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*This document is part of the Academic Regulations, Policies and Procedures, which govern the University's academic provision. Each document has a unique document number to indicate which section of the series it belongs to.*

## 11C - Academic Appeals: Policy and Procedure for Research Awards

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### 1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 This policy and procedure is intended for Bournemouth University (BU) staff and students (including those enrolled on programmes delivered at academic partners) and recent students/graduates on postgraduate research programmes. *11A - Academic Appeals: Policy and Procedure for Taught Awards* outlines the Appeals process for taught programmes of study.
- 1.2 This policy and procedure is for use when a student or a recent graduate wishes to Appeal against an academic decision. Academic Appeals from recent students/graduates are subject to the timescales contained within this document.

Students, please note that if you are Appealing against an academic decision on the basis of Exceptional Circumstances that may have affected your performance, the University can only consider this if you had a valid reason for not raising this at the appropriate time as indicated in *6J - Exceptional Circumstances including Extensions: Policy and Procedure*. If you are not sure what this means for you, please contact SUBU Advice.

The University makes every effort to support students and appreciates that submitting an Appeal may be considered a difficult undertaking. The University provides support which is freely available to help you through any issues you may be experiencing.

Please have a look at the information and resources located on the [Health & wellbeing](#) webpages including the [A-Z of Resources](#).

- 1.3 If a student wishes the Research Examination Team to take any relevant matters into account, for example personal matters such as illness or bereavement; they must inform the Chair of the Research Examination Team in writing before the meeting at which the student's examination performance is to be considered. At the very latest, information may be submitted orally to the Chair at the start of the viva voce with supporting evidence submitted

within **5 working days**. All information must be submitted via the student's Research Administrator. Matters that could have been raised before or during the meeting of the Research Examination Team but without valid reason, were not raised will not be considered in an Appeal.

## 2. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1 Responsibility for the management and implementation of this policy and procedure lies with the Academic Registrar.
- 2.2 **Students** are responsible for familiarising themselves with this Policy and Procedure and for acting in accordance with it as required. It is the responsibility of students to seek clarification if necessary.
- 2.3 **Senate** approves new policies or amendments to existing policies relating to academic appeals.
- 2.4 **Academic Standards and Education Committee (ASEC)** considers the effectiveness of the arrangements for academic appeals and recommends changes to current policy to Senate.
- 2.5 **Faculties** and the **Doctoral College** are responsible for ensuring that students are informed of the principles of this policy and procedure. The Doctoral College co-ordinates the Formal Stage of the procedure for Appeals from BU students. The relevant Deputy Dean of Research and Professional Practice may consider cases at the Formal Stage where there are conflicts of interest in the Doctoral College.
- 2.6 **Academic Quality** is responsible for coordinating the Review Stage of the procedure for Appeals. Academic Quality is also responsible for providing advice and guidance to staff involved with the procedures.

## 3. LINKS TO OTHER BU DOCUMENTS

- 3.1 Other documents with direct relevance to this one are:
  - [6A - Standard Assessment Regulations: Postgraduate Research Degrees](#)
  - [6J - Exceptional Circumstances including Extensions: Policy and Procedure](#)
  - [8A - Code of Practice for Research Degrees](#)
  - [11F- Student Complaints Policy and Procedures](#)
  - [11L - Third Party Involvement: Procedure](#)
  - [11K - Student Disciplinary: Procedure](#)
  - [Unacceptable Behaviour Policy](#)
  - [Important Information \(Student-facing Policies and Procedures\)](#)
  - [PGR Appeals Form](#)
  - [Dignity and Respect \(Harassment\) Policy and Procedure](#)

## Policy

## 4. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 4.1 The University takes all Appeals seriously and students will not suffer any disadvantage or recrimination by making an appeal in good faith. Where, however, an Appeal is believed to be frivolous, vexatious or motivated by malice, disciplinary action may be taken against the student under the relevant disciplinary policy.
- 4.2 The University is committed to the fair and equal treatment of all individuals regardless of gender, age, disability, colour, race, ethnic or national origin, socio-economic group, sexual orientation, marital status, family responsibilities, religious or political beliefs.

