

ACADEMIC APPEALS POLICY

Document Title		
ACADEMIC APPEALS POLICY		
Document Author/Owner:	Responsible Person:	
Steph Cramphorn	Academic Principal	
Approving Body:	Date of Approval:	
Academic Board	7.7.25	
Effective from:	Review Date:	Edition No:
1 st August 2025	March 26	9
EITHER For Public Access? Tick as appropriate	OR For Internal Access only? Tick as appropriate	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Summary/Description:		
<p>This document defines the process students can use to appeal when they feel a decision about them which has been reached by an academic body is unfair. This includes decisions about admissions and assessment procedures which have been applied to their work for any of The Open University Validated Awards at All Nations Christian College, has been unfair.</p>		
<p>2025-26 v1 <u>May 2025</u> Clarified timeframes and procedures in line with OIA Good Practice Framework Added Academic Misconduct Appeals Procedure Amended typos/formatting and where College nomenclature has changed</p> <p>2024-25 v2 <u>December 24</u> Review resulting in: Amendment of typos/formatting and where College nomenclature has changed Removal of all reference to a review by All Nations Christian College. Aligned Contents with section titles. Reduction in timeframe from 90 calendar days to 34 calendar days in line with the OIA framework and OU requirement. Alterations to timeline as a result of timeframe reduction. Updated OU contact information. Updated references to personnel dealing with a case. Updated hyperlinks to the new website. Addition of OIA Good Practice Framework- Handling Complaints and Academic Appeals to Related Documents section.</p>		

ALL NATIONS CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

To cultivate biblically rooted, hope-filled and culturally relevant engagement with God's mission, by training and equipping disciples of Jesus Christ in partnership with the global church.

ACADEMIC APPEALS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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2 AIM

All Nations Christian College would like you to have a positive experience in your dealings with us. However, we understand that we do not always get everything right. Students who are dissatisfied with the decision of an academic body may wish to appeal against that decision and those who have been rejected a place on a programme may also wish to appeal. The majority of concerns can usually be dealt with informally through discussion, but if your concerns cannot be addressed informally, this policy will enable you to make a formal complaint or appeal.

3 WHICH POLICY SHOULD YOU FOLLOW?

- 3.1** This is the policy you should follow if you wish to request a review of a decision taken by an academic body (i.e. tutor, moderator or Examination Board) charged with making decisions about student admissions, progression, assessment and awards. However, such a review may not question the academic judgement of academic staff.
- 3.2** The College Complaints Policy should be followed if you wish to express your dissatisfaction with either the service we have provided or the lack of a service, about which an individual is unhappy and seeks action by the College. It must relate to services that you were led to believe would be provided.
- 3.3** A complaint concerning unreasonable delay in returning work would be dealt with by the Complaints Procedure, and not the Academic Appeals Procedure, since the complaint concerns dissatisfaction with the administration service rather than any academic decision.
- 3.4** A **review** is a request for the decision to your complaint or your appeal to be reviewed. Therefore, the Complaints Policy and this Academic Appeals Policy both contain procedures for requesting a review of the decision reached by those considering your complaint or appeal.

- 3.5** In all of the above situations, you must have **reasonable grounds** for making a complaint or appealing a decision or asking for a review of a decision. This document will explain what those grounds are.

4 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The College will comply with the Equal Opportunities Act 2010 and the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR when dealing with complaints and appeals in addition to its own and The Open University's rules and regulations, where applicable. Complaints also comply with the Consumer Protection Act 2015. This document has also been written in compliance with The Good Practice Framework: Handling Student Complaints and Academic Appeals by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

5 DEFINITION

As outlined in section 3, an appeal is a request for a review of a decision taken by an academic body (i.e. tutor, moderator or Examination Board) charged with making decisions about student admissions, progression, assessment and awards. However, such a review may not question the academic judgement of academic staff.

6 SCOPE

- 6.1** An appeal will only be considered for students who are taking undergraduate or postgraduate studies at All Nations Christian College or if you were an applicant for either of these programmes.
- 6.2** Appeals by alumni must be initiated within 28 calendar days of leaving College (e.g., within 28 calendar days of the receipt of their final award or the end of their registration if they leave with a transcript).

