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University of  
South Wales  
Prifysgol  
De Cymru

# ACADEMIC APPEALS PROCEDURES FOR RESEARCH DEGREES 2024/2025

| <b>Title:</b> Academic Appeals Regulations |                   |                             |                 |                                     |                         |
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## SECTION ONE: ADVICE AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

- 1.1 The University is committed to safeguarding the emotional, mental and physical well-being of all parties involved during the operation of its Academic Appeals Procedure. Confidential advice and support are available from:
- The Students' Union - <http://su.southwales.ac.uk/>  
 The University's Wellbeing Services - <http://thewellbeingservice.southwales.ac.uk/>  
 The Chaplaincy - <http://chaplaincy.southwales.ac.uk/>  
 Immigration and International Student Advice - <https://intadvice.southwales.ac.uk/>
- 1.2 The Student Casework Unit provides authoritative, formal guidance on the applicability and operation of the Academic Appeals Regulations and Procedure.
- 1.3 If you attend a meeting, you are allowed to have a support person with you, for example an officer from the Students' Union or a friend. The role of the support person is to provide support to you during the meeting. Their role is normally not to represent you, or to advocate on your behalf or to speak for you, unless this has been agreed as a reasonable adjustment due to a disability. You cannot send any other person to the meeting on your behalf. At least 48 hours before the meeting, you must advise the University of the name and status of the person accompanying you. It is strongly recommended that you seek support from the Students' Union or Chaplaincy, as they are independent and familiar with the regulations and procedures of the University.
- 1.4 The Head of Student Casework (or nominee) reserves the right to refuse the attendance of a support person if it is determined that there is a conflict of interest relating to the nominated person, in which case, you will be given the opportunity to nominate a different support person.
- 1.5 The University of South Wales' procedures are not legal in nature and consequently, you should not need to have a legal support person or representative at hearings/meetings. However, you are able to seek preliminary advice, without prejudice, on the scope and nature of evidence you intend to submit in support of a case that is particularly complex.
- 1.6 While you do not have an automatic right to a legally qualified support person or representative, if you wish to be supported/represented at a hearing/meeting, you must apply for permission in writing to the Student Casework Unit ([studentcasework@southwales.ac.uk](mailto:studentcasework@southwales.ac.uk)) at least five working days before the scheduled date of the hearing/meeting. You must include in your representation the name of the proposed representative and the rationale for your request.
- 1.7 The University reserves the right to accept or refuse a request for a legally qualified support person or representative to attend any meetings/hearings, depending on whether a good reason is provided and the complexity and seriousness of the case. Should such a request be approved, the University reserves the right to also have a legal representative in attendance. Legal representatives will be clearly informed of the nature of the proceedings, ie, that they are not a legal process and will not be conducted as such.

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## **SECTION TWO: PROCEDURE FOR STAGE 1 - EARLY RESOLUTION**

- 2.1 Prior to submitting an appeal for consideration you are advised to discuss any concerns you have regarding your results or the decision of the Research Degrees Committee/Faculty Research Degrees Committee or its progression board, with a member of your supervisory team/Graduate School. If it has not been possible to resolve all of your concerns, then you may submit an academic appeal.

## **SECTION THREE: PROCEDURE FOR STAGE 2 – CONSIDERATION OF YOUR APPEAL BY THE FACULTY/GRADUATE SCHOOL**

### **Acceptable issues for appeal**

- 3.1 You are able to appeal about:

- the decision of the Faculty Research Degrees Committee or its progression board regarding progression or transfer;
- the examination decision of the Research Degrees Committee.

### **Ground for appeal against the decision of the Faculty Research Degrees Committee or its progression board**

- 3.2 Appeals can only be submitted on the following ground:

Material procedural defect or irregularity, which is relevant to the outcome of the academic decision.

You must demonstrate one or more of the following:

- a) there has been an administrative error;
- b) proper process has not been followed in relation to assessment of your progress;
- c) an academic decision was not arrived at in accordance with the regulations of the course.

### **Ground for appeal against an examination decision of the Research Degrees Committee**

- 3.3 You can only submit an appeal on the following ground:

Material procedural defect or irregularity, which is relevant to the outcome of the academic decision.