- 4.3 The University is committed to ensuring that the Appeal is dealt with independently and without bias. The decision maker at each stage will be a different person, thus ensuring independence and the removal of the perception that any bias may have occurred. However, staff who have been involved at earlier stages may be required to provide evidence and information relating to the case.
- 4.4 The University will deal with all Appeals in a timely manner and will ensure that students (and recent graduates) are communicated to with regards their case on a regular basis. Where the University needs to go outside of the timelines stipulated in this policy and procedure (e.g., due to staff sickness or the complexity of a case) this will be communicated to the student in a timely manner.
- 4.5 Where a student has exceptional circumstances, the processes set out in this document can be delayed at any point upon a student's request, otherwise normal timeframes apply. Any request is expected to be supported by verifiable evidence.
- 4.6 When reaching an outcome, the University will check to ensure it has properly applied its policies and procedures, and whether it has acted reasonably and fairly at all stages. Where an Appeal is upheld, the University will seek to correct any mistakes or misunderstandings and will take any other action as appropriate. Where an Appeal is not upheld the reasons for the decision will be provided.
- 4.6 If the student wishes to make a Complaint at the same time as an Appeal, both will be dealt with concurrently. If this is not practicable, the Complaint will be dealt with under 11F - Student Complaints: Policy and Procedure before the Appeal is considered.
- 4.7 Where a student is also subject to a University procedure whilst pursuing an Academic Appeal, such as (but not limited to) Fitness to Practice/Study or a Disciplinary Procedure, the University will determine which Procedure takes precedence. The student will be kept informed at all stages.
- 4.8 This document is an internal procedure and is not a legal process. The University strongly advises students to use the services of the [SUBU Advice](#) team who are independent from the University and have a full understanding of the university's processes and procedures. BU does not normally use legal professionals in the handling of cases and does not expect that students will need to do so either. The engagement of legal professionals by students to represent them in the appeals process is normally not permitted.
- 4.9 Students can choose to be supported or represented by a third party (but not normally a legal advisor) at each stage. However, the University will not investigate an Appeal made on the student's behalf by a third party unless they have appointed the third party as their representative to manage the Appeal on their behalf. Please refer to *11L – Third Party Involvement: Procedure* for further details.
- 4.11 Evidence in the form of a covert recording will not normally be admissible. Should a student wish to submit any covert recording as evidence at any stage of the procedure, it would be considered on a case by case basis.

## 5. DEFINITIONS

- 5.1 The University defines an Academic Appeal as: **a request for a review of a decision of an academic body charged with making decisions on student progression, assessment and awards.**
- 5.2 An Academic Appeal against decisions relating to research awards can only be considered on the following grounds:

1. there has been a material irregularity or significant administrative error in the assessment process.
2. a student's performance in assessment has been affected by illness or other factors which, for valid reason(s), they were unable to divulge before the meeting of the Research Examination team (see 6J – *Exceptional Circumstances including Extensions: Policy and Procedure*)
3. arrangements for supervision did not meet those outlined in Bournemouth University's 8A *Code of Practice for Research Degrees*
4. bias or the perception of bias in the assessment process / consideration of the Appeal.

**Disagreement with the academic judgement of the examiners assessing the merits of an individual piece of work or in reaching any decision based on the marks, grades and other information relating to a candidate's performance does not in itself constitute acceptable grounds for making an academic appeal.**