7 ACADEMIC APPEAL POLICY PRINCIPLES

The guiding principles of all the College complaints, appeals and review procedures are as follows:

- i. We aim to respond to your appeal confidentially, fairly and promptly and in accordance with the College's Equality and Diversity Policy.
- ii. All appeals will be managed in a sensitive way and with due regard to data protection legislation and the College Data Protection Policy. If your appeal involves providing evidence (e.g., a witness statement or medical evidence) confidentiality may not always be possible without hampering a thorough investigation of the facts. In these circumstances therefore the college will discuss with you the best way to approach the submission of evidence before releasing all or some of the evidence to the investigating officer or any others involved in the investigation.
- iii. **Students** involved in an Academic Appeal will be offered support by the College's pastoral team. If a meeting is called as part of an investigation, they may also choose to be accompanied by, or represented at any meetings by, a member of the community acting as a supportive friend. This must be someone independent of the circumstances that gave rise to the meeting and therefore not be the person offering them pastoral support through the process. **Applicants** may be supported by a friend who is not a member of the College community.
- iv. Formal written appeals should be recorded, acknowledged within 5 calendar days and investigated, wherever possible, within 34 calendar days of receiving the Formal Academic Appeal Form, and the Academic Principal notified. You will be informed in the event of any unavoidable delay and a reason given, for example staff unavailability.
- v. The processing of the formal appeal should take no longer than 34 calendar days in total. This requires you to meet any College deadlines for the submission of material. If there are

good reasons for extending the timeframe, you will be notified of any delays and regularly informed of progress and you shall similarly notify the College, however this could affect your ability to request a review.

- vi. Group appeals are permissible where the issue raised affects a number of students. In such circumstances, in order to manage the progression of the appeal, we ask the group to nominate one student to act as a group representative; this student may also be supported by one other person.
- vii. You will always be informed of the outcome of a formal appeal in writing and with reasons given for the decision which has been reached. You will be informed at the same time of any further appeal processes which may still be available to you.
- viii. A formal detailed record will be kept of all formal investigations and appeals.
- ix. No-one will be disadvantaged by making an appeal.
- x. The appeal may be withdrawn without prejudice at any time during the process.
- xi. The College will not investigate any formal appeal which it considers to be frivolous or vexatious.
- xii. All appeals procedures should be available to all, monitored regularly, and reviewed and evaluated periodically.

8 INFORMAL PROCEDURE

The majority of concerns can usually be dealt with informally by speaking with the relevant person. (E.g., the module tutor in the case of a module mark, the recruitment and training administrator who has been dealing with your admission or the Programme Leader in the case of a final award). When your appeal is resolved informally there will be no written record retained of the complaint or outcome. If your concerns cannot be addressed informally, the following formal procedures are available to you.

9 GROUNDS FOR AN ACADEMIC APPEAL

9.1 Admissible Grounds for an Academic Appeal

You can appeal only on the following grounds:

- i. **Administrative Error:** For example:
 - When there is an allegation of failure to apply the College regulations in arriving at the decision e.g., the final module mark or the decision to deny an applicant a place contradicts the published entry or application criteria,
 - When incorrect information was provided e.g., regarding the required assessment or deadline.
- ii. **Unfair:** When the grading criteria/learning outcomes published in the handbook were not fairly and consistently applied by the marker or there was discrimination when denying an applicant a place on the grounds of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, nationality, class or other non-academic grounds.
- iii. **Extenuating Circumstances:** When your performance was adversely affected by illness or other factors which you were unable or, **with valid reason**, unwilling to divulge to the relevant academic body when it made its decision. Your appeal must be accompanied by documentary evidence acceptable to the academic body.

