



End of Year Review 2022

Introduction

2022 has seen AAA grow from strength to strength. With the arrival of Sab Singh KC, Amelie Smith and Ben Symons, we now have 15 barristers and one very able and experienced legal assistant, Bradley Talbot. We now have legal experts in the fields of higher education, crime, and immigration, allowing us to cover most of the issues that arise, from the standard exam failure to the most serious types of sexual misconduct.

Collectively, we have conducted approximately 200 formal consultations this year (and many more “informal” ones), some within minutes of the client’s first approach, others early in the morning or late at night, written about 140 appeal statements and many more letters and e-mails for students. We have attended dozens of university hearings, providing world-class representation and reassurance to students, some of whom were facing expulsion or withdrawal from the course.

To assist our clients, we have used experts from a broad range of disciplines, including medicine, medical ethics, educational psychology, digital forensics, forensic linguistics, and mathematics. We know that university appeal deadlines are tight and that, through panic or indecision, students may leave things to the last minute. As a result, we now respond to telephone calls 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in addition to our 24-hour “live chat” service. This provides an unrivalled service to our clients and their families.

It is testament to our reputation that we continue to have clients referred to us from other lawyers, student unions and academics.

Highlights of 2022

- AAA gave a speech at the Westminster Higher Education Forum, chaired by Lord Storey, on tackling cheating in Higher Education (26 April 2022). In it, we called for a “kinder, more humane approach to investigations and hearings”, especially when dealing with students with mental health problems, and the need for urgent improvements to the system. A [blog](#) based on the speech was subsequently published on the Higher Education Policy Blog.
- To find out more about the prevalence of cheating in UK universities, AAA commissioned original research into the subject. Over 900 undergraduates were surveyed. The results were released in July 2022, prompting articles in the mainstream and specialist media. The bottom line was that 1 in 6 students admitted to cheating in online exams in the last academic year, with only 5% of those students ever having been caught for cheating. There was coverage in [The Times](#), the [Telegraph](#), and the [Times Higher Education](#). We explained the process and methodology in an article for [WONKE](#) in August 2022.
- AAA expanded to Australia with a new [website](#), assisting Australian students with their appeals, complaints and misconduct cases.

- AAA barristers published articles in WONKHE, HEPI, and elsewhere on ways to improve the fairness of university appeals and are quoted in mainstream media, such as the Telegraph, The Times, and Metro.

Some notable cases

- Judicial review of refusal of an admission decision by a Russell Group university, which resulted in the reversal of the decision. This was led by Sab Singh KC and Daniel Sokol.
- Settlement of claim for medical student for £45,000 following an initial offer by the university of just £1,000.
- Removing a flawed and discriminatory PhD from the public domain.
- Defending a student accused of using AI to cheat in an exam. With ChatGPT and the rapid improvements of AI technology, this is likely to be an increasing problem for students and universities.
- Dealing with essay-writing companies that are blackmailing students.
- A number of school expulsions, in particular for students' inappropriate use of social media.

Glowing reviews

AAA continues to have nothing but 5-star ratings on Google Reviews, with comments such as “outstanding”, “candid, honest and supportive” and “phenomenal expertise”.

Our favourite piece of feedback, however, is from an independent interpreter, instructed by the university, in one of our sexual misconduct cases. The day after the long, arduous hearing, the interpreter contacted the barrister by email, saying:

“Forgive the intrusion. I searched online for you after the marathon session yesterday. In light of observing dozens of barristers, I want to express my

admiration for your closing speech. The thought crossed my mind ‘If I ever get into legal trouble, I’m calling you’.”

Thank you for all your efforts and here’s to 2023 and another fantastic year for AAA!



Part of the AAA team at the social event on 16 September 2022.