Royal Veterinary College
University of London

Document A001

RVC Student Appeals Procedure

For all Undergraduate and Postgraduate Programmes

2024/25

Version	Update and Reason	Author and Title	Committee Approval	Date of Approval	Effective Date	Review date
1.0	Created	Academic Registrar	Unknown		June 2015	
1.1	Revision	Academic Registrar	Unknown		Jan 2017	
1.2	Format change and process revisions	SACC Manager	Academic Board	8th Sept 23	8th Sept 23	2023/24
1.3	Name change to SACC and FFR revisions	Assistant Registrar for SRC	N/A		1st August 2024	2024/25

Item	Contents	Page
1	Introduction and purpose	3
2	Definition of appeals	3
3	Academic judgment	3
4	Right of appeal and allowable grounds	3 - 4
5	General principles	4 - 5
6	How to request an appeal	5 - 6
7	Out of time	6
8	Support and advice for students	6 - 7
9	Confidentiality and record-keeping	7 - 8
10	Retention, Deletion and Archiving	8
11	Related policies and procedures	8
12	Attendance and engagement	9
13	Reasonable adjustments	9
14	Supporting early resolution	9 - 10
15	Appeals process	11 - 13
16	Appeals panel	13
17	Decisions of the appeals panel	13 - 15
18	Communication with the appellant	15
19	Final Formal Review	15 - 16
20	Completion of procedures information	16
21	The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education	16

1. Introduction and purpose

1.1 Students may wish to put forward a case regarding their results or continuation of study as a result of various factors. Depending on the factors cited, the case will be considered either as an Appeal, a potential Administrative Error, or a Complaint.

1.2 A student who appeals will suffer no detriment as a result of appealing.

2. Definition of an appeal

2.1 An appeal is a request for a review of a decision made by an academic body that makes a decision(s) on a student's progression, assessment, or award.

2.2 An academic appeal is based on documented evidence to support an extenuating circumstance, a procedural error, or new evidence which has likely resulted in an underperformance causing a failure to progress. The procedures cannot be used to contest a classification or marks if they were not what was expected or predicted.

3. Academic judgment

3.1 Academic judgment, as defined by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, *is not any judgment made by an academic; it is a judgment that is made about a matter where the opinion of an academic expert is essential. So, for example, a judgement about marks awarded, degree classification, research methodology, whether the feedback is correct or adequate, and the content or outcomes of a course will normally involve academic judgement.*

3.2 Academic judgment does not involve:

- Decisions related to procedural fairness.
- Whether or not the process has been interpreted correctly or appropriately applied.
- Consideration of evidence during a decision-making process.

4. Right of appeal and allowable grounds

4.1 Where a decision (the 'first decision') of a Student Performance and Development Panel, Board of Examiners, Research Degrees Committee, Post Graduate progression or

appraisal system or previous Appeals Panel has resulted in a student no longer having the right to:

4.1.1 progress or gain the award on the programme for which they originally registered, or
4.1.2 gain a pass on a particular option module at FHEQ level 6 or 7 where a substitute module is unacceptable to the student,

4.2 Any appeal has to be on one or more of the following grounds:

4.2.1 that there was an error in the procedure followed by the Board or Panel that might have resulted in an incorrect decision.
4.2.2 that the student's failure or ineligibility for the award was caused by extenuating circumstances which have significantly disadvantaged the student more severely than typical circumstances experienced by their peers.
4.2.3 that significant new evidence has come to light, which could not have been presented at the time of the first decision and is relevant to the first decision.
4.2.4 that there was an administrative error.

4.3 Where a student on a taught course wishes to contest an end-of-year result or a degree classification any appeal has to be on one or more of the following grounds:

4.3.1 that there was an error in the procedure followed by the Board or Post Graduate progression or appraisal system that might have resulted in an incorrect decision; and/or
4.3.2 that there was an administrative error.

5. General principles

5.1 A student cannot appeal against an academic judgement that is concluded following the correct application of RVC procedures (e.g., exam boards).

5.2 Where a student claims that there was an administrative error that might have resulted in an incorrect decision regarding progress or actual result, the Chair of the Board of Examiners, Research Degrees Committee or Panel. The Student Resolution and Compliance (SRC) Team will conduct a local-level investigation to determine whether

a case needs to be answered.

