

CONFERENCE OF COLLEGES APPEAL TRIBUNAL (“CCAT”)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

These FAQs are intended only as informal advice to students and colleges; they do not form any part of the CCAT Regulations and they have no legal status; they do not bind the CCAT or the CCAT Panel in any way.

For information about the procedures and process of the CCAT, reference should always be made to the Regulations. Details of the timescale can be found in the Schedule.

1. What is the Conference of Colleges Appeal Tribunal (CCAT)?

The CCAT materials were prepared by the Conference of Colleges’ Legal Panel and originally approved by the Conference of Colleges in May 2002.

Colleges, Permanent Private Halls and Societies (collectively referred to throughout as “Colleges”) can participate in the CCAT, and the membership to date is 42 Colleges. Its status is entirely voluntary, and its role is as a Conference appeal body for students on matters of academic and non-academic discipline. Participating Colleges have agreed to assist the CCAT and to follow the outcome of any decision.

The CCAT was established to provide a more independent appeal mechanism than Colleges can provide individually. Students at participating Colleges have a right of appeal to the CCAT against some academic and non-academic disciplinary decisions (**Regulation 1**) (see **FAQ 3**).

Students at non-participating Colleges may have a right of appeal direct to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator ([OIA](#)).

A student who is not happy with the outcome of an appeal to the CCAT may be able to take a complaint to the OIA.

2. Where can I find the CCAT Regulations and Schedule?

The Regulations and Schedule are available on the Conference of Colleges [website](#). They may also be available on the websites and in handbooks of participating Colleges.

3. What appeals will the CCAT consider?

The CCAT can only consider appeals against “academic and non-academic disciplinary decisions imposing a substantial penalty” such as “expulsion or suspension, substantial fines...and other penalties of similar severity” (**Regulation 1**). Substantial fines are fines above £1,000 (**Regulation 1b**). Interim internal decisions such as “the imposition of probation or specially assessed collections” will not be considered by the CCAT (**Regulation 1b**).

4. When can an appeal be made to the CCAT?

An appeal can be made only after the appellant has exhausted all available College appeal processes and received the College’s final decision. The appeal must be made within **5 working days** of the decision being appealed against (**Regulation 5**). Students are advised to contact the Secretariat of the Conference of Colleges (“the Secretariat”) as early as possible if they are considering appealing a decision.

5. Are there any statistics regarding the success of appeals and the number of appeals taken to the CCAT?

Yes. Information is available from the Secretariat. Please email [Lucy Lightowler](mailto:Lucy.Lightowler).

6. Are Panels guided by the reasoning and outcomes of previous cases when making their decisions?

Panels deal with each case on its own individual facts, in accordance with the CCAT Regulations. Panels are not formally bound by the decisions of previous Panels (**Regulation 24**). Practice may vary from one appeal to another, depending on the nature of the appeal. Throughout the process, it should be noted that “the Chair, the President and the Panel have discretion as to the appropriate procedure. In all of their activities, they must act in accordance with the principles of natural justice” (**Regulation 28**).

7. What information do I need in order to bring an appeal to the CCAT?

The CCAT Regulations provide a list of what the appellant needs to provide in their application to submit an appeal (**Regulation 6**).

The timescale of the process, membership of the CCAT and other advice may be found on the Conference of Colleges [website](https://www.confcol.org.uk/).

8. What do I need to do to appeal against a College decision?

There are a number of things to consider regarding bringing an appeal of a College decision to the CCAT:

- a) Consider whether your College is a “participating College” of the CCAT (**Regulation 3**). A list of participating Colleges is available on the Conference of Colleges [website](https://www.confcol.org.uk/). If your College is not a participating member, you should appeal directly to the [OIA](https://www.ox.ac.uk/academic-affairs).
- b) Identify the decision(s) against which you wish to appeal, and provide a copy of the decision(s) being challenged (**Regulation 6a**).
- c) Consider whether the College’s decision involves a “substantial penalty”, such as “expulsion, suspension or, substantial fines”. Interim internal decisions such as the imposition of probation or specially assessed collections will not be considered by the CCAT (**Regulation 1b**).
- d) Consider whether your complaint is that the College has broken its own “statutes, by-laws, regulations or rules relating to academic or non-academic matters” (**Regulation 1a**), and if so, which. You also need to consider whether your complaint relates to a failure to comply with some general principle of law.
- e) Consider what remedy you are seeking against the decision(s) concerned (**Regulation 6d**).

If your College is a participating College, you need to email your application to [Lucy Lightowler](mailto:Lucy.Lightowler) at the Secretariat as soon as possible.

9. Can I appeal to the CCAT if I fail my First Public Examination (FPE)?

No, failure of FPE is outside the remit of the CCAT.

If you fail your FPE on the first attempt, your college will re-enter you for a resit at the next opportunity (you should contact them to discuss this). Please see the [2025-26, General Regulations for the First and Second Public Examination](#).

