



University of
South Wales
Prifysgol
De Cymru

ACADEMIC APPEALS PROCEDURE FOR RESEARCH DEGREES 2026/2027

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SECTION ONE: ADVICE AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

- 1.1 The University is committed to safeguarding the emotional, mental and physical wellbeing of all parties involved during the operation of its Academic Appeals Procedure. Confidential advice and support are available from:

The Students' Union - <https://www.uswsu.com/>
The University's Wellbeing Service - <https://wellbeing.southwales.ac.uk/>
The Chaplaincy - <https://www.southwales.ac.uk/services/chaplaincy/>
- 1.2 The Student Casework Unit provides authoritative, formal guidance on the application and operation of the Academic Appeals Regulations and Procedure.
- 1.3 Where it is identified that swift consideration of an appeal is required; for example, when progress or delays will affect the student's health, the University will ensure this is highlighted to the staff considering the appeal and expedited as appropriate.
- 1.4 Students will not usually be required to attend any meetings as part of the Academic Appeals Procedure. However, if they are invited to attend a meeting, they are allowed to bring a person to support them; for example, an officer from the Students' Union, or a friend. If the student would like a support person to attend a meeting with them, the student must advise the University of the person's name, status and contact details at least 48 hours before the meeting.
- 1.5 The Head of Student Casework (or nominee) reserves the right to refuse the nomination of a support person, if it is determined that there is a conflict of interest relating to the nominated person; in which case, the student will be given the opportunity to nominate a different support person.
- 1.6 The role of a support person is to be there for the student during the meeting as a supportive presence. Their role is not to represent the student, attend meetings on their behalf, advocate on their behalf, or speak for them; unless a request is made in writing to the Student Casework Unit and this is agreed by the Head of Student Casework (or nominee) as a reasonable adjustment.
- 1.7 The University of South Wales' procedures are not legal in nature. Consequently, students should not need to have legal support or representation in relation to the Academic Appeals Procedure. However, if the student wishes to be supported/represented, they must apply for permission in writing to the Student Casework Unit (studentcasework@southwales.ac.uk). For guidance on requesting legal representation, please refer to the [Procedure for Requests for Legal Representation](#).
- 1.8 If the University receives formal legal action, including a pre-action correspondence from a solicitor on behalf of a student, it may stop action under this procedure, advise insurers and appoint legal representatives (as appropriate) to respond to the legal action.

SECTION TWO: PROCEDURE FOR STAGE 1 - EARLY RESOLUTION

- 2.1 Students are advised to discuss any concerns regarding their results or the decision of the Research Degrees Committee/Faculty Research Degrees Committee/its progression board with the relevant member of staff in the first instance.

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

Timescales

- 3.1 Appeals are usually time sensitive and require timely consideration to ensure that there is no adverse impact on the student's progression. Students must submit an appeal within 10 working days of publication of results, **regardless of any early resolution that is being attempted**, using the 'Research Degree Appeal Form' and including appropriate supporting evidence. This could include, for example, email correspondence from supervisors to support the appeal.
- 3.2 We will only accept late appeals for consideration if the student can provide good reason (supported by evidence where requested), for submitting an appeal outside of the specified timescale. Visa implications will need to be taken into account when considering any appeals submitted, with good reason, outside of the specified timeframe. Appeals cannot be accepted more than two months after the publication of results, because of the timeframes in which appeals can logistically be considered and the remedies that can be implemented.
- 3.3 Where it is not possible for the University to adhere to the specified timescales, which are identified throughout this Procedure; for example, due to the complexity of the case, the University will write to the student providing the reason for the delay and a revised date for the outcome of the appeal.

What students can appeal about

- 3.4 Students can 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.

Grounds for appeal against decisions made in relation to research

- 3.5 The grounds on which students can appeal a decision made in relation to research are as follows. The appeal must demonstrate, with evidence, at least one of the following:
- a) *there has been an administrative error which is relevant to the outcome of an academic decision;*
 - b) *proper process has not been followed in relation to assessment of your progress;*
 - c) *the consideration of your results was not in accordance with the regulations of the course;*
 - d) *there were circumstances affecting your viva performance, of which the examiners were not aware at the examination;*
 - e) *there was a procedural error/irregularity in how an examination was conducted that casts doubt on whether the result might have been different, had this not happened;*
 - f) *you can demonstrate you were assessed unfairly or improperly for a viva examination by one or more of the examiners.*

- 3.6 Other than where ground f) applies, the student may not challenge the academic judgement of the examiners. 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; i.e., where the student believes they deserve a higher mark or different outcome. Academic and professional judgement includes assessing a specific piece of work, and/or reaching a decision on their progression, or on the final level of the award, based on the marks, grades and other information relating to performance.