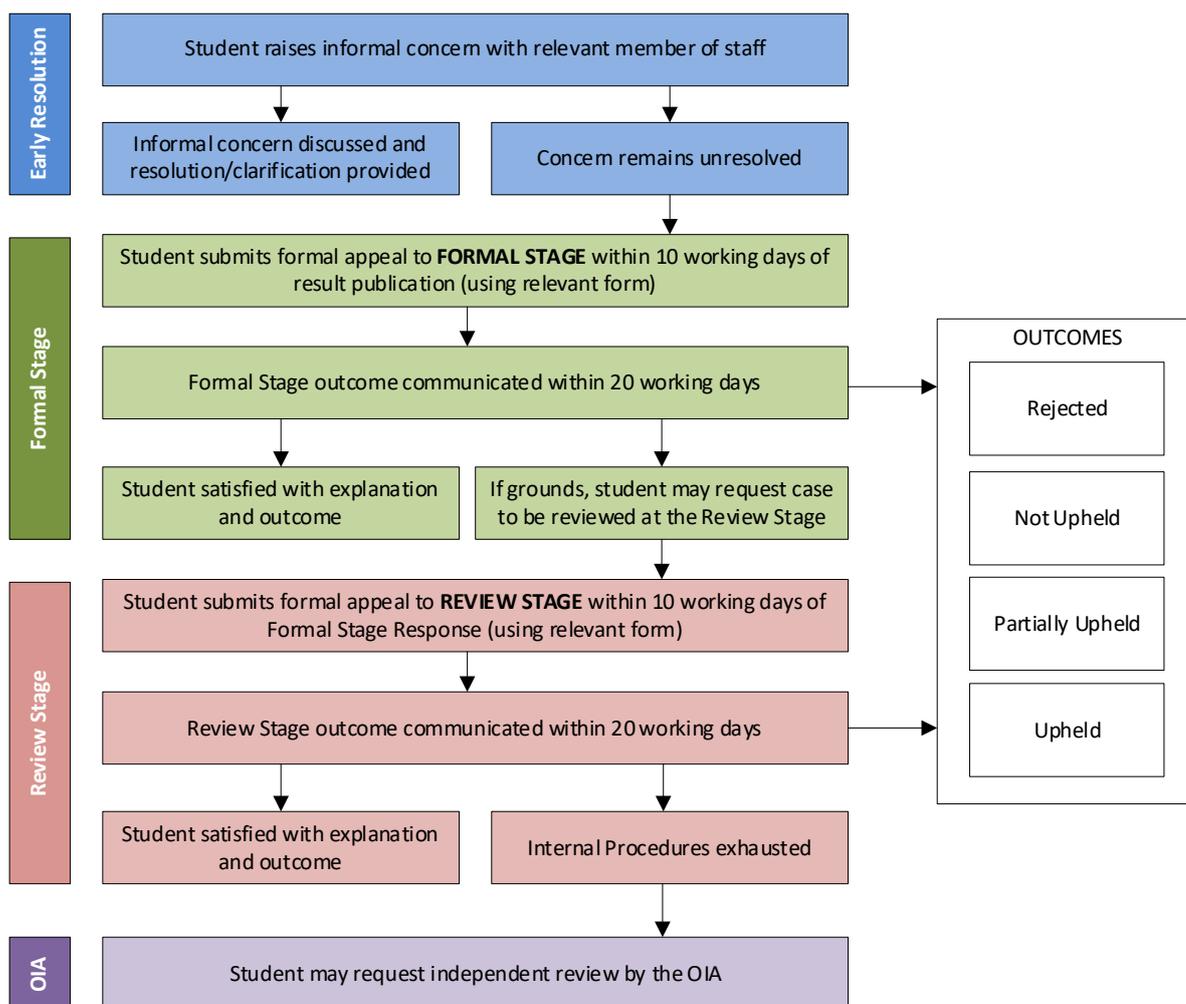
- 5.3 Those involved in consideration of Appeals at all stages will not attempt to re-examine the student, nor to appraise the professional academic judgement of the examiners, but will consider whether the decision of the Research Examination Team was fair and whether all relevant factors were taken into account.

## **6. STUDENT RIGHTS**

- 6.1 Students pursuing an Appeal through this policy and procedure will be entitled to apply for access to personal data by making a subject access request in accordance with the data protection legislation. Further information about data protection rights can be found on the [Data protection and privacy page of the BU website](#). This includes a subject access request form which will help you submit your response in writing.
- 6.2 Where a student's enrolment status is changed following withdrawal, and they are appealing against this decision, they will be entitled to an agreed period of time to access their IT account to gather anything required for their appeal before it will be suspended. This can be arranged via the IT Service Desk.
- 6.3 A student may not have a degree or other academic qualification conferred until all their outstanding examination or assessment Appeals have been resolved.

## **7. APPLICATION**

- 7.1 A student may Appeal against a decision of a Research Examination Team providing they can demonstrate that they have grounds as outlined in 5.2. Appeals may be made on multiple grounds.
- 7.2 The diagram below gives an overview of the Appeal process:



## 7.4 Early Resolution

7.4.1 The University's academic appeals procedure includes the provision for the early and informal resolution of any concerns that students may have at a local level relating to research awards, enabling concerns to be dealt with swiftly before these are escalated into a formal appeal.

7.4.2 Students are therefore encouraged to discuss any concerns relating to their research or supervision during the year with an appropriate member of their supervisory team or the Deputy Dean Research and Professional practice in the first instance, so the right person can look into the issue raised. Concerns at this stage should be made either in-person or in writing. Advice can be sought from the Students' Union.

7.4.3 Key principles of early resolution:

- Early resolution has the potential to arrive at similar resolutions as those derived through the formal process.
- Academic appeals may not always be readily amenable to early resolution because core academic judgment will not be open to challenge. Where appropriate, any meeting with students should normally be arranged within **five working days** of a concern being raised.
- Attempts for early resolution should be completed during the year and within **10 working days** of receiving the writing decision of the Research Examination Team, with an emphasis on students to raise concerns in a timely manner as to ensure any formal appeal is not submitted outside of published deadlines (see 7.5).

