the complaint in part or whole and take appropriate action or dismiss the complaint if there is no case to answer.
- 8.9 If the Registrar and Director of Professional Services has a conflict of interest, the case will be referred to
the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Pro Vice Chancellor or Vice Chancellor for review.
- 8.10 You will receive a Completion of Procedures Letter from Registry informing you of the outcome and your right to refer the complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) if you are still unsatisfied with the outcome.
- 8.11 Registry will keep confidential records of all formal complaints that have been lodged.

Authorisation



Mr Christopher Payne
Registrar & Director of Professional Services

Student Complaints Form

This form should be used along with the Student Complaints Procedure. If you have raised your concerns informally and they remain unaddressed, you can lodge a formal complaint using this form. If you need help or advice whilst completing this form, you should contact either Students First, Student Conduct Manager's Office or Registry.

This form should be sent to the Student Complaints Officer (student-complaints@buckingham.ac.uk)

Please keep a copy of this form for your records, plus any material you submit.

YOUR DETAILS

Title: Mr / Miss / Ms / Mrs / Dr / Other.....	
Forename(s):.....	Family Name:.....
Student Number:.....	Email:.....
Contact Address:.....	
Postcode:	Tel No:

NATURE OF THE COMPLAINT

I have raised the issue informally with.....
On [specify date(s)].....
I have written confirmation of this from the member of staff and attach this (this may be an e mail) <input type="checkbox"/>
I do not have written confirmation but give consent for you to contact the above-named <input type="checkbox"/>
Summary of complaint (continue onto a separate sheet if necessary):

DESIRED OUTCOME

What action would you like to see taken?

DECLARATION

I believe that the above information is accurate. I confirm that details of this complaint can be shared with relevant staff.

Signature:

Date:

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:			
Complaint received:		Complaint forwarded:	
Acknowledgement sent:		Response sent:	
Action required:			

Student Complaints Request for Review

This form should be used along with the Student Complaints Procedure. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your formal complaint, you can request a review. If you need help or advice whilst completing this form, you should contact either Students First, Student Conduct Manager's Office or Registry.

This form should be sent to the Student Complaints Officer (student-complaints@buckingham.ac.uk)

Please keep a copy of this form for your records, plus any material you submit.

YOUR DETAILS

Title: Mr / Miss / Ms / Mrs / Dr / Other.....	
Forename(s):	Family Name:
Student Number:	Email:
Contact Address:	
Postcode:	Tel No:

NATURE OF THE COMPLAINT

I remain dissatisfied because (please give reasons):

DESIRED OUTCOME

What action would you like to see taken?
--

DECLARATION

I believe that the above information is accurate. I confirm that details of this complaint can be shared with relevant staff.

Signature:

Date:

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:			
Original complaint received:		Original complaint forwarded:	
Original acknowledgement sent:		Original response sent:	
Request for review received:		Acknowledgement sent:	
Response sent:			
Action required:			

ACADEMIC APPEALS – POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1. Guiding Principles

- 1.1 Through the *Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure*, the University aims to investigate appeals in a timely, transparent and fair manner.
- 1.2 Registry will keep confidential records of all appeals lodged.
- 1.3 The effectiveness of the procedure will be monitored and reviewed annually by the Senate.
- 1.4 Queries from staff and students in respect of the procedure should be addressed to Registry.

2. Who can appeal?

This procedure applies to any student who wishes to appeal an **academic** decision made by Boards of Examiners, Heads of Department, Research Officers or Research Examining Teams in relation to progression, assessment or awards.

This procedure does not cover:

- MBChB Undergraduate Medicine appeals: for MBChB undergraduate medical school students, please refer to the *MBChB General Regulations and Appeals Policy*.
- Academic Misconduct Appeals: for students seeking a review of a decision in relation to an academic misconduct sanction in coursework, a thesis or the examination hall, please refer to *Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedures*
- Enforcement Process Appeals; for students seeking a review of a decision in relation to an enforcement process sanction, please refer to *General Regulations for Students of the University, Regulation 10. Enforcement Process Appeals*
- Student Complaints; please refer to the *Student Complaints Policy and Procedure* for complaints regarding non-academic matters or matters not associated with progression, assessment or awards.

3. Grounds for appeal

3.1 The only legitimate grounds for appeal are as follows. Any appeal should satisfy one or more of them:

- a) that grades have been incorrectly recorded or incorrectly aggregated; or the procedure for collation of grades has been incorrectly followed;
- b) that there has been an irregularity in the conduct of the examinations or other forms of assessment, which has adversely affected performance;
- c) that there have been circumstances which affected performance which the candidate could not or did not, for valid reasons, divulge prior to the meeting of the relevant Examinations Board in accordance with the Regulations;
- d) that the student has demonstrable reason to believe that one or more of the examiners was prejudiced or unreasonably biased.

