



The Inns of
Court College
of Advocacy

Fair Admissions Policy

**Including Admissions Complaints and Appeals
Procedure**

Version 7

Updated and approved 29 March 2022

Introduction

This policy applies to all categories of applicant to the ICCA Bar Course and is intended to provide a central policy to support all procedures involved in selection and admissions of students.

The ICCA will recruit students with the strongest academic ability and potential, irrespective of their social, cultural and economic background. The ICCA is committed to equality in education and applications are considered on their individual merits based wholly on the information provided by the applicant through the application process.

The ICCA will implement fair, transparent and consistent admissions practices and aims to offer clear and transparent advice and guidance to prospective applicants to enable them to make informed choices.

This policy is consistent with good admissions practice in higher education, as defined in the Quality Assurance Agency's '[UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#)' and complies with current legislation affecting the admission of students.

Role and Responsibilities

The ICCA operates a single admissions process for the ICCA Bar Course. This means that all applicants apply for both parts of the Bar Course save where applicants seek to join Part Two only, having already successfully completed the centralised assessments. Further details of prior learning and experience and equivalences can be found in the ICCA [Recognition of Prior Learning and Experience Policy](#).

The ICCA application process has four stages:

1. Application form and questionnaire (online)
2. Shortlisting
3. Selection
4. Offers

The academic admissions requirements are set by the ICCA Board of Governors. These will be in addition to the [mandatory admissions criteria set by the Bar Standards Board](#) (BSB) as the Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body for the profession. The ICCA may set requirements above, but not below, these mandatory admission criteria.

Each application is assessed by professional admissions staff who are responsible for progression decisions and ensuring admissions requirements are met. Non-standard and marginal applications will be sent to the ICCA Vice-Dean for review. All Admissions Staff and Assessors will be provided with regular and detailed training to ensure decisions comply with this policy.

Academic Entry Criteria

The ICCA publishes entry criteria on the [Entry Requirements](#) section of the ICCA website. In line with Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) advice to higher education providers on consumer protection law, the information will be accurate, clear, unambiguous and timely. As such, the ICCA avoid altering admissions criteria during the course of the application Cycle.

The ICCA accepts applicants with a wide range of qualifications and equivalences as stated in the ICCA Bar Course Entry Requirements section of the ICCA website and the ICCA [Recognition of Prior Learning and Experience Policy](#). Where an equivalency has not been published, enquiries to the ICCA are advised. The ICCA is committed to a regular review of entry requirements.

The published entry requirements reflect a typical offer; however, meeting or being predicted to meet this does not guarantee an offer. This is due to variations in the number of applications we receive each Cycle and the additional entry criteria applied at ICCA Bar Course Selection events. Applicants who fail to meet the minimum undergraduate academic degree or Graduate Diploma in Law (or equivalent law conversion course qualification) standard are entitled to apply for the exercise of discretion in their individual case where mitigating circumstances apply (see below).

Applications will be assessed against the advertised entry requirements for the ICCA Bar Course. The typical minimum academic entry requirements are an acceptable law degree awarded at a minimum level of Upper Second Class (2:1); or a degree in any other subject awarded at a minimum level of Lower Second Class (2:2) together with a Graduate Diploma in Law (or equivalent qualification) with a Commendation or Distinction.

Any offers to students awaiting results will be conditional on meeting the minimum academic standard.

An *acceptable* law degree means a UK/Republic of Ireland degree awarded at Level 6 (or above) of the '[Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#)' by a recognised degree awarding body which covers the [foundation of legal knowledge subjects](#) and the skills associated with graduate legal work (e.g. legal research) and which is compliant with the [QAA benchmark statement for law](#);

A *degree* in any other subject means a UK/Republic of Ireland degree, awarded at Level 6 (or above) of the '[Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#)', by a recognised degree awarding body.

Students who do not hold an acceptable law degree must take the Graduate Diploma in Law (or equivalent qualification) which must cover the [foundation of legal knowledge subjects](#).

