

ABMA Appeals Policy

Introduction

This policy is aimed at our customers, including learners, who are delivering/enrolled on or have taken an ABMA programme. It sets out the process you should follow when submitting appeals to us and outlines the process for how we will respond to enquiries and appeals.

It is also for use by our staff to ensure they deal with all appeals in a consistent manner.

This policy addresses two types of appeals:

1. Enquiries About Results (EARs) Appeals – which deals with **appeals associated with results** (which includes results processing checks, re-marks and/or marker report), and
2. General Appeals – which are appeals against a **decision** that ABMA has made.

This policy is divided into two parts to make the distinction between the two types of appeals clear.

Centre responsibility

It is important that members of your staff involved in the management, assessment and quality assurance of our programmes, and your learners are aware of the contents of this policy.

In addition, you must have internal appeal arrangements which learners can access if they wish to appeal against a decision taken by your centre. If an individual wishes to appeal against a decision taken by your centre, they must first exhaust your centre's appeals process before bringing the matter to ABMA.

Review arrangements

We will review this policy annually as part of our self-evaluation arrangements and revise it as and when necessary, in response to lessons learned, customer and learner feedback or requests from, or good practice guidance.

If you would like to feed back any views please contact us via the details provided at the end of this policy.

Fees

The fees charged for all stages are outlined in this document. These fees will cover the administrative and personnel costs involved in dealing with appeals.

If the final decision results in the appeal being upheld and the original decision overturned, the fee will be refunded.

The fees published reflects **each** decision being appealed.

| Enquiring About Results (EAR) Fees | |
|---|--------|
| Per Certificate | £25.00 |

| General Appeal Stages Fees | |
|---|---|
| Stage 1 – centre’s appealing on behalf of a learner | £50.00 |
| Stage 1 – centre’s appealing on behalf of itself | £200.00 |
| Stage 2 | £150.00 + fees/expenses charged by independent reviewer |

EAR and General Appeal applications will only be processed once the fees have been cleared.

Definition of ‘Appeal’

An appeal is defined as: ‘an earnest enquiry, request to reconsider or reverse a previously made decision, judgement or assessment’.¹

Areas covered by the policy

This policy covers:

- appeal from centres, on behalf of their learners, in relation to an assessment result
- appeal in relation to late registration/certification requests
- appeal in relation to ABMA’s decision concerning a centre’s application to offer an ABMA programme
- appeal concerning the contents and/or findings of a centre monitoring activity
- appeal concerning the contents and/or findings of a malpractice and/or maladministration investigation

¹ Handling Complaints, Appeals and Enquiries. (2018).

- appeal in relation to a decision to decline a request to make reasonable adjustments
- appeal in relation to a decision to decline a request to allow special considerations
- appeal in relation to the application of an action on a centre
- appeal in relation to the application of a sanction on a centre
- appeal in relation to a decision made by ABMA following an investigation into a complaint about a centre

Appeals process summary

If a centre wishes to raise an appeal against a decision that we have made, the appeals process is to review **how** the decision/outcome was reached in the first place, whether the correct process was followed when making the decision and if the decision/outcome was appropriate.

The reviewer then has to either uphold or reject the appeal.

Who can appeal?

Appeals can only be submitted by the head of your centre. If a learner(s) wishes to raise an appeal, your head of centre can raise the appeal on the learner(s)'s behalf.²

PART 1: Enquiries About Results (EAR): Checks, Re-marks and Reports

We have a thorough process of marking, moderating and verification in place to ensure that all ABMA learners receive a fair and accurate result which reflects their accomplishments during an assessment. These processes are regularly reviewed (and updated where necessary) to ensure quality and standards are maintained to the highest level. In the rare instance where a learner does not feel that the marks awarded to them are a fair reflection of their performance, they must inform their centre that they wish to raise an EAR.

Your head of centre can then raise an EAR application using the ABMA Appeals Form.