If you also fail the resit, you will not have reached the threshold standard to embark on the Final Honour School (FHS) and you should be withdrawn from your course. This is a University academic

decision, but may overlap with a College's own regulations for continued membership. A student has two options in this situation:

- a) submit an [Academic Appeal](#) to the Proctors if they believe that there was an error/irregularity or bias in the Examination decision-making process. There is no right of appeal over matters of academic judgment. This process may be most relevant if the student submitted a Mitigating Circumstances and Evidence (MCE) Form and were dissatisfied with how the Examiners took this into account. The University has published [Guidance for Students on Academic Appeals](#).
- b) request an exceptional third attempt at the FPE. This is not an appeal against the results of the Examination nor is it an appeal against any college decisions. This is an entirely different process, where the student asks for another attempt on the grounds of their personal circumstances affecting earlier attempts. Education Committee receives a small number of these requests every year, some with College support and some without. Colleges should request this as a dispensation to [Education Committee](#). If a College does not support a third attempt, the student can apply directly to edcapplications@admin.ox.ac.uk but the Education Committee will seek the views of the college and academic department when they consider the case. This dispensation will only be granted in exceptional circumstances (this process has an internal appeal and ultimately cases can be referred to the OIA by a student if dissatisfied).

10. What information do I need to provide in my application?

Your application should include:

- a) a brief statement of the facts and of the arguments on which the application is based (**Regulation 6b**), generally no longer than two A4 pages in length;
- b) a copy of the decision being challenged, any request for a remedy, and, where applicable, an application for a stay of the effects of the decision being challenged, or for any preliminary relief of an urgent nature (**Regulation 6a, d, e**); and
- c) details of your subject, year, and your email address (**Regulation 6f**).

Applications can be refined and added to if it is decided that a hearing will be held. At this stage, you will be asked to provide an "agreed bundle" (**Regulation 15**) (see **FAQ 16**).

11. What happens after I have submitted my application?

You will receive an acknowledgement from the Secretariat on the day they receive your application (if you submit your application on an evening, weekend, or during University closure, this will be the next working day). The Secretariat will also send you details of the procedure and timeline that will be followed.

The College will be asked to provide a brief response to the application which they will send to the Secretariat.

A Panel will usually be convened to consider your application and the College's response, unless the Panel President decides that your case does not fall within the CCAT's jurisdiction (**Regulation 13**).

If the Panel President alone, or the Panel, decides that your case does fall within the CCAT's jurisdiction, they will proceed with arranging a hearing (**Regulation 14**).

12. Who will be on the Panel to consider my appeal?

The Panel will comprise a Panel President and two Panel members from nominees of Colleges participating in the CCAT. Participating Colleges must nominate two people, while participating

Permanent Private Halls (“Halls”) must nominate one person, to serve on the CCAT. Those selected to serve are either members of the Governing Body of the College or Hall, or have sufficient expertise in student welfare and academic issues as recommended by the Head of House (**Regulation 3**).

The Panel President must hold a law degree or other professional legal qualification (**Regulation 8**).

Panel members cannot be a member of, or have any direct connection with, your College or your teaching (**Regulation 9**).

13. What do I do if one of the Panel members has a connection with my appeal?

“Both the appellant and the College can challenge any Panel member if there are legitimate doubts as to their independence or impartiality” (**Regulation 11**).

Once a Panel has been convened, both parties will be asked to notify the Secretariat by email if there are any concerns with the Panel membership. You need to demonstrate that there is a risk, or a perception of a risk, of bias. The Chair or Deputy Chair will decide if the concern is justified, and if so, a replacement will be sought, and the parties notified (**Regulation 11**).

You do not have the right to choose Panel members according to preference and it is not necessary for Panel members to have medical qualifications to decide medical issues.

14. When can I expect to have my case heard?

The President and/or Panel will first decide whether your appeal falls within the CCAT’s jurisdiction and whether it is appropriate to hold a hearing to consider your appeal (**Regulations 10 & 13**). Additional information may be required at this stage of the process to clarify particular points (**Regulation 16**).

If it is decided that a hearing is appropriate, both parties will be asked to attend a hearing, which will normally be held no later than 14 working days after the application has been received by the Secretariat (**Regulation 14**). There may be some unavoidable delays when appeals are submitted just before or during vacations.

15. I have been sent a date for the hearing, and I can’t attend, what can I do?

If there are dates that you cannot make for very good reasons, you must inform the Panel at the time you submit your appeal to the Secretariat.

If a difficulty unexpectedly arises, and there is a good reason, you should notify the Secretariat immediately. It may be possible for the Panel to rearrange a hearing date. However, the process for the CCAT is intended to be an expedited process and it will be of benefit to all concerned to meet the deadlines and attend the hearing as required, so that the outcome of your appeal is not delayed.