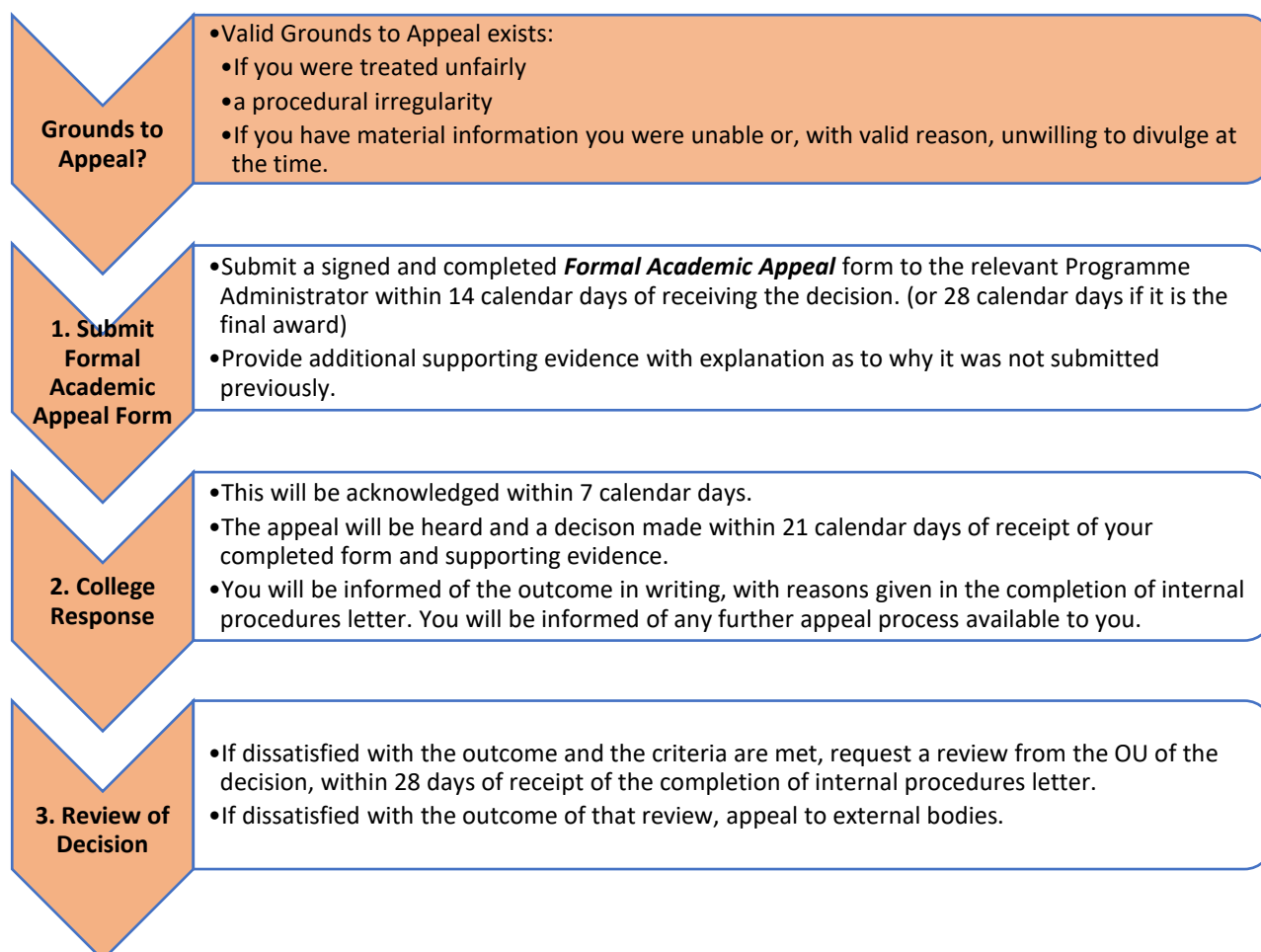
9.2 Inadmissible Grounds for an Academic Appeal

There is no right of appeal where:

- i. **Academic Grounds:** The dispute concerns academic judgement; e.g., because you do not agree with the mark awarded or the decision about your academic suitability to be admitted to a programme.