EARs are handled by the ABMA Examinations Department (ED).

² Learners and/or their parents/carers are not entitled to appeal directly to ABMA. Representations must be made to the head of centre where the learner is enrolled at/registered with. The head of centre's decision as to whether to proceed with an appeal is subject to the centre's internal appeals arrangements (A Guide to the Awarding Bodies' Appeals Processes. (2017). [ebook] JCQ, p.2. Available at: <https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/appeals/jcq> [Accessed 23 Mar. 2018]).

Deadline for EAR Applications

All applications and associated fees for EAR must be received by ABMA no later than **6 weeks** after the electronic results have been issued. The ED will acknowledge receipt within 5 working days of receiving the application and fees.

Outcomes of EAR Applications

In the case of an EAR application resulting in the marks being changed (wherein the marks are either increased or lowered), the marks and overall grade will be adjusted accordingly. Revised results will be issued to the learner and will supersede any previous results issued. Results/certificates are re-issued within 20 working days of the outcome.

Where marks are changed as a result of an EAR application, the fees paid for the EAR will be refunded.

Where marks remain the same, the fees paid for the EAR will be retained.

Once all the EAR options have been exhausted, we will not accept any further appeals.

PART 2: General Appeals

We have thorough policies and systems in place to assist us in making decisions. These policies are regularly reviewed (and updated where necessary) to ensure quality and standards are maintained to the highest level. In the rare instance where a centre does not feel that we have applied our policies correctly or fairly when making a decision, that centre can raise an appeal.

Centres can then raise a General Appeal using the ABMA Appeals Form.

General Appeals are handled by the ABMA Quality Department (QD).³

Deadline for General Appeal Applications

All applications and associated fees for appeals must be received by ABMA no later than **6 weeks** after the decision was communicated to the centre. The QD will acknowledge receipt within 5 working days of receiving the appeal and appropriate fees.

³ In instances where the QD was involved in the initial investigation, to ensure impartiality, the appeal will be handled by the Compliance Department.

Grounds for Appeals⁴

Appellants must clearly and concisely set out their grounds for appeals and must include **all** further evidence relevant to the appeal. The following are accepted as reasonable grounds for appeals:

- the incident was not dealt with in accordance with ABMA’s policies or procedures
- the decision was unreasonable in light of the evidence presented
- further evidence (including medical evidence) has come to light which changes the basis of our decision⁵
- the action/sanction imposed is disproportionate to the seriousness of the malpractice/maladministration.

The following do not, by themselves, constitute grounds for an appeal:

- the individual did not intend to cheat
- the individual has an unblemished academic record
- the individual could lose a university place
- the individual regrets his/her actions.

Stage 1: Preliminary Appeal

ABMA will aim to process and respond to Preliminary Appeals within 10 working days of the payment being cleared. Please note that in some cases the review processes may take longer, for example, if a centre visit is required. In such instances, we will contact all parties concerned to inform them of the likely revised timescale.

The purpose of the Preliminary Appeal is to check that the appeal application is complete and to ascertain if the issue can be resolved before it goes to the independent appeal stage. In all instances, we will ensure that the person carrying out this appeal review will not have a personal interest in the outcome.

The role of the appeal reviewer is to:

- check that the relevant ABMA policies and procedures were applied correctly,
- review the evidence that was used/informed to reach the decision/outcome,

⁴ Adapted from JCQ, 2019. *A Guide to the Awarding Bodies’ Appeals Processes*. [pdf] Available at: <<https://jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/JCQ-Appeals-Booklet-2019.pdf>> [Accessed 23 March 2022].

⁵ Further evidence submitted will be assessed in terms of the relevance it has on the **original** decision/outcome. If we determine that the evidence has no relevance to the original decision/outcome, we will communicate this in our report.

- review further evidence (including medical evidence) which has come to light which could change the basis of the original decision
- determine if the decision reached was correct in light of our policies, procedures and the evidence.

