

Student Complaints, Reviews, Appeals & Feedback

Policies and Procedures



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The Benedict XVI Catholic Institute of Higher Education (BCI) always welcomes feedback from its students. Whilst most of the feedback BCI receive is positive, problems do arise and students may occasionally wish to express concern or dissatisfaction with aspects of the Institute's services it provides. BCI's aim is to use the feedback gathered from such complaints positively in order to improve the services offered and to enhance the campus experience for all students.

BCI is committed to ensuring transparent processes for complaints, and general feedback, and deal with a complaint seriously, fairly, within a reasonable timescale and, where appropriate, in confidence.

1. Student Complaints Policy

1.1 Purpose of the Policy

This policy outlines the key principles that will be applied by BCI in receiving and resolving complaints from its students.

A complaint is defined as a written expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about the Institute's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the Institute.

1.2 Scope

1.2.1 This policy applies to all students studying at BCI

1.2.2 A complaint brought under this policy may relate to:

- the performance of administrative, academic, teaching, or service functions of the Institute
- any third party involved in the delivery of services on behalf of the Institute, if the complaint is in regard to the delivery of those services, or
- the behaviour or actions of a staff member or another student of the Institute

1.2.3 This policy does not cover the following:

- Requests for new or different services or facilities
- Matters where there are separate policies or procedures, i.e. Academic Appeal.
- Matters of academic judgement (the considered view of an appropriately qualified and experienced subject specialist on the

academic performance. This could relate to: learning outcomes, the award of marks for an assessment, fitness to practise and or research methodology.)

- Appeals against the decision not to offer a place to an applicant, including matters of judgement about an applicant's suitability to study a programme.

1.3 General Principles

- 1.3.1 The Institute recognizes its responsibility to provide an environment in which all students and staff are treated fairly and with respect. Thus, it maintains an organizational culture in which a student's right to seek resolution of a complaint is recognized and supported.
- 1.3.2 Anonymous complaints may be made. However, the Institute may be constrained in how effectively it can investigate an anonymous complaint, and ongoing anonymity cannot be guaranteed if a matter is investigated.
- 1.3.3 Students are encouraged to informally raise matters of concern at any time, without needing to proceed to a complaint, unless they wish to do so.

1.4 Complaint-handling Principles

1.4.1 Good faith:

The complaints process assumes and relies upon all parties engaging in good faith, with an open approach to considering reasonable options.

1.4.2 Procedural fairness:

All complaints will be handled with due regard to procedural fairness.

1.4.3 Proximity:

Every reasonable effort will be made by the parties to the complaint and the decisionmaker to resolve the complaint at the lowest level possible.

1.4.4 Timeliness:

All complaints will be addressed in a timely manner, in compliance with internal and external requirements.

1.4.5 Confidentiality and Privacy:

- i. A complaint will be treated by all parties with appropriate confidentiality.
- ii. Unless required otherwise by law, information arising in the course of a complaint will be shared only with the parties and other persons involved on a need-to-know basis.
- iii. Information will only be used for the purpose of resolving the complaint in accordance with this Policy, with the provision that aggregated and de-identified data can be used to support the Institute's monitoring, reporting and continuous improvement processes.

1.4.6 No disadvantage:

- i. A student making a complaint will not be disadvantaged simply because of having made the complaint. Where alternative study or class arrangements are necessary to as an interim action or to resolve a complaint, any alternative arrangements will not act to disadvantage the student who made the complaint.
- ii. In particular, the student will not be hindered from using any facilities and attending lectures, classes, laboratories and tutorials and to submit assessments, simply because they have made the complaint.
- iii. BCI will not tolerate victimization in any form of:
 - a student who lodges a complaint
 - a person who provides information about a complaint matter, or
 - any other person involved in investigating or adjudicating the complaint.
- iv. Disciplinary action will be taken against anyone who retaliates against or victimizes a person as outlined above.

1.4.7 Vexatious and frivolous complaints: The Institute reserves the right to take appropriate disciplinary action in the event of a complaint that is demonstrated to be vexatious. The Institute may also decline to consider a complaint that is frivolous.

1.4.8 Right to withdraw: A student who makes a complaint generally has the right to withdraw it, but there will be instances where the Institute, for its own protection and the protection of others, must nonetheless continue to investigate a matter after the complaint has been withdrawn.

1.4.9 Support: A student who makes a complaint or is the subject of a complaint has the right to have a support person with them at any discussions, meetings or hearings related to the complaint, and to access the support services provided by the Institute. A student may nominate their own support person, other than a practicing legal practitioner.

1.4.10 Right to review and appeal:

- i. A student who is dissatisfied with a complaint decision may request a review by an appropriate senior person who has had no previous involvement in the matter, as provided in the Student Review and Appeal Policy.
- ii. A student may appeal the outcome of a review if they meet the grounds provided in the Student Review and Appeal Policy.

