

Academic Appeals Policy (Higher Education)

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This policy and procedure is subject to The Equality Act 2010 which recognises the following categories of individual as Protected Characteristics: Age, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion and Belief, Sex (gender), Sexual orientation, Disability.

Alternative Format

This policy is available in alternative formats, to request this, please email marketingcampaigns@mkcollege.ac.uk

Version Control

Version Number	Author	Approver	Date approved	Next review date
1	Deputy Director for Quality	Policy scrutiny Group	24/2/26	Mar 27

Change log

Version Number	Summary of changes
1	New policy

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1. Introduction

Milton Keynes College is dedicated to enhancing the quality of its educational provision and continuously strives to improve all aspects of its services. As part of this commitment, the College ensures that any feedback or concerns regarding assessment are handled transparently, fairly, and efficiently.

Students are entitled to challenge assessment decisions without fear of negative consequences. Milton Keynes College treats all academic appeals with seriousness, impartiality, and aims to resolve them within a reasonable timeframe.

Ideally, concerns should be addressed immediately and directly with the relevant staff member(s). If this approach does not lead to a satisfactory resolution, or if it is not practical, the formal academic appeals process should be followed.

2. Scope

This policy is relevant to any form of assessment conducted by Higher Education Students at Milton Keynes College. It covers evaluations at the start of a programme (such as assessing prior learning), throughout the course, and upon completion. However, it does not apply to academic appeals concerning externally awarded qualifications (e.g. GCSEs), where grading decisions are made by the awarding body.

If you believe that an assessment decision regarding your work is inaccurate or based on incomplete or incorrect information, you are entitled to challenge that decision. You can do so without concern for retaliation or unfair treatment. Milton Keynes College is committed to handling such appeals fairly, objectively, and within a reasonable timeframe.

Please note that there are distinct procedures for providing feedback on services offered by Milton Keynes College (refer to the Complaints Policy (Higher Education)), and for reporting concerns in the public interest (see the Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure). These matters fall outside the scope of the academic appeals process.

Examples of academic appeals might be:

- The outcome of a request for a temporary suspension (see the HE Withdrawals or Suspension of Studies policy).
- Application for reasonable adjustments for teaching and assessment of students with disabilities.
- Decisions relating to recognition of prior learning (see the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy)
- Alleged procedural irregularity in the conduct of an assessment.
- Decisions relating to an application for extension or extenuating circumstances (see HE Extensions & Extenuating Circumstances Policy).

This list is not exhaustive, however it should be noted that simply disagreeing with the academic judgement of the assessors or the outcome based on marks or grades does not constitute valid grounds for an academic appeal. You must make a case, with evidence to support it, that College has made a procedural error in reaching that result.

At all stages of the academic appeal process, those reviewing the case will not re-assess the student's work or question the professional judgement of the examiners. Their role is to determine whether the decision made by the assessor was fair and whether all relevant information was properly considered.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Heads of School are tasked with overseeing the proper execution of the academic appeals process within their respective areas. The Deputy Director of Quality is responsible for managing the second stage of the process, as detailed in Section 5.

All staff involved in teaching and assessment must ensure students are aware of the academic appeals process and that it is applied effectively within their course.

4. Stage 1 - Informal

The preferred starting point for resolving concerns is through informal discussion, allowing issues to be addressed without initiating the formal appeals process. Students should raise their concerns with their Course Team Leader. This conversation should be documented in Pro Monitor under the

Comments and Meetings section. The Course Team Leader should then consult with the assessment moderator and/or the Head of School. If the issue remains unresolved within 10 working days from the date results are released, the appeal may proceed to the Stage Two.

5. Stage Two – Formal

If the concern is not resolved informally, students should submit a formal academic appeal to the Deputy Director of Quality via email (Quality@mkcollege.ac.uk) within 20 working days of the results being published. The appeal should clearly outline the issue, the grounds for appeal, any supporting evidence, steps taken during the informal stage, and the desired outcome. We will aim to acknowledge a formal academic appeal within 5 working days of receipt.

The Deputy Director of Quality will review the academic appeal to confirm whether it falls under the academic appeals process. If it does not, the student may be redirected to a more appropriate procedure, such as the Complaints Policy (Higher Education) or the appeals process of an awarding body. Alternately they will be informed the appeal lacks sufficient grounds and the student will be notified in writing.

If valid grounds are identified, the Deputy Director of Quality will assign the case to an impartial staff member for investigation. This may include the Deputy Director for Quality themselves.

The investigator may request a meeting with the student to gather more information, although this is not mandatory if the initial documentation is sufficient. Additional details may also be requested via email.

We will aim to provide a full response within 15 working days of receiving the academic appeal. This response will explain the decision clearly and outline next steps if the student wishes to escalate the academic appeal.

All outcomes will be centrally recorded to help identify common causes of academic appeals and inform improvements. These records also support monitoring and reporting, including analysis related to protected characteristics.