Students who do not obtain a UK/Republic of Ireland degree of the required standard must verify the equivalence of their qualifications or experience by obtaining a Certificate of Academic Standing from the BSB.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) is responsible for safeguarding the quality and standards of programmes across the UK. Therefore, the ICCA does not discriminate between UK degrees awarded a similar classification.

Time Limits

To be eligible for enrolment, applicants must commence the ICCA Bar Course within five years of 31st December in the year in which they completed the academic component (undergraduate acceptable law degree or Graduate Diploma in Law, or equivalent law conversion course).

Applicants whose academic qualifications fall outside this timeframe must complete a Graduate Diploma in Law (or equivalent) or seek exemption from the same from the BSB. In the latter case, proof of exemption by certificate is required.

Additional Mandatory Entry Requirements

Entry requirements imposed by the ICCA, the BSB, or the ICCA's Academic Partner are clearly listed in the ICCA Bar Course Entry Requirements on the ICCA website.

All applicants must hold a valid Bar Course aptitude test (BCAT) pass to enrol on the ICCA Bar Course.

All applicants must join an Inn of Court to enrol on Part Two of the ICCA Bar Course, although joining an Inn at the earliest opportunity is recommended. It should be borne in mind that applications need to be made approximately 12 weeks before enrolment to ensure the process can be completed. Joining an Inn of Court is separate and distinct from joining the ICCA Bar Course and is the responsibility of individual candidates.

To proceed to and enrol on Part Two of the ICCA Bar Course students must pass all Part One assessments (the BSB centrally set assessments) at either the first or second attempt, excluding any assessment sitting which is set aside due to mitigating circumstances.

English Language Requirements

In addition to the mandatory entry requirements listed above, to enrol on the ICCA Bar Course, all applicants must, in accordance with BSB regulations, exercise good English language skills as defined in section 1.8 of the [Professional Statement for Barristers](#).

At enrolment, ICCA Bar Course students must have attained a minimum standard of:

- IELTS Level 7.5 in all disciplines, or
- 73 in each part of the Pearson Test of English (academic).

If the ICCA considers that any aspect of a student's English language ability is not at the required level after they have commenced the course, the ICCA will, as soon as the issue is identified, require the student to take one of the language tests above and the student concerned must provide a test certificate certifying that they have achieved the required scores within 28 days.

Mitigating Circumstances

The ICCA requires a minimum acceptable law degree award of an Upper Second (2:1) or above, or a degree in any other subject awarded at a minimum level of Lower Second Class (2:2) together with a Graduate Diploma in Law, or equivalent, with a Commendation or Distinction, unless mitigating circumstances apply. Applicants who did not achieve this minimum degree/GDL award but consider that they would have done but for mitigating circumstances, may apply to the ICCA for the exercise of discretion to disapply the minimum degree/GDL award requirement in their individual case.

The criteria for discretion to be exercised concerning mitigating circumstances are:

- i) there is clear evidence that the student is academically of upper second-class quality (for students who have taken an acceptable law degree) or of Commendation or Distinction quality (for students who have taken the GDL or equivalent) overall

- ii) there is clear evidence of a temporary cause which prevented the student from fulfilling their full academic potential, **which has not already been considered by their course provider in the award of their degree.**

The ICCA Bar Course online admissions application form contains guidance at relevant sections for setting out mitigating circumstances and for providing referees and evidence in support of the mitigating circumstances application. In all other cases, the ICCA understands that circumstances beyond an applicant's control may detrimentally affect their academic progress and therefore adversely impact an application. In such instances, the ICCA expects applicants to have taken appropriate action to ensure the relevant examination bodies have allowed for such circumstances. For this reason, mitigating circumstances cannot be applied for by applicants with predicted grades.

Fair Application Assessment

The ICCA considers all aspects of the application as part of a holistic approach to selection and admissions, which will include attendance at a Selection Event for shortlisted candidates.

The assessment of applications may include some or all of the following elements: predicted or achieved performance in undergraduate and/or postgraduate qualifications, a personal statement, evidence of relevant experience, evidence of English language proficiency, performance at interview, a written exercise, an oral exercise and, where relevant, evidence of extenuating or mitigating circumstances.