5.3 If an administrative error is uncovered the SRC Team will escalate the findings to the Registrar and Chair of the Examination Board or Committee to propose an appropriate resolution.

5.4 If the case is unproven the student will be written outlining how the decision was determined and would mark the end of the process.

5.5 Consideration of cases will also explore whether the student had reasonable access to support measures and options related to deferrals or an interruption of study.

5.6 Successive Appeals submitted by the same student in either the same year or future years will require new grounds on the reasons surrounding their underperformance to be submitted. Cases will not be accepted based on a student's circumstances which have already been previously considered.

6. How to request an appeal

6.1 Students who have failed to meet the requirements to progress will be notified of their right of appeal via a withdrawal notification letter from the Registrar.

6.2 A student appeal submission must be submitted by completing the A002 Student Appeals Request Form.

6.3 Students are required to submit their appeals including their written statement and supporting evidence within **21 calendar days** (3 weeks) from the date of the withdrawal letter.

6.4 Cases will not be considered unless there is sufficient evidence to support the students' claims or grounds for an appeal.

6.5 The SRC Team will acknowledge receipt of the full appeal submission within 5 calendar days.

6.6 The submission will be fully reviewed and assessed to ensure the case meets the allowable grounds.

6.7 Once the case has been fully reviewed the SRC Team will respond within 14 calendar days providing either:

- The case submitted is invalid, unfounded or does not demonstrate the student suffered a disadvantage compared to their peers. The appellant will be provided with a further 5 calendar days to re-submit their case. Any later submission after the additional 5 calendar day allowance will be considered out of time.

- The case submitted qualifies for a hearing, the students will be informed of the next available hearing date.

7. Out of time

7.1 Appeals must be submitted within the procedural timescales of 21 calendar days from the date of the withdrawal letter.

7.2 Any appeals received after this time will be considered out of time.

7.3 Should there be exceptional circumstances for a late submission then students should submit the form and provide their reason for an extension and any evidence to support their claims. A decision will be made on whether or not the appeal can be taken forward.

7.4 Reasons that will not be accepted for lateness:

- Not knowing about the academic appeals process or associated time limits.
- Being on holiday or having work commitments.
- Non-reported or registered issues around technical or connection difficulties.

8. Support and advice for students

8.1 Students who have been referred to the Appeals Procedure can approach a range of staff and supporters for advice. Examples are (but not restricted to) listed below:

- Tutor
- Senior Tutor
- Supervisor
- Departmental Postgraduate Research (PGR) Advisor
- Research Degrees Officer
- Student Union Representative
- Course Director or Academic Head of the Graduate School
- Year Leader
- Advice Centre
- Study Skills Team
- Student Resolution and Compliance (SRC) Team
- Disability Advisor
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Unit

9. Confidentiality and record keeping

9.1 Cases of appeals are treated with confidentiality and are not discussed amongst the RVC or wider community. Only key members of staff will be notified such as the Exams Office, the student(s) tutor and/or supervisor, and any RVC support services required to provide additional development and support in relation to any post-meeting recommendations or conditions.

9.2 The Academic Board will receive annual reports of anonymised appeal cases including data on the total number of reported case types, outcomes and identified risk and control measures. The RVC will annually evaluate and audit the appeal cases along with other forms of feedback, to improve the quality and effectiveness of the RVC's governance, compliance, and service delivery standards.

9.3 Students are advised to keep a copy of all correspondence in case they are dissatisfied with the appeal outcome and wish to use this information as part of their supporting evidence when making a request for a Final Formal Review (section 19) or submitting a complaint to the OIA (section 21).

9.4 Appeals records are administered centrally by the SRC Team within the Academic Registry. Records of appeals cases are retained for 6 years from the last action taken on the case to enable the RVC to respond to any requests regarding the decision and processes that may be made by the OIA and/or Freedom of Information

(FOI) requests.

9.5 To help support the RVC annual evaluation any student who undertakes the appeals process will be invited to complete a Student Resolution and Compliance Survey.

10. Retention, Deletion and Archiving

10.1 Data related to appeals is used to:

10.1.1 Monitor and analyse our management of casework within the required timeframes to improve and develop RVC service delivery.