You must demonstrate one or more of the following:

- a) there were circumstances affecting your performance which the examiners were not aware of at the oral examination;
- b) there is evidence of procedural irregularity in the conduct of the examination (including administrative error) of such a nature as to cause doubt as to whether the result might have been different had there not been such irregularity;

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- c) there is evidence of unfair or improper assessment on the part of one or more of the examiners; a student may not otherwise challenge the academic judgement of the examiners.

3.4 An appeal will not be accepted on the basis of a disagreement with the academic or professional judgement of the examiners and/or Research Degrees Committee and/or Faculty Research Degrees Committee or its progression board, ie, you believe you deserve a higher mark or different outcome. Academic and professional judgement includes assessing a specific piece of work, and/or reaching a decision on your progression, or on the final level of the award, based on the marks, grades and other information relating to your performance.

### **Timescales**

3.5 You must submit your appeal within 10 working days of publication of results using the 'Stage 2 Research Degree Appeal Form' and include appropriate supporting evidence. This could include, for example, email correspondence from your supervisors to support your allegation.

3.6 Late appeals will only be accepted if you can provide good reason, supported by written independent evidence, for submitting an appeal outside of the timescales. Visa implications will need to be taken into account when considering any appeals submitted, with good reason, outside of the specified timeframe. We cannot accept appeals more than two months after the publication of your results.

3.7 Where it is identified that swift consideration of an appeal is required, for example, when progress or delays will affect your health, the University will ensure this is highlighted to the staff considering your appeal.

### **Processing your appeal**

3.8 Upon receipt of your stage 2 appeal, the Student Casework Unit will check that your appeal is admissible; that is:

- it does not question the academic or professional judgement of the examiners and/or Research Degrees Committee and/or Faculty Research Degrees Committee or its progression board;
- the form has been correctly completed, includes all appropriate evidence and was submitted within 10 working days of the publication of the assessment results or is permissible under 3.5.

3.9 If your appeal does not meet the requirements set out in 3.8 it will be returned to you along with a University Completion of Procedures Letter (see 6.1).

3.10 If your appeal is eligible for consideration, it will be referred by the Graduate School to a nominee within the faculty at Academic Manager level or above (the Nominee), who will not have been involved in the consideration of your results.

3.11 Stage 2 appeals will be dealt with primarily on the basis of the documentation that you have provided. However, if the Nominee considers it is necessary, they may seek written or oral testimony from the examiners, from other persons present at the oral examination, from supervisors or other members of the academic staff, or further evidence or statements from you (either in writing or via a meeting with the Nominee).

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- 3.12 If the Nominee requires additional information to assist them in reaching a decision on the outcome of an appeal you will be given five working days in which to confirm that you intend to provide the additional information and the timeframe in which the information should be submitted. If the information is not submitted within the timeframe and a rationale for the delay is not provided a decision will be made on the appeal without the additional information.
- 3.13 The Nominee has 20 working days from the date that you provide the final relevant piece of documentation to review the appeal and provide a response, with a rationale as to the decision, to a Head of Research that has had no prior involvement with your case.
- 3.14 The Nominee is able to:
- a) confirm the original decision of the Progression Board, examiners or independent subject specialist; or
  - b) invite the Progression Board, examiners or independent subject specialist to reconsider their decision; or
  - c) recommend the appointment of new examiners or a new independent subject specialist.
- 3.15 The Student Casework Unit will write to you with the outcome of the appeal within five working days of receipt of the final outcome by the relevant Head of Research.
- 3.16 Where it is not possible for the University to adhere to the specified timescales, for example due to the complexity of the case, the University will write to you providing a rationale for the delay and a revised date for the outcome of your appeal.

## SECTION FOUR: PROCEDURE FOR STAGE 3 – REQUEST FOR REVIEW

### Grounds for review

- 4.1 You are entitled to submit a stage 3 request for review of the stage 2 decision on the following grounds.
- a) You have evidence that the procedures at stage 2 were not conducted in line with the regulations and this has materially disadvantaged you.
  - b) You have new and relevant evidence which **for good reason** was not available at the time your stage 2 appeal was submitted. *(NB Sensitive personal, family or cultural reasons will not be accepted as good reason as they should have been drawn to the University's attention at stage 1).*
- This information should not have been accessible or known to you when the stage 1 appeal was submitted. Information that was available and not provided with the stage 1 appeal will not be considered valid grounds for a request for review.
- c) You have evidence that the outcome at stage 2 was manifestly unreasonable.
- 4.2 You are only entitled to access stage 3 once stage 2 has been completed.