All applicants will be assessed against the same published entry requirements and criteria.

In accordance with this policy, during the initial shortlisting process, admissions assessors will not have information relating to any applicant's name, address, school or university or protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

Even though some of this information is required to be entered by applicants during the application process, this is to ensure that students can meet the minimum entry requirements and for monitoring and contact purposes and the information is removed from their application before it is passed to an assessor. Candidates will not be asked any questions used to determine their application which are designed to reveal this information. Such information does not form any part of the criteria against which each application will be assessed.

During selection events, even though certain individual characteristics of applicants will be self-evident during such a selection process, all trained assessors will have no such information about individual applicants prior to the process commencing, other than the candidate's name and any information which is required to assist with reasonable adjustments or specific learning difficulties.

Where it is necessary to review an application which reveals such information, the application will then be passed on to an assessor with this information removed, so as to ensure consistency of approach to all candidates.

Application Procedure

Applications to the ICCA Bar Course must be made within those application dates for specific course cycles as published on the ICCA website. Applications outside these published dates will not be considered.

The application procedure applies equally to all applicants for admission to the ICCA Bar Course. Exceptions cannot be made.

Applications to the ICCA will be submitted through the Applications Portal which is linked to the ICCA website. Applicants are only permitted to make one application each year for one of two course cycles.

Applications can typically be submitted from October or November each year for Bar Course Cycles to commence the following academic year. The deadline for applications may vary slightly from year to year, but the applications portal is expected to close in January each year.

All applications will be considered and shortlisted candidates will be invited to a Selection Event. Offers will typically be made to students in March of each year. The ICCA reserves the right to place candidates on a reserve list. All decisions are communicated to applicants in writing. Precise dates will be communicated in writing to all candidates receiving offers.

Successful applicants must meet mandatory entry requirements and offer conditions in sufficient time to complete enrolment administration.

Applicants considering deferred entry are advised to consult the ICCA for any specific guidance or restrictions on deferred entry. All deferral requests must be submitted in writing to the ICCA Registry Office at students@icca.ac.uk stating why they would like to defer. The Registry team will respond with further advice. Requests for deferral must be received by the Registry Office before the end of April prior to the commencement of the course unless exceptional circumstances apply.

The ICCA reserves the right to withdraw an offer from a candidate who is considered, on justifiable grounds, to be unsuitable for a place on the course according to individual circumstances.

Course Cycles

Each application will be for one of two course Cycles as follows:

First Cycle:

- Part One: September of Year 1 (anticipated completion December of Year 1)
- Part Two: March of the following Year (Year 2) (anticipated completion July of Year 2)

Second Cycle:

- Part One: January of Year 2 (anticipated completion April of Year 2)
- Part Two: September of Year 2 (anticipated completion January of the following year, Year 3)

For example, applications made through the applications portal, which is open between October 2022 and January 2023, will be for either the First Cycle (Part One September 2023 and Part Two March 2024) or the Second Cycle (Part One January 2024 and Part Two September 2024).

Anticipated completion dates assume a student follows the recommended structured pathway for Part One and passes the assessments in both parts of the course at the first attempt. Students who do not follow the recommended structured pathway, do not pass assessments at the first attempt, or for other reasons, delay commencement of Part Two will commence Part Two within a subsequent Cycle which will be arranged with the ICCA once the student is enrolled and registered on the ICCA Bar Course.

Applicants may choose which course Cycle to follow during the online application process. Applicants may also state that they have no preference to which Cycle they are allocated. All applicants will be assigned to the First or Second Cycle. It will not be possible at the application stage to choose a Part One from the First Cycle and a Part Two from the Second Cycle. Applicants who wish to choose a Part Two commencement date outside their chosen Cycle may arrange this with the ICCA registry once they have accepted an offer of a place on the ICCA Bar Course.

