



## Guidelines for Staff (Section One Appeals)

Please note that this document is for guidance purposes only and the University's formal policy, arrangements and procedures are contained in the document **PGR Code of Practice Appendix 10: Research Degree Appeals Procedure**, which takes precedence over these Guidelines.

### TIMESCALES

It is intended that the full procedures under Section One, including any further appeal, will be completed within no more than 90 days of the student's submission of the appeal, except in circumstances where matters need to be referred to a full scheduled meeting of an Independent Progress Assessment Panel (IPAP) and this cannot be held within that timeframe. In order to keep to this 90 day maximum, indicative timescales are given in the guidance below. There is scope for flexibility within these, provided the overall timescale for completion of each stage is adhered to, unless there is good reason (communicated to the student) why a longer period is required.

### INITIAL CONSIDERATION OF THE CASE

#### Receipt of an appeal

Students are required to submit their appeal to the Postgraduate Research Experience Team (PRET). Upon receipt of an appeal, the Postgraduate Research Experience Team (PRET) should send an acknowledgement to the student. It is suggested that this should be done **within three working days** and this should include an indication of when they can expect to receive an update on its progress (this should normally be **within 21 calendar days** except where it is known that, for good reason (e.g. staff leave) it may take longer. If the appeal has been submitted after the deadline for appeals (normally **14 calendar days** from the date on which the student has been notified of the decision by the IPAP), the Postgraduate Research Experience Team (PRET) will consider whether there is any good reason why the student may have been unable to submit it within the deadline, in which case the appeal may still be considered. This should normally be completed **within 21 calendar days** (see above).

If the appeal is rejected, either because it is out of time, or because it is decided that the student has not cited valid grounds for it to be considered, the Postgraduate Research Experience Team (PRET) should write an Outcome Letter to the student. This letter should explain the reasons why the appeal has been rejected and detail the student's right to ask for a review of that decision. It is suggested that this letter should be sent to the student **within five calendar days** of the decision being taken.

If an appeal is accepted for further investigation, it is suggested that the Postgraduate Research Experience Team (PRET) should inform the student **within five calendar days** of the decision being taken and, **within two calendar days** of the decision being taken, should ask the Dean of School/Institute to appoint an investigator. It is suggested that this should normally be **within three calendar days** as any further delay will deplete the time available to the investigator to complete their investigation. A Dean of School/Institute, therefore, may wish to consider in advance of receipt of any appeals who is available and might be approached.

## **GUIDELINES ON ACADEMIC INVESTIGATIONS OF CASES**

### **Who should conduct the investigation(s)**

The investigator appointed by the Dean of School/ Institute should be a member of academic staff who must not have had previous material involvement in the determination of the finding of academic malpractice.

### **Timescale**

The investigator is required to complete their investigation and to submit their report to the Dean of School/ Institute. To meet the deadlines concerned, it is suggested that this should normally be **within no more than 26 calendar days** of their appointment. This includes taking time to consult on the draft report with a member of the SCCCT.

If, during the investigation, it becomes apparent that the investigation is going to take longer than 21 calendar days (e.g. because of staff absences), the investigator should immediately inform the Postgraduate Research Experience Team (PRET) in order that the student and the SCCCT can be informed of the likely length of delay and the reasons.

### **Conduct of the investigation**

The investigator should ensure that their investigation covers the specified grounds of the student's appeal, which the Postgraduate Research Experience Team (PRET) has identified as valid but should note in particular that this excludes anything which the student has cited which solely constitutes a questioning of academic judgment.

There are three possible outcomes which the investigator may recommend as a result of their investigation:

- Appeal upheld
- Appeal not upheld
- Appeal partially upheld

The Investigator should consult the SCCCT ([appeals@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:appeals@liverpool.ac.uk)) regarding the proposed recommendation before formalising the report.

### **Investigation report – content**

The report should not be in the body of an email but on headed paper attached to an email and should include clear identification of the name of the investigator. It would normally not exceed 2 pages of A4 – one side may be appropriate - but should cover the specified grounds of the appeal and the findings, including the recommendation as to whether the appeal is upheld/not upheld/partially upheld. The minimum headings that should be included in the report are indicated on the template below.

### **Investigation report – process**

Once the draft report has been discussed with the SCCCT, the finalised report should be sent by the Investigator to the Dean of School/ Institute who will also forward a copy to the Postgraduate Research Experience Team (PRET).

## **CONSIDERATION OF AN INVESTIGATION REPORT**

### **Recommendation that the appeal is not upheld**

If the Dean of School/ Institute accepts the recommendation, it is recommended that they should take that decision **within five calendar days** and ask the SCCCT to issue an Outcome Letter within no more than a further **five calendar days**. This should include the student's right to ask for a review of that decision.

If the recommendation is that the appeal should not be upheld, but this is considered to be contentious (e.g. if a complaint has been made prior to the appeal) then it may also be referred to the IPAP for consideration of the implications of the decision. In this case, it is recommended that the decision to refer the recommendation should be taken **within five calendar days** and that the SCCCT should write to the student within no more than a further **five calendar days** to inform them of this and of the timescale for consideration by the IPAP.

### **Recommendation that the appeal should be upheld or partially upheld**

If the recommendation is that the appeal should be upheld/partially upheld the Dean of School/ Institute will refer the matter back to the next meeting of the relevant IPAP for appropriate action.

The Dean of School/ Institute will instruct the IPAP to inform the student in writing of the date by which the student can expect to receive notification of the IPAP's decision.

After the IPAP has taken the decision, the SCCCT will issue an Outcome Letter to the student and it is recommended that this is sent **within five calendar days** of the IPAP's decision. This letter should include the student's right to ask for a review of that decision.

## **REQUESTS FOR REVIEWS OF DECISIONS**

Requests for reviews of a decision to reject an appeal without an investigation or against any decision taken following an investigation are handled through the SCCCT. Where no such request is received within the stated deadlines, the case is considered closed.

**TEMPLATE FOR SECTION 1 RESEARCH DEGREE APPEAL INVESTIGATION REPORT**

Appeal under Section 1 of the Research Degree Appeals Procedure

Investigation Report

**I. Appeal Details**

**Student:** (name and ID number)

**Module:** (name and module code)

**Specific element of assessment:**

**Date of appeal:**

**Details:** (brief resume, including cited grounds of appeal)

**II. Background information**

Including terms of reference of the Investigator, i.e. when they were appointed and what they have been asked to review.

**III. Comments**

To include what material has been reviewed

**IV. Recommendation of the investigation**

To include conclusion i.e. grounds for decision

Either:

- a. upheld
- b. not upheld
- c. partially upheld, and if so to specify which grounds are upheld and which are not

**Name of investigator**

Job description

**Date**