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- 4.3 You are not able to introduce any new issues at stage 3.

### **Timescales**

- 4.4 You must submit your stage 3 request for review within 10 working days of notification of the outcome of stage 2 using the 'Stage 3 – Request for Review Form' and include appropriate evidence. Request for review forms are available at <https://registry.southwales.ac.uk/student-regulations/academic-appeals/>.
- 4.5 Late requests for review will only be accepted if you can provide good reason, supported by written independent evidence, for submitting your request outside of the timescales. Particular consideration will need to be given to timeframes where visa implications are concerned.
- 4.6 Where it is identified that swift consideration of your request for review is required, for example when progress or delays will affect your health, the University will ensure this is highlighted to the relevant staff.
- 4.7 Where it is not possible for the University to adhere to the specified timescales, for example due to the complexity of the case, the University will write to you providing a rationale for the delay and a revised date for the outcome of your review.

### **Initial consideration of case**

- 4.8 The University Secretary (or nominee) will consider your request for review within 10 working days of submission of the request.
- 4.9 If the University Secretary (or nominee), after considering your request for review, concludes that:
- a) it does not meet the grounds above set out in 4.1;
  - b) it was submitted outside the 10-working day deadline;
  - c) it does not include the appropriate evidence.

the request for review will be disallowed and the original decision will stand. You will be issued with a University Completion of Procedures Letter within five working days.

- 4.10 If the University Secretary (or nominee) decides that your request for review meets one or more of the grounds, your case will be referred to a Review Panel.

### **Review Panel**

- 4.11 The Review Panel will consist of:
- Chair of Research Committee or nominee from Executive with experience of research (Chair);
  - One senior member of academic staff who are members of either the Research Degrees Committee or a Faculty Research Degrees Committee<sup>1</sup> and who have experience of examining and/or chairing research degrees;

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<sup>1</sup> The appointed panel member will not be a member of the Faculty Research Degrees Committee in the faculty where the student is registered

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- President of the Students' Union (or nominee), who will be independent and have no prior knowledge your case.

The Review Panel will be supported by a Secretary, who will be the Director of Research and Business Engagement (or nominee).

- 4.12 Members of the Review Panel will be independent and will have had no prior involvement in your case.
- 4.13 The Review Panel will be convened within 20 working days. from the date of referral by the University Secretary (or nominee).
- 4.14 In order to permit full consideration of your request for review the Secretary may request relevant information from the faculty. The Review Panel will not rehear the case but will consider your request based on the grounds stated in section 4.1.
- 4.15 Any meeting of the Review Panel will normally be held in private; however, you will be given the opportunity to request attendance at the meeting. The Chair of the Review Panel will confirm whether your request will be upheld.
- 4.16 Exceptionally, you may be invited to meet with the Review Panel to clarify details of your request for review. The Review Panel may also wish to meet with the Chair of the Research Degree Committee or other involved party to answer specific queries.
- 4.17 A Review Panel will not have the authority to set aside the decision of the Research Degree Committee and thereby to recommend the award of the degree.
- 4.18 The Review Panel will make one of the following decisions:
- Reject the appeal and confirm the original decision of the Progression Board, examiners or independent specialist.

In this case, the decision of the Review Panel will be communicated to you within five working days of the meeting. The decision will be final and the matter will be regarded as closed.

- Invite the Progression Board, examiners or independent specialist to reconsider their decision.
- Recommend the appointment of new examiners or a new independent specialist.

In this case, the decision of the Review Panel, together with the timescales for any further required action, will be communicated to you by the Student Casework Unit within five working days of the meeting.

- 4.19 There is no appeal against the decision of the Review Panel.
- 4.20 The Review Panel may make recommendations for consideration by the Regulations Subgroup or Academic Board, as appropriate, on any matters arising from the consideration of appeals.



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## **SECTION FIVE: OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT ADJUDICATOR FOR HIGHER EDUCATION (OIA)**

- 5.1 If you are unhappy with the outcome of this Procedure you may, following issue of a University Completion of Procedures Letter, lodge a complaint with the OIA.
- 5.2 Details of the OIA and the relevant information in relation to the Scheme can be accessed at [www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk). Further information and advice can be obtained from the Student Casework Unit.