The ICCA will use its best endeavours to offer applicants a place on their chosen Cycle, although this will not always be possible. However, if an applicant requires a chosen Cycle for good reason (e.g., pupillage commencing at a certain date) the applicant will have the opportunity to state this during the online application process. Where the ICCA is satisfied that a successful candidate has good reason to require a specific Cycle the applicant will be offered that Cycle. The Cycle allocated to successful applicants will be notified when their offer is made.

The Cycles available during each application process will be clearly published on the ICCA website.

Applications for Cycles commencing outside those which are published will not be considered.

Fraud, Plagiarism and Misleading Information

It is essential that any personal statement or other written materials submitted as part of an application are the work of the applicant. The ICCA may use plagiarism detection software to evaluate the originality of a piece of work.

If it is detected that a personal statement, answer or other written material may be plagiarised, or that any other element of an application may be incorrect, fraudulent or misleading, no invitation to a selection event or offer will be made until the matter has been resolved. Any irregularities will be investigated by contacting the applicant.

The ICCA reserves the right to terminate the application process or to withdraw an offer if incorrect, plagiarised, fraudulent or otherwise misleading information is provided in or during the application process.

Disabled Applicants

Applications from disabled applicants will be considered based upon academic merit and potential. Any support needs or adjustments will be considered independently of the admissions decision. Where an applicant believes that their disability has impacted detrimentally upon their

academic performance to date, they should notify the ICCA using the mitigating circumstances procedure outlined above.

Unsuccessful Applications – Feedback

The ICCA operates a competitive admissions system and therefore a considerable number of applicants may be unsuccessful. The ICCA is unable to provide feedback to candidates who are not shortlisted for a selection event.

The ICCA will provide general feedback to candidates who were invited to and attended a selection event. This means that unsuccessful candidates will be provided with the marks awarded under each assessment category/competency against the relevant criteria for the exercise.

Following feedback, if a candidate wishes to appeal the admissions decision, the process outlined in the annex to this policy should be followed.

Complaints and Appeals Procedure

Applicants who are unsuccessful in applying for admission to the ICCA Bar Course, and who wish to appeal the decision, should follow the two-stage appeal process as outlined in the Admissions Appeal Procedure, provided as an annex to this policy.

Receipt of the appeal will normally be acknowledged within 2 working days, with the response to the appeal normally being provided within a further 20 working days. Where the appeal is upheld, the response will indicate the outcome of the reconsideration of the application.

Applicants who do not wish to appeal the decision made on their application, but who are dissatisfied with their experience or the service they received during the application process, may make use of the two-stage complaints process outlined in the Admissions Complaints Procedure, provided as an annex to this policy. Applicants are recommended to attempt informal resolution of any complaint at the local level before initiating a formal complaint.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed every year by the ICCA Vice-Dean and revised in light of changes in legislation and the strategic priorities of the ICCA, directed by its Governors. Any enquiries regarding this policy should be directed to the Vice-Dean via admissions@icca.ac.uk.

Annexes

- A Admissions Complaints Procedure
- B Admissions Appeals Procedure

ANNEX A: Admissions Complaints Procedure

Purpose

The ICCA is committed to ensuring that all applications are considered on their individual merits and treated in a fair and equal way, based on all information provided through the application process. However, it is recognised that there may be occasions where applicants feel that the ICCA has not dealt with applications to the applicant's satisfaction. This annex outlines the procedure through which applicants can make a complaint regarding the level of service received from the university in the application process.

Scope

This procedure is for applicants who wish to make a complaint regarding the application process. The complaints procedure has one informal and two formal elements:

1. **Informal local resolution**, dealt with at the most local relevant level;
2. **Stage One Complaint**: formal written complaint investigated by the ICCA Vice-Dean (or nominee);
3. **Stage Two Complaint**: if the applicant is not satisfied with the outcome reached as a result of the Stage One Complaint, they may escalate the complaint to be investigated by the Dean of the ICCA (or nominee).

The ICCA will ensure that any applicant seeking to use this procedure will not be treated less favourably in the application process, or during any future applications that they may make for admission to the ICCA Bar Course.

A complaint is the expression of a concern about a procedure or administrative process and can be lodged at any stage of admissions, recruitment and widening access processes.