1.4.11 Recordkeeping and reporting

- i. Full and accurate records will be kept of all complaints, reviews and appeal matters, their investigation (if relevant) and their resolution
- ii. Complaints data will be reported on in a regular and systematic manner.

1.4.12 **Continuous improvement:** The Institute will make a record of, and follow up on, the causes of the complaint, and, where appropriate, put in place remediation to mitigate against a recurrence.

1.5. Complaint-handling Procedure

Student complaints will be managed by a Complaints Panel which will comprise of two senior members of the Institute and one representative of the student body. The Panel members chosen will have had no previous connection with the investigation of the complaint. The Panel will interview the relevant parties and will determine the Institute's final decision on the complaint.

The student complaints procedure consists of three stages:

1. Informal early resolution stage
2. Formal stage
3. Review stage

At all stages of the Procedure students are invited to communicate clearly and concisely, identifying the core issue(s) and stating the desired outcome. It is recommended that the relevant party should provide any evidence to support the case as early as possible in the process.

1. Informal early resolution stage

The purpose of this stage is to swiftly address issues or concerns on an informal basis. The Institute expects that the majority of issues and concerns can be resolved informally at this stage through discussion and negotiation between the student and staff at the point closest to where the matter originated.

2. Formal stage

The Formal stage is originated as and when:

- A Student is not satisfied with the outcome of the Informal early resolution stage.
- The issues raised are complex and will require detailed investigation.

Formal complaints can be sent via email to studentcomplaints@bci.lk or a hard copy to the Head of the Department by registered post.

3 Review stage

If the student is not satisfied with the resolution offered to the complaint, they may request for the complaint to be reviewed. Requests for review should be submitted to the Head of the Department, either by emailing to studentcomplaints@bci.lk or by sending it by registered post, within 14 calendar days of notification of the outcome from the Formal stage.

The following are acceptable grounds for review:

- That there has been a clear failure of due process in consideration of the complaint, which the complainant can define and provide evidence;
- That the decision of the Formal stage was not reasonable and in accordance with the facts of the case;
- New material evidence which the complainant was unable to provide, for valid reasons, earlier in the process.

The Institute will inform the complainant the outcome of the review within 14 calendar days. A letter of completion will be issued at this point indicating that the investigations have been completed and notifying its final decision, and does not intend to take the matter any further.

2 Student Reviews & Appeals Policy

2.4 Purpose of the Policy

This policy outlines the key principles that will be applied in:

- receiving, assessing and hearing requests for reviews of a decision made by the Institute
- receiving, assessing and hearing eligible appeals against review decisions.

2.2 Scope

2.2.1 A student may request a review of a decision made under the following policies:

- Student Complaints
- Assessment & Awards
- Academic Integrity
- Admissions - Enrolment
- Student Progress
- Other policies, not listed above, which provide for recourse to the Student Appeals Committee

- 2.2.2 A student may apply to have an appeal heard where relevant grounds are met, of a review decision.
- 2.2.3 Considers appeals on committee decisions relating to other academic matters, after a review has taken place.
- 2.2.4 Appeals related to the outcomes of matters with regard to Student Conduct or staff disciplinary processes will not be considered.
- 2.2.5 Decisions of the Academic Senate and the Governing Council are not subject to review or appeal under this policy.

2.3 General principles

- 2.3.1. All actions under this policy are to be based on values that are consistent with the Mission of the Institute supported by principles of mutual respect and procedural fairness for and by all students, staff and others who may be involved.
- 2.3.2 Reviews and appeals must be made, assessed, and heard in a timely manner, in accordance with internal and/or external timelines, processes and requirements that are relevant to the subject of the matter.
- 2.3.3 There will be no cost associated with any review or appeal made
- 2.3.4 It is the responsibility of the student to state their grounds for review or appeal fully and to provide copies of all relevant evidence at the beginning of the process.

2.4 Procedures in handling student reviews and appeals

2.4.1. Student Reviews

- 2.4.1.1 A student who is concerned with any academic or administrative decision or any other within the scope of the this and believes an error has been made, should first consult the person who made the relevant decision, to gain an understanding of the basis for the decision. Such consultation should normally be initiated by the student within 10 working days of being notified of the relevant decision.
- 2.4.1.2 A written request for a review of decision must be lodged in student's own words and under their own name providing the following details
 - Details of the original decision and documentation with regard to the decision
 - Reasons for requesting a review.
- 2.4.1.3 In the event the request for a review is accepted by the Review and Appeal Committee the following procedures will be carried out;
 - Priorities requests for review
 - Assess the nature and substance of the request for a review
 - ensuring that a request for a review does not overlap with any legal action underway on the same matter
 - Determining the referral point for the request for a review

- Liaise with the student and original decision-maker to clarify information relevant to the matter and request further documentation.