6. Stage Three – Appeal Review

If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage Two, they may submit a written request to review the appeal by email to the Group Director for Quality & Standards (quality@mkcollege.ac.uk) within 5 working days. The appeal should include:

- Full name
- Contact details (address, phone, email)
- Programme of study
- Date of the decision being appealed
- Description of the decision
- Grounds for the appeal
- Any relevant supporting information

The Group Director for Quality will aim to acknowledge receipt within 5 working days and arrange for the case to be reviewed. If the student's expectations exceed the scope of the review, this will be clarified.

An appropriate member of the Group Leadership Team will complete the review.

The review will assess whether procedures were followed correctly, whether the Stage Two outcome was reasonable, and whether the student received a clear explanation. If new evidence is presented, the reviewer will consider whether there was a valid reason for its late submission.

The student will receive a written decision within 10 working days of the Stage 3 appeal request being received. The outcome will indicate whether the previous decision is upheld, partially upheld, or overturned.

If you are studying on an Open University validated programme, the academic appeal decision letter or email will include a Completion of Internal Procedures letter, detailing how you may be able to request a review of the case by the Open University through the Open University Complaints and Academic Appeals process.

If you are a student on any other Higher Education course, the academic appeal decision letter or email will include a Completion of Procedures letter, detailing how you may write to the Independent Adjudicator about the handling of the academic appeal.

Final outcomes will be recorded centrally to support continuous improvement and enable analysis of appeal trends, including those affecting groups with protected characteristics.

7. Group Academic Appeals

If a concern affects multiple students, they may choose to submit a collective academic appeal. In such cases, the group can appoint a spokesperson, provided all members agree to this representation.

8. Support and Reasonable Adjustments

Students requiring reasonable adjustments to engage with the academic appeals process should contact Learning Support (LearningSupport@MKCollege.ac.uk).

9. Access to Information

Students have the right to view all materials reviewed during the academic appeal. These can be requested by email to the Deputy Director for Quality (quality@mkcollege.ac.uk)

10. Appeal Timelines

The college will endeavour to ensure that all complaints, from initial receipt of a Stage 2 complaint to the end of a Stage 3 appeal, will take no longer than 40 calendar days to process.

All academic appeals should be resolved within the OIA Good Practice Framework of 90 days. If this deadline conflicts with the HE Exam Board or the Awarding Organisation completion, the College will notify the awarding organisation.

11. Vexatious or Frivolous Academic Appeals

For the purpose of this Policy, a persistent, unreasonable or vexatious appellant is a student who appeals about issues, either formally or informally, and/or whose behaviour is unreasonable.

Such behaviour may be characterized by:

- Actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious.
- Prolific correspondence or excessive e-mail or telephone contact about an appeal.
- Using Freedom of Information or Data Subject Access Requests excessively and unreasonably.
- An insistence upon pursuing unsubstantial complaints and/or unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes.
- An insistence upon pursuing appeals in an unreasonable manner.
- An insistence on only dealing with the Principal/CEO/Senior Managers on all occasions, irrespective of the issue and the level of delegation in the College to deal with such matters.
- An insistence upon repeatedly pursuing an appeal when the outcome is not satisfactory to the complainant but cannot be changed, for example, if the desired outcome is beyond the remit of the College because it relates to a decision made by a third party.
- Refusal to follow the college processes when requested to do so e.g., not following the College's Academic Appeals process, refusal to submit information via the appropriate channel, attempts to use alternative contact channels to circumvent the Academic Appeals process.

For the purpose of this policy, harassing behaviour is the unreasonable pursuit of any of the actions described above in such a way that:

- Appears to be targeted over a significant period on one or more members of college staff.
- Causes ongoing distress to individual member(s) of college staff.

- Has a significant adverse effect on the whole/parts of the College community; and/or is pursued in a manner which could be perceived as intimidating and oppressive by the recipient.
- Repetitive, harassing, or obsessive academic appeal
- Pursuit of academic appeals lacking merit or demanding unreasonable outcomes
- An insistence upon pursuing academic appeals in an unreasonable manner
- Academic Appeals intended to disrupt or irritate
- Requests for redress without serious intent or value

Such academic appeals may be dismissed, with a written explanation provided. Students will also be informed of how to challenge this decision. Please refer to the MK College Complaints Policy (Higher Education) for further details.

12. Related Policies

Refer to the following documentation in conjunction with this policy, which can be found on the College Website [here](#)

Complaints Policy (Higher Education)
 Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure
 Academic Misconduct Policy
 Recognition of Prior Learning Policy
 HE Admissions Policy
 HE Extensions & Extenuating Circumstances Policy

Please also refer to :

- Open University Validated Awards handbook: [OU Handbook for Validated Awards | Validation Partnerships](#)
- Open University Validated Awards Regulations: [Regulations for validated awards of The Open University | Validation Partnerships](#)
- Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA): <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/>

13. Timelines