Complaints Made Without Foundation

The ICCA may terminate consideration of a complaint if it considers it to be without foundation or made in bad faith. In such instances, the member of staff dealing with the complaint will write to the applicant to explain why consideration of the matter is being terminated. Anonymous complaints will not be considered.

Resolution of a Complaint

Where a complaint is upheld in whole or in part, possible outcomes will include one or more of the following:

- A reconsideration of the application through the Appeals Procedure
- An apology
- A clear explanation of the events or context that led to the decision
- A change in procedures
- A referral of the complaint for consideration by the ICCA Bar Course Education Committee

Confidentiality and Record Keeping

The ICCA will limit the disclosure of information consistent with conducting a fair investigation and the implementation of any recommendations following investigation into the complaint. If an applicant names a member of staff or another applicant, then the individual named will normally have the right to know the complaint made against her/him in order to be able to reply to the complaint.

Once an applicant has made a Stage One Complaint, records will not be held on the application but kept securely in the Registry Office. Records will be retained in accordance with legal obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.

Timescales

The applicant should raise the complaint at the earliest opportunity and in any case in respect of Stage One no later than 10 working days of the incident complained of or the date of notification that an application has been unsuccessful.

To raise a Stage One Complaint, the applicant is required to complain in writing to the ICCA Registry by email to students@icca.ac.uk.

Registry staff will confirm receipt of the complaint within two working days. The Vice-Dean (or nominee) will respond to the applicant's complaint within 10 working days of receipt.

Informal Local Resolution

In the interests of providing the best possible service to applicants, the ICCA will seek a resolution to a complaint regarding an application through informal discussion and at the earliest opportunity. Informal complaints may be made to a member of staff at the ICCA such as the registry or academic staff, as a first point of contact in writing, by email or verbally.

The member of staff will endeavour to assist the complainant if at all possible. An informal complaint may be escalated to a more senior member of staff if necessary.

A note on the application will be made when an informal complaint is made to keep a record of the incident.

If the outcome of the informal complaint is that no resolution can be agreed to the satisfaction of the applicant, the applicant will be made aware of the Stage One Complaint procedure.

If the applicant does not proceed to submit a Stage One formal complaint this will be determined as being the end of the matter as far as this procedure is concerned.

Stage One: Complaint to the Vice-Dean of the ICCA

Should a complaint not be dealt with informally to the satisfaction of the applicant she/he may initiate a Stage One Complaint. A Stage One complaint involves an investigation by the Vice-Dean (or nominee), with the support of the Registry. If the complaint relates to a member of the Registry staff, the complaint will be reviewed by a manager outside Registry Services.

To initiate a Stage One Complaint, the applicant must make the complaint in writing to the ICCA Registry at students@icca.ac.uk within 10 working days of the incident complained of or the date of notification that an application has been unsuccessful. Third parties are not permitted to make a Stage One Complaint.

The Registry will confirm receipt of the complaint within two working days of submission. The written complaint must outline the nature of the complaint, steps that have been taken to informally resolve the issue, the timings involved to date and how the applicant wishes to see the complaint resolved.

The Vice-Dean will respond in writing within 10 working days from the date of written notification of the complaint.

The Vice-Dean will investigate the circumstances of the complaint and the adherence of ICCA staff to procedures. The investigation may involve interviewing the applicant/complainant and other persons directly involved. The Vice-Dean may seek opinion and information from any person with knowledge of the matter.

At the conclusion of the investigation the Vice-Dean will form a judgment on the complaint and the applicant will be informed in writing of their findings. The findings will include the judgment regarding the merits of the complaint and, if applicable, proposals for a resolution of the complaint and/or recommendations for further action arising from the complaint.

The communication will also inform the applicant of the right to submit a further complaint under Stage Two of this procedure if she/he remains dissatisfied with the findings.

Stage Two: Complaint to the Dean of the ICCA

Where an applicant's complaint to the Vice-Dean is not upheld or a satisfactory outcome is not reached, the applicant may apply to the Dean of the ICCA in a Stage Two Complaint. This must be received in writing to the ICCA Registry at students@icca.ac.uk within 10 working days of the final Stage One Complaint response from the Head of Programmes.