10.1.2 Respond to internal audit requirements.

10.1.3 To enable us to respond to any requests regarding the decision and process that may be made by the OIA.

10.1.4 To conduct the periodic evaluation of cases in relation to Freedom of Information Request.

10.2 The student's tutor (for teaching degrees) or supervisor (for research degrees) and essential student support staff will be informed of the outcome of the appeal but not the content of the appeal.

10.3 Chairs and Panellists' who obtain copies of records before and during a Hearing will be sent an automated reminder to delete or shred any papers and/or documented evidence related to the student's Hearing. This may also include double deleting any copies saved in downloaded folders. Access will also be removed from the created One Drive Folder where appeals documents are securely shared.

11. Related policies and procedures

11.1 Where a student claims that the actions or inactions of RVC or external staff or other RVC provisions for their learning have resulted in the student's underperformance, this will be treated as a complaint using the RVC Student Complaints and Resolution Procedure.

11.2 At any stage of this process the staff involved can refer the student to the Professional Requirements Procedure. Should this occur, the Appeals Procedure will be halted. If the matter is not referred back to this procedure, then the appeals process will be considered complete.

12. Attendance and engagement

12.1 Students are expected to fully engage with the appeals process if they wish to submit an appeal. This includes responding to requests for information and attending hearings scheduled under this procedure.

12.2 Failure to engage with the appeals procedure may result in the case not being heard and the termination of proceedings.

12.3 Approval of non-attendance is only permitted in exceptional circumstances (i.e., medical grounds). If approval is granted, the Hearing will be postponed with the intention of rescheduling at the earliest opportunity.

12.4 If a student decides to withdraw from the RVC whilst an appeals case is ongoing, this will mean the case is withdrawn from being considered under these procedures.

13. Reasonable Adjustments

13.1 The SRC Team encourages reported students to disclose, at the earliest opportunity, any disabilities, learning differences or personal circumstances that may require the SRC Team to make reasonable adjustments to Appeals processes so that there is sufficient time to consider these requests and implement any agreed adjustments. Request can be submitted in writing to studentappeals@rvc.ac.uk.

13.2 Reasonable adjustment may include providing information in different formats, providing additional breaks during meetings, or conducting meetings via videoconferencing (for example where reported students are working/carers and unable to travel).

13.3 At the RVC's discretion, by way of making reasonable adjustments, the student may also be entitled to bring a health professional, support worker or disability advisor.

14 Supporting early resolution

14.3 Students cannot challenge decisions about marks, progression, or classifications once they have been ratified by the Board of Examiners. We appreciate that students may be dissatisfied with their awarded marks and wish to seek extra clarification on the marking process or the Exam Board's decision following the publication of results, such as:

14.3.1 How the marks have been calculated

14.3.2 Explanation of the marking and moderation process

14.4 We encourage all students to consult with their academic tutor and supervisor in the first instance to try and understand the circumstances surrounding their results and feedback.

14.5 Students can also contact the Advice Centre (advice@rvc.ac.uk) for wellbeing and support and the RVCSU for any independent advice.

14.6 If a student is unable to access their tutor or supervisor, there will be other course staff available, for example, the Year Leader, Strand Leader, or Course Director. The Exams Office (exams@rvc.ac.uk) will be able to signpost students to the best point of contact in relation to specific assessment and/or exam queries.

14.7 If the issue around marking clarification remains unresolved, then the student can submit their concerns to the SRC Team (studentappeals@rvc.ac.uk) who will carry out a marking investigation.

14.8 The marking investigation will be in collaboration with the course Exams Officer who will check whether a procedural error or administrative error has taken place.

14.9 The possible outcomes might be:

14.9.1 The investigation finds there is no procedural error or administrative error and the RVC marking process was followed accurately. The student would not be able to contest the outcome of academic judgment, and this would mark the end of the procedures.

14.9.2 The investigation detects a procedural error or an administrative error in the marking process and the case would be escalated to the Registrar for early resolution.

14.10 Should other students be directly affected by the outcome then the RVC would offer the same resolution for all students impacted by the investigation outcome.