- ii. **Unawareness of Criteria:** The dispute concerns a claim of unawareness of the published assessment regulations (e.g., word count, submission deadline, etc.) or admissions criteria.
- iii. **Extenuating Circumstances:** If the dispute concerns a student who was given an extension to an assignment deadline due to illness, but chooses to submit their assignment/sit the examination before the given deadline, they may not subsequently claim that their performance was adversely affected by that illness.

10 ACADEMIC APPEAL PROCEDURES



10.1 Admissions Appeals Procedure:

If you think that you meet any of the above criteria you can appeal by:

- a. Completing a **formal academic appeal form**. This is attached as an appendix to this document.
- b. The completed and **signed** form, together with all your supporting evidence, should be given to the Recruitment and Training Administrator who was dealing with your admission's application (paper or electronic copies are acceptable).
- c. The form and supporting evidence should be submitted within 14 calendar days of receiving the result of your application. This will be acknowledged in writing within 7 calendar days.
- d. The relevant Programme Leader will discuss the appeal with the Admissions Team and aim to communicate the result to you, with rationale, within one calendar month of receiving the appeal form.
- e. You will be informed of any further review process available to you at the same time as hearing the outcome of the investigation.

- f. You may withdraw a formal appeal in writing without prejudice at any time during the process.

10.2 Module Appeals Procedure:

If you think that you meet any of the above criteria you can appeal by:

- a. Completing a **formal academic appeal form**. This is attached as an appendix to this document.
- b. The completed and **signed** form, together with all your supporting evidence, should be given to the Recruitment and Training Administrator of your Programme (paper or electronic copies are acceptable).
- c. The form and supporting evidence should be submitted within 14 calendar days of publishing the mark. This will be acknowledged in writing within 7 calendar days.
- d. The Programme Leader will discuss the appeal with the first marker and moderator and seek to reach a mutual agreement. If no such agreement is reached the matter will be resolved in consultation with the External Examiners for a final decision, which will then be communicated to you in writing. In this case, the College aims to communicate the result to you within 21 calendar days of acknowledging receipt of the appeal form. This written response will include any actions required of you or the College to follow up and implement that decision.
- e. You will be informed of any further review process available to you at the same time as hearing the outcome of the investigation.
- f. You may withdraw a formal complaint or appeal in writing without prejudice at any time during the process.

10.3 Final Award Appeals Procedure

If you feel your complaint fulfils the grounds above, you may appeal by:

- a. Completing a **formal academic appeal form**. This is attached as an appendix to this document.
- b. The completed and **signed** form, together with all your supporting evidence, should be given to the Recruitment and Training Administrator of the relevant Programme within 28 calendar days of receiving the result of the final award (paper or electronic copies are acceptable). This will be acknowledged in writing within 7 calendar days.
- c. It should clearly set out the reasons for the appeal and include, where appropriate, supporting documentary evidence.
- d. The Programme Leader shall, within 7 calendar days of acknowledging receipt of the appeal form, consider the academic appeal and determine whether there is a *prima facie* case to answer.
- e. In the perceived absence of a valid case to answer, the Programme Leader will explain to you in full the reasons behind the Board's original decision and provide you with those reasons in writing within 14 calendar days of acknowledging receipt of the appeal form. This written response will include any actions required of you or the College to follow up and implement that decision.
- f. If, conversely, there is perceived to be an academic case to answer, the Programme Leader will submit the academic appeal with all appropriate documentation to the members of the Examination Board for discussion and final decision. You will then be informed of the Examination Board's decision in writing by the Programme Leader within one calendar month of the Programme Leader's determination of a *prima facie* case. You will be kept informed if there is going to be any unavoidable delay.

- g. If you fail, without good cause, to provide the markers, in advance of their marking, with information about personal circumstances that may have affected your performance in assessments, the Examination Board has authority to reject the request on those grounds.
- h. You may withdraw a formal academic appeal in writing without prejudice at any time during the procedure. Any decision made by the College at the previous stage in the procedure will then be upheld and become the final outcome.
 - i. You will be informed of any further review process available to you at the same time as hearing the outcome of your appeal.