A Stage Two Complaint may be allowed, at the discretion of the Dean, on the following grounds:

1. There is evidence of significant administrative or procedural error in the processing of the Stage One Complaint; and/or
2. There is new evidence which the applicant was unable to provide as part of the Stage One Complaint.

The Registry will confirm receipt of the complaint within two working days of submission. The Dean (or nominee) will respond to the appeal within 20 working days of receipt of the Stage Two Complaint. The response will indicate whether, in the opinion of the Dean, one or both of the criteria above are satisfied.

Where a complaint is upheld (fully or partially), the Dean will inform the Registry and/or the Vice-Dean as to any actions to be taken. The Dean's decision is final, and no further appeal or review is permitted.

ANNEX B: Admissions Appeals Procedure

Introduction

An appeal is a request for a review of a decision concerning selection or admission and can be lodged only after such a decision has been made.

The ICCA's selection event decisions are made based on the academic judgment of academic staff. Individual cases will not be reconsidered on the grounds of disagreement with that judgment and decisions may only be appealed on those procedural grounds as detailed in this policy. The ICCA will provide general feedback to those candidates who have attended a selection event but were not offered admission to the ICCA Bar Course.

General

This appeal procedure is available to applicants whose application for admission to the ICCA Bar Course is rejected. This procedure is not available to applicants who:

1. Accept an offer of admission, but who subsequently fail to meet the conditions of the offer
2. Wish to appeal the decision of another institution
3. Wish to obtain feedback on an application following shortlisting
4. Wish to obtain detailed as opposed to general feedback on an application following a selection event
5. Seek a reconsideration of the academic or professional judgment of ICCA academic staff
6. Receive an offer of admission but who fail to respond by a set deadline.

In accordance with principles of the Data Protection Act 1998, appeals will only be accepted from the individual who applied to the programme of study. Appeals will not be accepted from third parties.

Stage One Appeals

Where an applicant is rejected, they should appeal in writing to the ICCA Vice-Dean by contacting the ICCA Registry at students@icca.ac.uk within 10 working days of the date of notification of the decision. Appeals may be submitted on one, or both, of the following grounds:

1. Misapplication of the general entrance requirements by the ICCA; or
2. Other significant administrative or procedural error(s) affecting the outcome of the application.

Applicants must clearly identify which of these grounds is being used as the basis for their appeal and refer to this in their correspondence. Any available evidence which the applicant wishes the ICCA to consider must be supplied with the correspondence.

The Registry will acknowledge receipt of the appeal within two working days and a response provided to the appeal by the Vice-Dean (or nominee) within a further 10 working days. The response will indicate whether the applicant's appeal is upheld (fully or partially) or rejected and the reasons for the decision. Where the appeal is upheld, the response will indicate the outcome of the ICCA's reconsideration of the application.

Second Stage Appeals

Where an applicant's appeal to the Vice-Dean is not upheld, the applicant may appeal to the Dean of the ICCA. Appeals to the Dean must be received in writing by contacting the ICCA Registry at students@icca.ac.uk within 10 working days of the date of the first stage decision by the Vice-Dean.

A second stage appeal may be allowed, at the discretion of the Dean (or nominee), only on one or both of the following grounds:

1. There is evidence of significant administrative or procedural error in the processing of the first stage appeal
2. There is new evidence which the applicant was unable to provide as part of the first stage appeal, and sufficient evidence remains that the initial decision on the application warrants reconsideration

The ICCA Registry will normally acknowledge receipt of the appeal within two working days and a response provided to the appeal by the Dean (or nominee) within a further 10 working days. The response will indicate whether, in the opinion of the Dean, one or both of the criteria are satisfied.

Where a second stage appeal is upheld (fully or partially), the Dean will inform the Vice-Dean and the ICCA Registry as to any actions to be taken, which may include a reconsideration of the application where appropriate.

The decision of the Dean and any consequent reconsideration by the ICCA is final and no further appeal is permitted.