14.11 There is no available outcome which allows for re-marking an examination or assessment. The agreed resolution would be aligned with the outcomes of the formal

appeals, for example, an opportunity to resit, resubmit or retake the piece of work under question.

15 Appeal process

15.3 The A002 Student Appeals Report Form should be accompanied by a written statement together with documented evidence to support the issues and circumstances surrounding the appeal:

15.4 The written statement should include:

- A self-appraisal outlining the details of the circumstances surrounding your reasons for an appeal.
- How the circumstances have directly impacted your personal circumstances, learning and/or teaching previsions i.e., attendance/engagement.
- Reflection in terms of how you intend to manage the circumstances moving forward especially if the issues require more long-term management.
- Any steps taken to engage with the RVC support services or external support.

15.5 Examples of evidence which can be used include (non-exhaustive list):

- Medical evidence.
- Order of service or death certificates.
- Specific Learning Difference or Disability Diagnosis if the diagnosis is directly associated with the period related to the underperformance.
- Emails and communication trails to demonstrate engagement with support services.
- Testimonials from family members and/or RVC staff.

15.6 Examples of evidence which will not be accepted:

- Testimonials from fellow students or practitioners.
- Matter of opinions or hearsay claims around undiagnosed illness or conditions.

15.7 Students are advised to consult with tutors/supervisors and other professional sources of advice to ensure they present a complete case to the Appeal Panel.

15.8 Where any extenuating circumstances presented would seem relevant to the student's fitness to practice, after consultation with the relevant Senior Tutor, the Registrar or their nominee, the case may be directed to the Professional Requirements Procedure.

15.8.1 In addition to the material presented by the student, the Appeals Panel will

receive a copy of the following for each appellant:

15.8.2 A statement from the appellant's tutor or supervisor concerning the student's engagement with their studies in the time leading up to the failure.

15.8.3 A full academic history from all routine formal progress meetings and assessment marks for the time leading up to the failure.

15.8.4 Any record of meetings following a Student Performance and Development (SPD) Meeting.

15.8.5 Any relevant information held on record by the Graduate School in relation to RVC's postgraduate programmes.

15.9 Full disclosure of meeting notes within a student's registration period will be obtained and used in an appeal proceeding where the following circumstances are identified and deemed relevant by the SRC Team:

15.9.1 Meeting notes (from SPD or appraisal processes) that disclose evidence directly related to the appeal case for example, non-engagement with learning or circumstances which refute the students' grounds for appeal.

15.9.2 Any parts of the student's notes which are identified as being non-related disclosure will be appropriately redacted.

15.10 Conflict of interest will be checked with the student and the Panel members before any case documents are shared to ensure all Panel members remain impartial. Should any conflicts be identified and reported then the SRC Team will be obligated to find an alternative Panel member.

15.11 The student will receive a formal invitation letter containing all the necessary details required to intend up to 7 calendar days before the hearing.

15.12 The student and Panel members will receive a full copy of the case documentation up to 7 calendar days before the Hearing.

15.13 The RVC reserves the right to hold the hearing remotely based on good, evidenced grounds (i.e., medical reasons). Any requests will require approval by the Chair.

15.14 Students will be entitled to bring a supporter to the Hearing, and this can be a friend, a family member or a member of the RVC community. Students must inform the SRC

Team of the name of their chosen supporter by the deadline date outlined on the invitation letter. The supporter's role is to support the student but not to participate in the hearing discussions unless invited to do so by the Chair.

15.15 The Hearing will be recorded under the supervision of the Secretary.

15.16 The Panel will make its decision in private. This session will not be recorded but summary notes will be taken by the Secretary.

16 Appeals panel

16.3 The composition of the Panel will be:

16.3.1 A Chair nominated by the Registrar and/or SRC Team.

16.3.2 Two senior members of academic staff experienced in making decisions about student progression in programmes of a similar academic level to those of the appellant.

16.3.3 Panel members must not have been key to the decision of the relevant Board or Panel making the first decision and independent of any consideration of the Student Development and Performance (SPD) Panel.

16.3.4 A nominee of the President of the Student Union selected for (i) their independence from the student whose case is being considered (ii) their understanding of the principles at stake and (iii) the broad context of the study of the student whose case is being considered.