10.4 Academic Misconduct Appeals Procedure

If you think that you meet any of the above criteria you can appeal by:

- g. Completing a **formal academic appeal form**. This is attached as an appendix to this document.
- h. The completed and **signed** form, together with all your supporting evidence, should be given to the Recruitment and Training Administrator who was dealing with your Academic Misconduct case (paper or electronic copies are acceptable).
- i. The form and supporting evidence should be submitted within 14 calendar days of receiving the result of your application. This will be acknowledged in writing within 7 calendar days.
- j. The relevant Programme Leader will discuss the appeal with the Academic Principal and aim to communicate the result to you, with rationale, within one calendar month of receiving the appeal form.
- k. You will be informed of any further review process available to you at the same time as hearing the outcome of the investigation.
- l. You may withdraw a formal appeal in writing without prejudice at any time during the process.

11 FURTHER REVIEW/APPEAL PROCEDURES

11.1 The resolution of your appeal will include any options you may have of escalating your concern to another body.

11.2 Once the College's processes have been exhausted, the College can issue you with a Completion of Internal Procedures letter. If you are still not satisfied you can contact The Open University **within 28 days of receiving the COIP letter**. If you are not registered with The Open University, you are not eligible to escalate your complaint to them. In this case, on completion of our internal processes, we will give you a Completion of Procedures Letter which will permit you to complain to the OIA (see below). They will not hear a complaint until you have exhausted the College's and The OU's appeals/complaints procedures.

11.3 The Open University accredits our institution and validates our undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Please see The Open University's current Handbook for Validated Awards via the link in the Related Documents section below: Appendix 1: Appeals and Complaints to find out the timescales, admissible grounds and procedures for appealing to them after you have concluded our internal complaints and review procedures. You can contact them:

- By writing to: the Secretary of the SAARP, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA U.K.
- By email to: SCO-SAARP@open.ac.uk
- By phone: 01908 332840

Following investigation, The OU will issue a Completion of Procedures letter to the student. Only when The OU has issued a CoP letter can you (if still dissatisfied) go to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

- 11.4 The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)** was set up under the Higher Education Act 2004 to provide 'an independent student complaints scheme'. All Higher Education Institutions in England and Wales are required to comply with the scheme, which is free to students.

The OIA can only consider unresolved appeals from students **after** the College's and The OU's own complaints and appeals procedures have been concluded and you have been given a Completion of Procedures letter by The Open University (see the previous paragraph 12.3 above).

The OIA will not usually consider appeals about decisions regarding admissions.

Full details on the OIA scheme can be found at: www.oiahe.org.uk.

12 ESTABLISHED PROCEDURAL IRREGULARITY

- 12.1** In cases where procedural irregularity is established as a result of an appeal, the Examination Board should then be responsible for ensuring appropriate follow-up action.
- 12.2** If an error or irregularity is found to have affected more than one candidate, the Examination Board must reconsider all the relevant grades and classifications and take appropriate follow-up actions. In this case it is the responsibility of the Examination Board to confirm the revised grades and classifications in the presence of an OU representative.

13 RESULT OF APPEAL

- 13.1** Whenever an appeal is concluded, the result and reason for the decision will be submitted in writing to the student. Should the appeal have been dismissed, the student will be advised of their right to request a review to the OU.
- 13.2** Where a decision is upheld, a recommendation must be made for reconsideration by the Examination Board.
- 13.3** Should the examiners agree to amend their decision but are uncertain about the most appropriate alternative recommendation they should seek additional evidence of the student's performance. This may be obtained either through reassessment at the next opportunity, or through a viva voce examination or, through another form of assessment appropriate to the student's circumstances and to the requirements of the programme of study.

14 APPEAL CASE ANALYSIS

The issues and outcomes of any appeals will be discussed with the Programme Leaders and the Training Team. They will be discussed further in the Undergraduate, Postgraduate and Quality Assurance Committees to monitor and ensure the effectiveness of the appeal, the quality of the student learning experience and the issue of confidence in the appeal and complaints processes. The Academic Board also monitors the entire processes and outcomes.