The appeal review process may involve:

- a discussion with the appellant or the learner,
- a request for further information from the appellant or learner, and/or
- a centre visit by authorised ABMA personnel.

Following the initial review, the reviewer will contact the appellant with details of our decision to either:

1. Uphold the appeal and amend our original decision in light of the new rationale/evidence being put forward and which has now been reviewed, or
2. Reject the appeal and confirm that we stand by our original decision. The reviewer will provide a rationale as to why the appeal was rejected.

Should the appeal be upheld, the fees paid for the appeal will be refunded.

Should the appeal be rejected, the fees will be retained, and the appellant must confirm, within 10 working days of being issued the appeal outcome, whether they accept the decision or if they wish to formally proceed to our independent appeal stage.⁶

Stage 2: Independent Appeal

If the decision is made to proceed to the independent appeal stage, appellants must submit the Stage 2 Appeal Fees within 5 working days of notifying us of their decision.⁷

ABMA will aim to process the Independent Appeal request, and source an independent reviewer within 10 working days of the payment being cleared. Please note that in some cases sourcing an independent reviewer may take longer. In such instances, we will contact all parties concerned to inform them of the likely revised timescale.

The independent reviewer will be someone who is not an employee of ours, an assessor working for us, or otherwise connected to our organisation. They will also be someone with the

⁶ If the appellant does not provide a notification within this timeframe, we will assume the matter closed and we will close the appeal.

⁷ Please note that this is an admin fee and is non-refundable should the appellant chooses to withdraw from the appeals process

relevant competence to make a decision in relation to the appeal and will not have a personal interest in the decision being appealed.

Once we have sourced an independent reviewer, we will provide the appellant with the following information:

- Details of the independent reviewer and who they are a representative of (where permitted),
- The fees that the independent reviewer will charge (if applicable), and
- The timeframe that the independent reviewer anticipates that the review will take.

Upon being issued the details of the independent review, the appellant has 5 working days to:

- acknowledge and agree the terms and, where applicable, the associated cost of the review, and
- submit the independent review fees, including proof of payment, where applicable.

If this timeframe is not met, ABMA will assume that the matter is closed.

Once the terms have been agreed and, where applicable, the associated fees have been paid, all documents will be forwarded to the independent reviewer. We will ask that the independent reviewer respond fully to the appeal in accordance with the anticipated timeframe given, however, please note that in some cases the review processes may take longer, for example, if a centre visit is required. In such instances, we will contact the appellant to inform them of the likely revised timescale.

The role of the independent reviewer is to:

- check that the relevant ABMA policies and procedures were applied correctly,
- review the evidence that was used/informed to reach the decision/outcome,
- review further evidence (including medical evidence) which has come to light which could change the basis of the original decision
- determine if the decision reached was correct in light of our policies, procedures and the evidence.

The independent review process may involve:

- a discussion with the appellant, the learner and ABMA personnel,
- a request for further information from the appellant, the learner or ABMA personnel, and/or
- a centre visit by authorised independent reviewer personnel.

Following the independent review, the reviewer will submit their recommendation to ABMA to either:

1. Uphold the appeal and amend our original decision in light evidence given, or
2. Reject the appeal and confirm that they stand by our original decision. The reviewer should provide a rationale for as to why the appeal was rejected.

Should the appeal be upheld, the fees paid for the appeal will be refunded.

Should the appeal be rejected, the fees will be retained, and the appellant must confirm, within 10 working days of being issued the appeal outcome, their acceptance of the decision.⁸

The decision of the independent review is final.

Contact us

If you have any queries about the contents of the policy, please contact our Quality Department at:

ABMA
7 Queens Square
Lyndhurst Road
Ascot
Berkshire
SL5 9FE
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0) 20 8733 7000
E-mail: quality@abma.uk.com
Web: www.abma.uk.com

⁸ If the appellant does not provide a notification within this timeframe, we will assume the matter closed and we will close the appeal.