

**Central
Film
School**



Central Film School

Academic Appeals Policy

2021

Academic Appeals Policy

Scope

In line with the UK's Quality Code for Higher Education and allied guides, Central Film School (CFS) defines an 'academic appeal' as a student request for a review of a decision made within or procedure mandated by the Academic Board and exam boards structure, which is charged with decisions on student progression, assessment and awards. An academic appeal differs from a student complaint (see separate policy on student complaints). This policy specifically addresses academic appeals.

Where an awarding body mandates its own academic appeals policy this present appeals policy of the School will not apply. The appeals policy of the awarding body takes precedence, i.e. will be the policy and procedure followed. Unlike student complaints, assessment appeals are always dealt with by a formal process. This procedure applies to all students, and applies to both formative and summative assessment.

The Academic Board is ultimately responsible for academic assessment appeals.

A student wishing to make an academic appeal should make the appeal in writing, stating the general nature of the appeal, giving detail on the appeal, and stating the remedy sought. The written appeal should be sent to the CEO with a copy to the chair of the relevant exam board. An academic appeal may not be initiated orally, and may not be initiated with the original designers, marker(s), moderators or invigilators of assessments. The student should not discuss the appeal informally with the original designers, marker(s), moderators or invigilators of assessments. The appeal should be made as soon as possible after the disputed assessment decision or completed procedure.

The written appeal should be structured as follows:

Case statement, which should include:

- Introduction explaining the reasons for appealing
- Detail of the case
- Summary of case
- Outcome sought
- Appendices of evidence

CFS recognises that appeals may be made by individuals or, in some circumstances, a group of students.

CFS will aim to resolve any appeals in a timely way and bring matters to a conclusion as speedily as possible. The following procedures therefore give timescales that are both fair and realistic, and have sufficient flexibility to take account of individual circumstances. Should key staff be unavailable (for example due to sickness or planned holiday), CFS will take all reasonable steps to forward matters, however, procedures may be delayed until the required staff are available.

In order to avoid students feeling inhibited from making an academic appeal for fear that they may suffer disadvantage, CFS maintains confidentiality when receiving or handling an academic appeal unless disclosure is necessary to enable the appeal to be progressed.

Academic appeals procedures are approved and monitored by the Academic Board in collaboration with its subcommittees. The procedure will be reviewed periodically in line with developments in good practice.

Principles of the procedure

The procedure is based on the following principles:

- a student has the right to attend any panel (subcommittee) hearing, but may not attend a meeting of the parent exam board.
- a student has the right to be accompanied by a colleague or friend at any panel (subcommittee) hearing.
- a record of any formal hearing will be available to the student on request.
- the timescales set out may be extended with the agreement of the parties.
- where more than one student has lodged an academic appeal relating to the same, or substantially the same, issue, the appeals may be dealt with together in the interests of fair and consistent decision-making.

Where an academic appeal concerns an apparently trivial issue the chair of the exam board will discuss this formally in writing with the student to determine whether there is a real need to pursue the matter through the board meeting or panel provisions of the procedure. An example of a trivial appeal is a dispute over a few marks, where the disputed difference makes no difference to overall module or award classification. In brief, small and non-consequential differences of academic judgement will be considered to be trivial matters. Larger differences of academic judgement will be considered non-trivial only if the student provides prima facie evidence that there has been a gross failure of assessment process (e.g. published learning outcomes not properly assessed, assessment criteria perversely applied). If the student and committee chair are unable to agree on whether the academic appeal is trivial or substantial, the student will be entitled to continue the appeal formally but must supply further evidence or explanation that shine new light on the matter and demonstrates that a substantive academic appeal is, in fact, being made.

If the student's academic appeal restates an appeal that the School is already dealing with, or that it has dealt with in the past, the student will be asked to explain how the new appeal differs from the previous one, and either what new incident has occurred or what new evidence has come to light. Where it is clear that there is nothing new being raised, the School may reject the new complaint without further procedure.

Deliberately false or malicious appeals will be treated as matters of misconduct and will be investigated in line with the Disciplinary policy and procedure. Appeals raised while a student is subject to disciplinary proceedings will be heard entirely independently of the disciplinary process.

There may be times when what is expressed by the student as an academic appeal contains within it a complaint and vice versa. Where this is the case, the School may reclassify the matter in consultation with the person making the academic appeal. It is possible for such a reclassification to trigger an alternative procedure without the student having to initiate this.

The appeal will be heard in a relevant exam board meeting or by a specially appointed panel (subcommittee of the exam board), at the discretion of the chair of the board in consultation with the CEO. Students may not attend exam board meetings at any time, but a student making an appeal will be invited to any special panel (subcommittee) meeting as described in this procedure.

In advance of any panel hearing, and in consultation with the CEO, the chair of the exam board may appoint an investigating officer to look into the appeal.

The panel will consist of two nominees of the CEO and two nominees of the chair of the exam board. Both may nominate themselves. Where possible, there should be a gender balance on panels. The School will make every attempt to ensure that the hearing will be held within 20 working days of receipt of any investigating officer's report, or within 20 working days of the appeal being received if no investigation is ordered. The student will be given five working days notice that any panel hearing is to be held. The student may request an alternative date, to allow up to an additional five working days if their representative is unavailable. If, following a reasonable attempt to rearrange the hearing, the student is still unable to attend, they may send a representative, or the hearing may be held in their absence. The student should inform the CEO and/or the chair of the panel, two working days before any meeting or hearing, whom the student would like to be accompanied or represented by.

The student making the appeal should ensure that they attend the meeting at the specified time. If they are unable to attend because of circumstances beyond their control, they should inform the CEO and/or the chair of the panel as soon as possible. If they fail to attend without explanation, or it appears that they have not made sufficient attempts to attend, the hearing may take place in their absence.

Written information or evidence must be made available to all parties at the earliest opportunity and, in any case, two working days before any exam board meeting or panel hearing.

All those attending any meeting will be allowed to make representations at the meeting. Witnesses may be called. The hearing will be minuted and these minutes will be placed in the student's personal file.

Refusal of any party to attend shall not invalidate the proceedings.

The committee or panel, in seeking to resolve the appeal matter, may adjourn the meeting or defer a decision if more information is required.

The recommendation of any panel meeting will be passed to the exam board for discussion and approval/modification. The exam board will inform the Academic Board of its decision.

The student will receive a 'Completion of Procedures Letter' confirming that the internal procedures have reached completion and the outcome has been reached (including reason(s) for reaching that outcome), within 14 working days of the exam board meeting. The written communication will be sent in at least two ways (eg email, posted letter). The exam board will explain how and when it will implement any remedy.

The decision and Completion of Procedures letter of the exam board, acting on behalf of the Academic Board are the final internal step. There is no further internal right of appeal after this decision. Students who remain dissatisfied may be able to, depending upon the nature of the issue and terms of reference of the external body, approach external agencies such as the Office of the Independent Adjudicator and/or any awarding or approval body.

In light of academic appeals, CFS will reflect on whether the finding(s) might suggest that School regulations, procedures or practices need to be amended for the benefit of students and staff, and any issues will be referred to programme and exam boards.

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