15 ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES, POLICY APPROVAL AND REVIEW

- 15.1** The **Board of Trustees** have legal oversight and responsibility for all College policies, but have delegated to the Academic Board the authority to ensure fit-for-purpose policies and procedures related to academic provision are in place. The **Board of Trustees** are responsible for ensuring:

- Academic provision at the College is adequately resourced.
- They receive details from the **Academic Principal** of any serious incident or one which could be of reputational risk to the College which should be reported to either the Open University, the Office for Students and/or the Charity Commission.

15.2 The **Academic Board**, who is also authorized by the Open University through its accreditation process, acts on behalf of the **Board of Trustees** on all academic matters. They are responsible for:

- Ensuring that the academic activities of the College support its mission statement and values.
- Ensuring that a fit-for-purpose Academic Appeals Policy is approved by them and complies with all relevant legislation and regulations (e.g., the regulations of The Open University).
- Overseeing the effective implementation of this policy and ensuring it is satisfactorily managed.
- Ensuring that the principles of this policy are:
 - Considered when managing and planning academic matters.
 - Reviewed by exploring what can be learned from appeals/complaints when they occur.
 - Reviewed in consultation with academic staff, students and The Open University, as a means of constantly seeking to improve the College's academic provision.
- Ensuring they receive details from the **Academic Principal** of reported incidents and outcomes of cases (particularly where a significant impact on someone has occurred or lessons need to be learned), or details of a serious incident or one which could be of reputational risk to the College.

15.3 The **CEO**, the **Academic Principal** and the **Quality Assurance Committee** are jointly responsible for the annual monitoring and review of this policy and recommending approval to the Academic Board for all changes.

15.4 The **Academic Principal** is responsible for providing leadership for all academic provision of the College and for leading the college's Academic Appeals Policy and practice by:

- Monitoring investigations into academic appeals and any subsequent complaints.
- Ensuring that decision making complies with College and Open University regulations and is applied consistently across academic provision.
- Reporting to the External Examiners where an appeal reveals that procedural irregularity has occurred.
- Reporting to the **Academic Board** and **Senior Leadership Team** incidents and outcomes of cases (particularly where a significant impact on someone has occurred or lessons need to be learned), or details of a serious incident or one which could be of reputational risk to the College.
- Ensuring the College and its staff comply with any appeals process undertaken by an outside agency (e.g., The OU or the OIA).

15.5 The **Programme Leaders** are responsible for managing the complaints and appeals process in line with this policy.

15.6 The **Examination Board** is responsible for:

- Ensuring appropriate follow-up action is taken where procedural irregularity on the part of the college has been established.
- If necessary, determining what alternative form of student assessment should be undertaken where an appeal is upheld.

15.7 The **Student Academic Representatives** are responsible for:

- Raising academic issues on behalf of their cohort with the **Academic Principal**.
- Reporting back to their cohort on the resolution of issues raised by the students or one of the academic committees.

15.8 All academic staff and students are responsible for:

- Familiarising themselves with this policy on appointment/at induction/orientation.

- Taking a pro-active role in improving the College's Academic Appeals Policy and practice.
- Promoting and implementing/complying with this policy.

If **involved in an academic appeal** in any capacity, they are also responsible for:

- ensuring they present their case with integrity and in a timely fashion and/or
- ensuring they comply with any investigation and the procedures in this policy.

15.9 The **Recruitment and Training Administrators** are responsible for processing an academic appeal in accordance with the procedures in this policy and any complaint in accordance with the relevant policy.