3.2 Disagreement with the academic judgement of the Board of Examiners will not be considered grounds for appeal.

4. Procedure

4.1. A student wishing to appeal against the decision of a Board of Examiners should do so in writing to their Head of Department/Programme Director (taught students) or Research Officer (research students) using the Academic Appeals Form as soon as possible and not normally later than **one week** after the publication of their confirmed results. The student's submission must be accompanied by any relevant evidence in support of the appeal, including medical evidence if appropriate.

4.2 The Head of Department/Programme Director/Research Officer will check the eligibility of the appeal to ensure that:

- a) The Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure is applicable; and
- b) That any of the grounds as listed above in Paragraph 3 are met; and
- c) That the appeal has been submitted in time; and
- d) That appropriate evidence has been provided to support the appeal.

4.3. Following receipt of the documentation referred to in paragraph 4.1, the HoD/PD/RO will assess the documentation and will seek additional information if necessary. Where there may be a conflict of interest, a nominee who is a Senior Academic may be appointed.

Ineligible Appeals

4.4 Ineligible appeals may be directed to a more appropriate procedure or dismissed completely with sign off by the Dean/Chair of University Research Committee. A Completion of Procedures letter will be issued by the Registry Officer if the appeal is dismissed.

Eligible Appeals

4.5 If the grounds of the appeal fall under paragraph 3c above, the HoD/PD/RO shall consult with Students First if appropriate.

4.6 The student may be given the opportunity to make representation in person or in writing.

4.7. The HoD/PD/RO must complete the appropriate sections of the Academic Appeals Form and submit this, together with a copy of the student's examination grid and any relevant medical or other evidence to the Dean for undergraduate and postgraduate taught students, or the Chair of University Research Committee for postgraduate research students. The form should be completed as fully as possible, and the HoD/PD/RO shall make a recommendation as to the action that should be taken in response to the appeal.

4.8. The Dean/Chair of University Research Committee will review the documentation and consider the recommendation of the HoD/PD/RO. The Dean/Chair of University Research shall either approve the recommendation or amend it, as he/she considers appropriate, taking account of all evidence submitted.

4.9. Authority vested in the Dean/Chair of University Research Committee includes:

- a) approval of requests for permission to re-sit/re-submit for capped marks, for honours marks, or to resit as if for a first attempt;
- b) approval of requests to progress to the next stage of study, notwithstanding a decision not to allow a student to proceed until certain conditions are satisfied;
- c) approval of requests to re-start an academic stage
- d) approval of minor variations to the programme of study (not requiring the approval of the Chair of the ULTC) [*not applicable to postgraduate research students*]; consideration of special programmes designed for individual students; subject to the approval of the Chair of the ULTC [*not applicable to postgraduate research students*].

4.10 If the appeal is upheld, the positive outcome will be communicated to the student and the student's HoD/PD/RO by the Dean/Chair of University Research Committee two weeks after the date of the appeal submission deadline. Any delays should be communicated to the student.

4.11 . In the case of an appeal which is supported by the Dean/Chair of University Research Committee and affects a degree classification, then the paperwork must be forwarded to the Chairman of Examination Senate for ratification of the award. Following ratification, the outcome of the appeal will be communicated to the student (and the student's HoD/PD/RO) by the Dean/Chair of Research Committee two weeks after the appeal submission deadline.

4.12. If the recommendation is to reject the appeal, the student will be informed in writing by the Dean/Chair of University Research Committee two weeks after the appeal submission deadline. The student will be given the opportunity to request a review of this decision within 5 days if unsatisfied with the original outcome.

4.13. If the student requests a review of the decision, the appeal paperwork will be considered by a Review Panel consisting of an Independent Dean from another School and an Academic Services Representative. The function of the Review Panel is to review the decision in a timely manner and, in the interest of fairness to the student, to ensure that appropriate procedures have been followed in respect of considering the appeal. The student should expect an outcome two weeks after the date of the review submission deadline.

4.14. If the decision of the Review Panel supports the original decision taken by the Dean/Chair of University Research Committee, then no further approval is required and the decision is considered

final. The outcome of the review will be communicated to the student (and the student's HoD/PD/RO) by the Independent Dean

4.15. If the decision of the Review Panel is to uphold the appeal (and thereby overturns the original decision made by the Dean/Chair of University Research Committee) then the paperwork must be forwarded to the Chairman of Examination Senate or nominee for a final decision. The outcome of the appeal will be communicated to the student (and the student's HoD/PD/RO) by the Chairman of Examination Senate or nominee.

4.16 Copies of all appeal paperwork and correspondence must be forwarded to Registry once proceedings have concluded for the purposes of maintaining the student record.

4.17 If the appeal is not upheld, the Registry Officer will issue a Completion of Procedures letter automatically when the student's case has exhausted the University's procedures. The letter will summarise the outcome of the appeal and inform the student of his/her right to request a review of their case by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. The letter will be issued within 28 days of procedures being completed.