16. What do I have to provide for the hearing?

The Panel President will ask you and the College to prepare an “agreed bundle” and provide the information needed to clarify any specific issues arising from the preliminary discussion of the application and the College response (**Regulations 15 & 16**).

17. What is an “agreed bundle”?

This is an agreed set of documents which the Panel is likely to find useful, and any documents to which either party intends to refer in its submission. These are collected in a single bundle.

Documents such as relevant College Rules, extracts of the minutes of relevant bodies, and copies of significant letters or emails will usually be included. Agreement between the parties may be helpful in

determining how far back in the history of the case it is necessary to go. It will be helpful if both parties go further and set out the agreed facts, or reach agreement as to which facts are in dispute.

With regard to the disputed facts, the bundle should include the documents, and any witness statements, that either side proposes to rely on. The bundles must be paginated with tabs, table of contents, and cross references provided. The appellant and the College must work together to produce the bundle and to email it to the Secretariat no later than 2 working days before the hearing. Both parties must ensure that they each have a set of the agreed bundle (**Regulation 15**).

Guidance on producing an agreed bundle can be found [here](#).

18. Where will the appeal be heard?

The hearing will normally take place over Microsoft Teams (**Regulation 18**). The Secretariat will communicate arrangements for the hearing to both parties via email.

19. Can a student be allowed representation from the Student Union as their “Counsel”, or does this have to be a legal professional?

You can attend the hearing on your own, or take a friend or family member with you for moral support. Hearings are conducted informally, in a non-confrontational manner and the Panel President will communicate simply. Most appellants do not feel the need for external legal advice.

“Both the appellant and the College may choose to be represented by a third party. With the Panel’s agreement, this may include a solicitor or barrister.” (**Regulation 17**).

Any third-party representative, including representation from the Student Union, is permitted. If the Panel find that a representative is stepping beyond the functions of advocacy, it could step in.

You will need to notify the Secretariat of proposed representation and witnesses as soon after notice of the hearing as possible (**Regulation 14**). If one party is so represented, the other party may ask for and be granted similar rights.

Note that each party will bear its own costs of representation.

20. What will happen at the hearing?

“The hearing itself will normally be held in private via Microsoft Teams, however parties may apply to the Chair for the hearing to be held in public” (**Regulation 17**).

At a typical hearing, the Panel President and two Panel members, and a College representative or representatives will be present. An officer from the Secretariat will often be present in a neutral capacity, and will arrange for the hearing to be recorded (and transcribed if needed) (**Regulation 19**). Upon joining the Microsoft Teams meeting, each party will be admitted by the Secretariat. The Panel will introduce themselves and explain what will happen. If you need to take a few moments out, the Panel will be happy to arrange for a short break.

21. How long will the hearing take?

“...the Chair, the President and the Panel have discretion as to the appropriate procedure. In all of their activities, they must act in accordance with the principles of natural justice.” (**Regulation 28**).

The length of hearings will vary from case to case as they are considered on an individual basis.

The purpose of the hearing is to enable the Panel to gain a full picture of the situation, and the length of time that this will take will depend on the nature of the appeal.

Typically, hearings have been held during a morning or an afternoon during the week. The priority of the hearing is to ensure that everyone has a fair chance to present their case, but the aim is to ensure that this does not continue beyond one morning or afternoon and may in fact be shorter.

Each side may be informed in advance that they have a fixed time to present their case to the Panel. If witnesses are produced, witness statements may be asked for in advance of the hearing.

22. When will I be told the decision of the Panel?

Normally within 7 working days of the hearing (**Regulation 25**). If matters are straightforward, it may be possible for the Panel to provide a provisional decision at the end of the hearing. Brief reasons will be provided with, or as soon as possible after, the CCAT Decision has been communicated (**Regulation 24**). The CCAT Decision will be communicated via email.

23. What do I do if I am unhappy with the outcome of my appeal to the CCAT?

The next route of appeal is to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator ([OIA](#)). The OIA has a helpful webpage detailing which complaints they can and cannot look at [here](#). Details of how to do this are sent to both parties with the final CCAT Decision. Students must send a signed OIA Complaint Form within **12 months** of the date of the final CCAT Decision and the Completion of Procedures Letter. For example, if your Completion of Procedures Letter is dated 7 January the OIA should receive your Complaint Form by 7 January the following year.

24. Can I claim costs for my appeal?

No. Each party bears the cost of an appeal to the CCAT.

25. What happens to the bundles, documents, decision and recording?

Each party should retain their own documents. The Panel members will return any paper documents to the Secretariat.

Files will be retained for two years from the date of the hearing by the Secretariat, after which all except the CCAT Decision will remain on file. The anonymised CCAT Decision may be made available to new Panel Presidents and members for guidance.

26. Where can I access welfare support while involved in a CCAT case?

There are a number of services available to provide support to you while involved in a CCAT case. Useful information about these services can be found [here](#).