16 POLICY COMMUNICATION

16.1 This policy and any other policies referred to in this document can be found [here](#).

16.2 The College Administrator will make every effort to respond to any request to provide this policy in a different format. Such requests should be sent to info@allnations.ac.uk

16.3 This policy will be included in staff and student induction.

17 RELATED DOCUMENTS

- All Nations Christian College [Admissions Policy](#)
- All Nations Christian College [Data Protection Policy](#)
- All Nations Christian College [Equality and Diversity Policy](#)
- All Nations Christian College [Postgraduate Handbook](#)
- All Nations Christian College [Undergraduate Handbook](#)
- [OIA Handling Complaints and Academic Appeals Framework](#)
- [QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#)
- [Open University Handbook for Validated Awards](#)

18 APPENDICES:

- Formal Academic Appeal Form
- Completion of Internal Procedures Letter Template

APPENDIX 1:

FORMAL ACADEMIC APPEAL FORM			
Student Name		Student No.	
Preferred email contact details: If this is a complaint made by a group of students, please give the email details of <u>one</u> nominated point of contact.			
Do you have an additional need you would like us to be aware of when considering your appeal?		Yes/No (circle). If yes, please give details of adjustments that will assist you.	
Course:		Level	
Appeal relates to: (What academic decision do you feel was wrong or unfair?)	<input type="checkbox"/> Admissions decision <input type="checkbox"/> Assignment mark <input type="checkbox"/> Module mark <input type="checkbox"/> Final Award <input type="checkbox"/> Academic Misconduct <input type="checkbox"/> Other		
I am making this Academic Appeal based on the following grounds (tick the relevant box(es) only if they are listed as permissible grounds in this policy)		I offer the following information in support of the ground(s) selected (complete the relevant box(es) below):	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Admin Error (e.g., Failure to apply the College regulations or criteria OR incorrect information provided by the College)		(You need to state clearly the precise nature of the error)	
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Unfair or inconsistent application of the regulations (e.g., regarding grading criteria/learning outcomes published in the handbook/admissions criteria etc.)		(You need to state clearly the precise nature of the error)	
<input type="checkbox"/> 4. You have new material evidence that you were unable to provide earlier regarding extenuating circumstances. (You must give us this evidence and explain why it was not available when the decision was made. This reason can also be used to appeal for a lighter penalty in a case of Academic Misconduct, but only if the evidence was unavailable at the time of the Academic Misconduct investigation.		(By material evidence, we mean 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.)	

Brief factual outline why you feel a review of this academic decision should be made:			
Optional: Additional information offered for consideration:			
Where New Evidence is available (section 4), list attachments if applicable:			
Do you have anyone to support you with this appeal? Please speak with your personal tutor or a friend/other staff member about this so that they can support you.			
Signed (Student)		Date:	

NEXT STEP

1. Have you checked this policy to check you have the grounds and are within the time limits for making this appeal?
2. Have you completed all sections of this form?
3. Have you included all supporting documents (if appropriate)?
4. You should pass this completed and signed form on to either the Recruitment and Training Administrator of the relevant Programme or the Compliance and Training Administrator cta@allnations.ac.uk.

APPENDIX 2:

Completion of Internal Procedures Letter Template

Dear [*Name of complainant*],

Appeal Outcome

This letter confirms that All Nations Christian College has completed its internal investigation into your appeal against the decision of [which body] to [*please describe*]:

The issue(s) that you raised in your *appeal was/were* [*details*]

The issue(s) that were considered in relation to your *appeal was/were* [*brief summary of the appeal*].

The procedures / regulations applied were [name of policy and documents].

The final decision of the College is [*detail*] because [*reasons*].

Review Options:

The Open University accredits our institution and validates our undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome, you may be able to apply for a review of your appeal, by contacting The OU within 28 days of this letter for the next step of the process, using any of the following methods:

- By writing to: the Secretary of the SAARP, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA U.K.
- By email to: SCO-SAARP@open.ac.uk
- By phone: 01908 332840

Following investigation, The OU will issue you with a Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter.

Only when The OU has issued a CoP letter can you (if still dissatisfied) go to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). The OIA was set up under the Higher Education Act 2004 to provide 'an independent student complaints scheme'. This scheme is free to students.

Any complaint made to the OIA can only be made:

- If your complaint is eligible under its rules
- Usually, only if has first been dealt with through the College and The OU's internal procedures and not until after their completion.
- If it is received by the OIA within 12 months of the date of your CoP letter from The Open University or All Nations Christian College.

Yours sincerely,

[Authorised signatory]