4.18 The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) runs an independent scheme to review student appeals and complaints once all internal procedures have been completed. The University is a member of this scheme. If you are unhappy with the outcome you may be able to ask the OIA to review your appeal. You can find more information about making a complaint to the OIA, what it can and can't look at and what it can do to put things right here: <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students>.

Authorisation



Mr Christopher Payne
Registrar & Director of Professional Services

ACADEMIC APPEAL FORM

This form should be completed in conjunction with the Academic Appeals – Policy and Procedure, published in the Handbook

Part A: (To be completed by the Student and submitted to Academic Department)

Student Name:	
Student ID number:	
Programme:	Stage:
Are you studying on a Tier 4 Visa? Yes / No	
Grounds for appeal: Any appeal should satisfy one or more of the following grounds. Please tick the appropriate box(es): <input type="checkbox"/> 1.1 that grades have been incorrectly recorded or incorrectly aggregated; or the procedure for collation of grades has been incorrectly followed; <input type="checkbox"/> 1.2 that there has been an irregularity in the conduct of the examinations or other forms of assessment, which has adversely affected performance; <input type="checkbox"/> 1.3 that there have been circumstances which affected performance which the candidate could not or did not, for valid reasons, divulge prior to the meeting of the relevant Board of Examiners in accordance with the Regulations; <input type="checkbox"/> 1.4 that the student has demonstrable reason to believe that one or more of the examiners was prejudiced or unreasonably biased.	
What action is requested? If this involves reversing an existing decision, please explain:	
What are the reasons on which the appeal is based?	
Please indicate any supporting evidence that you are submitting with the appeal and ensure that copies are submitted:	
Declaration: I confirm that I have read and understood the procedures for Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure and confirm the facts and supporting evidence submitted for the appeal is wholly accurate.	
Signed:	Date:
(Student)	

Part B: (To be completed by the Head of Department/Programme Director/Research Officer)

Recommendation of the Head of Department/Programme Director/Research Officer (with reasons)

Was any evidence on which the student relies submitted prior to the examinations or meeting of the Board of Examiners?

If it was not, please explain why not.

If the evidence was available to the Board of Examiners, please explain either a) why it was not considered, or b) what account was taken of it by the Board of Examiners:

Signed:

Date:

Name:

(Head of Department/Programme Director/Research Officer)

Part C: (To be completed by the Dean/Chair of University Research Committee)

If the recommendation is one which is within the authority of the Dean/Chair of University Research Committee, and is supported positively, the approval of the Dean/Chair of University Research Committee will be sufficient and appropriate action may be taken at that level.

Comments and Recommendation from the Dean/Chair of University Research Committee					
1 Is the student permitted to proceed with their studies? (If YES then complete section 2) (If NO then complete section 1a)					Y/N
1a Is the student restarting the degree? (If YES please indicate the attempt number; date of re-registration; new expected end date and whether module credits are to be carried over (If NO then please complete section 2)	Attempt Number:	Re-start Date (term / year)	Module	Unit Value	Mark
		New Expected End Date			
2 Name and unit values of modules to be re-sat. Please indicate whether module attendance is required; re-sit date and classification criteria	Module	Unit Value	Attendance Required (Y/N)	Honours or capped marks (H/C)	Re-sit Date (term / year)
<i>If attendance is requested or required for any of the re-sit modules (and the student has <u>not</u> been permitted to proceed) then an Associate Student form must be completed and the student instructed to report to Registry to complete their re-registration.</i>					
Comments					
Signed: _____ Date: _____ Name: _____ (Dean/Chair of University Research Committee) In the case of an appeal which is supported by the Chairman of the Dean/Chair of University Research Committee and affects a degree classification then the paperwork must be forwarded to the Chairman of Examination Senate for the ratification of the award and Section E completed					

Part D: (To be completed by the Review Panel if appeal is rejected)

If the recommendation is to reject the appeal, the student may request a review of the decision and the paperwork must be forwarded to a Review Panel consisting of an Independent Dean and a member of Academic Services.

Recommendation by Review Panel (for consideration of a rejected appeal):

If the decision of the Review Panel supports the original decision made by the Dean/Chair of University Research Committee then no further approval is required. The result must be communicated to the student by the Independent Dean in accordance with paragraph 4.14.

In the case of an appeal which is upheld by the Panel (and thus overturns the original decision) then the paperwork must be forwarded to the Chairman of Examination Senate or nominee for a final decision and Section E completed.

Signed:

Name:

Date:

(Independent Dean)

Signed:

Name:

Date:

(Academic Services Representative)

Part E: (To be completed by the Chairman of Examination Senate)

For approval of revised degree classification or final decision

Recommendation of Chairman of Examination Senate

Signed:

Date:

Name:

(Chairman of Examination Senate)

If the role of the Chairman of Examination Senate has been for ratification of an award then the paperwork should be returned to the Dean for communication with the student in accordance with paragraph 4.11.

If the role of the Chairman of Examination Senate has been for a final decision then the result should be communicated to the student by the Chairman of Examination Senate in accordance with paragraph 4.15.