2.4.1.4 Review request by the students may be rejected on the following terms and conditions

- Request concerns a decision that is not reviewable
- Request is frivolous
- Consists of incomplete information or failure to provide requested material in the required timeframe
- Request is vexatious
- Request not submitted within the specified time period

2.4.1.5 Students will be notified of the outcome of the review within 14 calendar days of the request being referred to the reviewer. The student will be informed of any delay and the expected timeframe for completing the review.

2.4.1.6 In conducting the review the reviewer may:

- Consult with the student, the original decision-maker, and any other person they consider may be relevant to the matter
- Re-examine any documentary evidence provided
- Consider any new documentary evidence provided
- Consider the original decision or any permissions applied in light of decisions in other comparable matters.

2.4.1.7 As an outcome of the review may be subject to any one of the following:

- Original decision without amendment
- Original decision with one or more amendments
- Original decision set a side and referred for new investigations
- Original decision set a side and substitute a different decision

2.4.1.8 The outcome of the review will be notified in writing to the student

2.4.1.9 If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of the review, and has relevant grounds, they may appeal via the process described in 2.5.

2.4.2. Student Appeals

2.4.2.1 The Student Appeals Committee will hear appeals, where relevant grounds are met, arising from reviews of decisions under the policies mentioned in 2.2.1

2.4.2.2 Students may request for an appeal against a review decision only on the following grounds.

- Situations where relevant evidence emerges that was not available at the time of the original decision during a student assessment, informal appeal, etc.
 - That there was a misapplication of policy or procedure resulting in some real disadvantage to the student
 - That the authorization applied was noticeably excessive
 - That there was a bias or a conflict of interest on the part of the reviewer.
- 2.4.2.3 Appeals to make in a student's own words and under their own name.
- 2.4.2.4 Appeals need to be submitted within 10 calendar days of notification of the outcome of the review, the Institute considers that there are exceptional or compelling circumstances.
- 2.4.2.5 When lodging an appeal the following documents need to be submitted
- a copy of the written notice of the outcome of the review
 - specifying the grounds for appeal
 - outlining a case in support of the grounds for appeal, including any evidence
- 2.4.2.6 When an appeal is received, the Student Review and appeal committee will verify the following:
- That the documentation is correctly completed and contains all required supporting evidence
 - Confirm that the review of the original decision has been completed
 - Liaise with the student if any errors of documentation require correction
 - Assess the appeal and advise the student if the matter is not an eligible decision for appeal
- 2.4.2.7 In the event the appeal is accepted hearing will be scheduled within 30 calendar days. In case of any delay in scheduling a hearing within this timeframe, the student will be informed of the reasons for the delay and the expected timeframe for scheduling a hearing.
- 2.4.2.8 With regard to the outcome of the appeal the following procedures will be adopted:
- If the appeal is dismissed, the Committee must confirm the review decision.
 - If the appeal is allowed in whole or in part, the decision will be notified to the original decision-maker for the matter to be reconsidered in the light of the Committee's findings
 - If it is considered not appropriate to remit the decision, they may set aside the decision or substitute or vary the decision or sanction.
 - The decision of the Student Review and Appeals Committee will finalize the internal review and appeals procedures

3 Student Feedback Policy

3.1 Purpose of the Policy

To monitor and improve the quality of the student learning experience through the collection, use and reporting of student feedback about teaching and the learning environment.

3.2 Scope

This policy applies to collecting and evaluating student feedback and opinions about individual unit, the course they are enrolled in, quality of teaching, resources and support available at the Institute.

3.3 General Principles

- 3.3.1 All students will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the subjects of study or relating to the broader Institute experience.
- 3.3.2 Surveys will be conducted to collect feedback from students relating to courses and units; quality of teaching; and experiences with the Institute.
- 3.3.3 Feedback processes will be anonymous, systematic, rigorous and respectful of the rights of students and staff and incorporate strategies to maximize student participation. Privacy and confidentiality will be ensured at all stages of the process.
- 3.3.4 Student Feedback will be used:
 - to improve the quality of courses and units through the development of annual improvement plans;
 - To inform the professional development needs of academic staff;
 - To enhance course and unit design;
 - To improve the provision of learning resources, facilities, equipment and services through the development of annual improvement plans; and
 - To compare and benchmark the Institute's performance against the sector or other providers.
- 3.3.5 All feedback surveys and forms should be fit for purpose and meet the Quality Assurance requirements.
- 3.3.6 The overall survey result for all subjects will be presented to the Academic Board to inform and improve the quality of learning and teaching activities. And the overall survey result of the Institute will be presented to the Management Team to inform and improve different aspects of the Institute's operation.