16.3.5 A Secretary, nominated by the SRC Team.

16.4 The quorum shall be three members.

16.5 The Student Union member of the panel can be omitted from the panel membership at the request of the student whose case is being considered. Where this occurs, the quorum will be reduced by one member.

17 Decisions of the appeals panel

17.3 The Panel will determine the outcome by the majority view of members. The Chair shall have a casting vote. The Secretary has no vote.

17.4 The Panel will determine whether to uphold or reject the appeal and/or redirect any aspects of concern to Professional Requirements or Student Complaints and Resolution Procedures.

17.5 The Panel will uphold the appeal where they have found that:

17.5.1 There was a procedural error.

Or

17.5.2 that the student's failure or ineligibility for the award was caused by extenuating circumstances which have significantly disadvantaged the student, more severely than typical circumstances experienced by their peers and their academic record and approach to their learning and other needs show that the student does have the academic potential to gain the award sought.

17.5.3 There is new evidence which could not have been considered or taken effect when the first decision of non-progression was made.

17.6 Where the appeal is justified the Panel will prescribe the compulsory conditions for the student's return to study; namely:

17.6.1 For the student to retake, resubmit or resit the examination, assessment and or appraisal.

17.6.2 Repeat the year in full or part and undertake all in-attendance teaching and assessment.

17.6.3 any required period of deferral

17.6.4 any requirement for confirmation from an Occupational Health physician that the student is fit to study before the student can return to study.

17.6.5 any other actions considered important for future success such as engaging with learning support or other specialist advice.

17.7 The student's Return to Study status would be that of a 'resit' student meaning they have one last opportunity to fulfil the condition with no 2nd sit entitlement.

17.8 The Panel may not permit a student to progress on their programme of study without having passed the examination/assessment or appraisal that they had failed before the appeal. However, if there is a case of miscalculation of results or misinterpretation of regulations the student would be deemed to have passed following an appeal.

17.9 Where a student's maximum period of registration has been exhausted a request for Suspension of Regulations (SoRs) will need to be submitted to the Registrar by the Chair for approval. In such cases, an appeal outcome cannot be determined until this process

is complete. Should the SoR not be approved this would deem the appeal not upheld. The student will be given sufficient reason as to how the outcome was decided and would be eligible to appeal the decision under the Final Formal Review Procedures (section 19).

18 Communication of the outcome

18.3 Written communication before and after the panel hearing will be in PDF and emailed to the student's RVC email address by the SRC Team.

18.4 Students will also be notified of the decision of the Appeal Panel in writing not more than 7 calendar days after the hearing.

18.5 Students will be informed verbally, in person or by telephone, by the Panel or the Secretary, of the decision on the day of the hearing or the following day.

19 Final Formal Review (Internal)

19.3 The student can request a Final Formal Review if they have grounds to believe:

19.3.1 There is new evidence that could not have been, or for good reason was not, made available at the time of the hearing.

19.3.2 Evidence can be produced of significant procedural errors made during the formal complaints process.

19.3.3 Any remedy or outcome proposed as a resolution to the appeal is manifestly unreasonable.

19.4 Students requesting a Final Formal Review must complete and submit a Final Formal Request Form to the Student Appeals, Complaints and Conduct team at ffr@rvc.ac.uk **within 14 calendar days** of the formal misconduct outcome. Full details and process are outlined in the Final Formal Review Procedures.

20 Completion of procedures information

20.3 If the RVC determines that an appeal is unjustified or that a case is not permitted to proceed under the Final Formal Review Process, the RVC will provide a Completion of Procedures (CoP) Letter to the student. This letter will include an explanation of the decision reached.

20.4 A Completion of Procedures letter is required should the student wish to advance a complaint with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education. The RVC will usually only issue a Completion of Procedures letter once the disciplinary procedure has concluded and a final decision has been provided to the student.

21 The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIAHE)

21.3 Students who are dissatisfied with the outcome of a Final Formal Review can apply to the OIA for an independent review. Requests for OIA review must be made no later than 12 months after the Final Formal Review decision.

21.4 Further guidance on submitting a complaint to the OIA and the OIA Complaint Form can also be found on the OIA's website: https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students/can-you-complain-to- us/.