Processing appeals

- 3.7 Upon receipt of an academic appeal, the Student Casework Unit will check that the appeal is admissible; that is:
- it does not question academic or professional judgement;
 - the appeal is based on the permitted grounds (a-f);
 - the issue raised should not be referred to another procedure;
 - 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 3.2.
- 3.8 If the appeal does not meet the requirements set out in 3.7, it will be deemed ineligible and the student will be issued a University Completion of Procedures Letter (see 5.1).
- 3.9 If the appeal is eligible, it will be referred to a Nominee within the Faculty who will not have been involved in the consideration of the student's results ("the Faculty Nominee").
- 3.10 Stage 2 appeals will be dealt with primarily on the basis of the documentation that the student has provided. However, if the Faculty 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 the student (either in writing or via a meeting with the Faculty Nominee).
- 3.11 If the Faculty Nominee requires additional information to assist them in reaching a decision on the outcome of an appeal, the student will be given five working days to confirm that they intend to provide the additional information, and a deadline by which the information should be submitted. If the information is not submitted by the deadline, and a good reason for the delay is not provided, a decision will be made on the appeal without the additional information.
- 3.12 The Faculty Nominee has 20 working days from the date that the student provides the final relevant piece of documentation or the date of referral to Stage 2 (whichever is later) to review the appeal and provide a response, with a rationale as to the decision, to the Associate Dean for Research and Innovation (or Nominee). They will have had no prior involvement with the case.
- 3.13 The Associate Dean (or Nominee) can:
- 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.
- 3.14 The Student Casework Unit will write to the student with the outcome of the appeal within five working days of receipt of the outcome by the Associate Dean (or Nominee).

SECTION FOUR: PROCEDURE FOR STAGE 3 – REQUEST FOR REVIEW

Grounds for review

- 4.1 Students 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 appeal was submitted.*
 - c) *You have evidence that the outcome at stage 2 was not reasonable or was disproportionate in the circumstances.*
- 4.2 Students are not able to introduce any new issues at stage 3.

Timescales

- 4.3 Students must submit a request for review within 10 working days of the stage 2 outcome using the 'Stage 3 – Request for Review Form' and including appropriate evidence. Request for review forms are available at <https://registry.southwales.ac.uk/student-regulations/academic-appeals/>.
- 4.4 Late requests for review will only be accepted if the student can provide good reason (supported by evidence where appropriate), for submitting the request outside of the timescales. Particular consideration will need to be given to timeframes where visa implications are concerned.
- 4.5 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 the student providing a rationale for the delay and a revised date for the outcome of the review.

Initial consideration of case

- 4.6 The Head of Student Casework (or nominee) will advise the student within five working days if the request for review is eligible for further consideration; that is:
- a) An arguable case is presented under at least one of the grounds set out in 4.1.
 - b) The request for review has been submitted within ten working days of the Stage 2 outcome; or good reason for lateness is given (supported by evidence as requested by Student Casework).
 - c) The request for review is appropriately supported by evidence.

Where a request for review is ineligible, the student will be issued a Completion of Procedures Letter, which will allow them to complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) if they remain dissatisfied.

- 4.7 If the Head of Student Casework (or nominee) decides that the request for review presents an arguable case, the case will be referred to a Review Panel.

Review Panel

- 4.8 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 Committee¹ and who have experience of examining and/or chairing research degrees;
 - President of the Students' Union (or nominee).
- 4.9 Members of the Review Panel will be independent and will have had no prior involvement in the case.
- 4.10 The Review Panel will be convened within 20 working days from the date of referral by the Head of Student Casework (or nominee).
- 4.11 In order to permit full consideration of the request for review, the Review Panel may request relevant information from the faculty. The Review Panel will consider the request for review based on the grounds stated in section 4.1.
- 4.12 Any meeting of the Review Panel will normally be held in private; however, the student will be given the opportunity to provide a written representation before the meeting.
- 4.13 Exceptionally, the student may be invited to meet with the Review Panel to clarify details of their request. The Review Panel may also wish to meet with the Chair of the Research Degree Committee or other involved party to answer specific queries.
- 4.14 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.
- 4.15 The Review Panel will make one of the following decisions:
- a) Reject the appeal and confirm the original decision of the Progression Board, examiners or independent specialist.
- In this case, the decision will be communicated to the student within five working days of the meeting. The decision will be final, and the matter will be regarded as closed.
- b) Invite the Progression Board, examiners or independent specialist to reconsider their decision.
 - c) 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 the student by the Student Casework Unit within five working days of the meeting.
- 4.16 There is no appeal against the decision of the Review Panel. Where the Review Panel rejects the appeal, a Completion of Procedures letter will be issued.

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

This document is available in Welsh. Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg.

- 4.17 Where a request for review results in a different outcome, if the student remains dissatisfied with the decision, they will be able to request a Completion of Procedures letter from the Student Casework Unit.
- 4.18 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.

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

- 5.1 If the student is unhappy with the outcome of this Procedure, they 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. Further information and advice can be obtained from the Student Casework Unit.