## 7.5 Formal Stage

- 7.5.1 If a student's concern cannot be clarified by early resolution, students have the opportunity to submit an appeal to the Formal Stage.
- 7.5.2 Appeals at this point should be addressed in the first instance to the Doctoral College using the Appeals Form (Appendix 1). This form must be submitted **within 10 working days** of receiving the written decision of the Research Examination Team. Where a student wishes to make an Appeal outside of this timescale, they will need to provide an explanation of why they were unable to keep within this timescale and provide evidence to support this. Students must include any relevant evidence to support the Appeal. The provision of any additional evidence after submitting a formal appeal may impact the response timescales, as per 7.5.4.
- 7.3 On receipt of a formal academic appeal, the appropriate team will consider whether the Appeal is admissible on the grounds stated in paragraph 5.2 above and reserves the right to reject any Appeal that is not within the scope of these grounds. In these cases, the student will be provided an explanation of why their appeal has been rejected.
- 7.5.4 Whilst every effort will be made to deal with Appeals in a timely manner, Appellants should normally expect to receive a written response **within 20 working days** of receipt of their Appeal. Students will be informed of any delay, with a reason for the delay and revised timescales provided.
- 7.5.5 The outcome of the Appeal will be one of the following:
- **Rejected-** the Appeal does not fall within the grounds outlined in 5.2 OR has been submitted outside of the 10 day deadline and no evidence was submitted to support a valid reason for submitting outside of the deadline.
  - **Not Upheld-** The Appeal has been investigated but there is no evidence to support the grounds upon which the Appeal was made
  - **Partially upheld-** The Appeal has been investigated and it is found that one or more elements of the Appeal has been substantiated
  - **Upheld-** The Appeal has been investigated and it is found that the grounds upon which the Appeal has been fully substantiated.
- 7.5.6 All appellants who have received an outcome from a Formal Stage Appeal have the opportunity to request that their case is considered at the Review Stage, provided there are valid grounds as outlined in 7.6.1.

## 7.5 Review Stage

- 7.6.1 If a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the Formal Stage, they may request a review of their Appeal on the following grounds:
- there had been material irregularities in the application of the University's policies and procedures for considering the student's Appeal at an earlier stage of the process;
  - the student has provided new and relevant evidence in support of their Appeal which, for valid reason, they had not been able to supply at an earlier stage of the process;
  - the outcomes of the Formal Stage is deemed to be unreasonable under the circumstances.
- 7.6.2 The Review Stage will not consider the issues raised in the original appeal afresh nor involve a further investigation. New points of appeal, including additional grounds, may **not** be raised at the Review Stage.
- 7.6.3 A student seeking consideration at the Review Stage must submit their request within **10 working days** of the date of the Formal Stage response. The request should be addressed to Academic Quality and demonstrate how their request meets the grounds upon which a review may be brought as outlined in 7.6.1.

- 7.6.4 On receipt of the request, Academic Quality will consider whether the appeal is admissible on the grounds stated in paragraph 7.6.1 above and reserves the right to reject any request that is not within the scope of these grounds. In these cases, the student will be provided an explanation of why their appeal has been rejected.
- 7.6.5 The Review Stage will normally be completed with a response in writing **within 20 working days** of receiving the request. The outcome will be in line with section 7.5.5 above. When reaching an outcome, the Review Stage may refer a matter back to the Formal Stage for reconsideration. Students will be informed of any delay, with a reason for the delay and revised timescales provided.

## **8. REVIEW BY THE OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT ADJUDICATOR**

- 8.1 The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) runs an independent scheme to review student complaints, in which Bournemouth University is a member of this scheme. If you are unhappy with an outcome, you may be able to ask the OIA to review your appeal. You can find more information about making a complaint to the OIA, what it can and can't look at and what it can do to put things right if something has gone wrong here:
- 8.2 You normally need to have completed this procedure before you complain to the OIA. We will send you a letter called a "Completion of Procedures Letter" when you have reached the end of our processes and there are no further steps you can take internally. If your appeal is not upheld, we will issue you with a Completion of Procedures Letter automatically. If your appeal is upheld or partially upheld, you can ask for a Completion of Procedures Letter if you want one. You can find more information about Completion of Procedures Letters and when you should expect to receive one here:

## **9. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW**

- 9.1 Faculties are required to keep records of Appeals considered at the Formal Stage and will report on these on an annual basis.
- 9.2 Academic Quality will report on all appeal cases annually to the University Board. The purpose of this report is to ensure appropriate monitoring, evaluation and review of the Appeals process. The report will also outline any recommendations for amendments to practice based on the data collated. Academic Quality will ensure that all such recommendations are considered in a timely manner.

### **General**

## **10. REFERENCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION**

- 10.1 [Office of the Independent Adjudicator – Good Practice Framework](#)  
[The UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#)
- 10.2 This policy was reviewed according to the University's [Equality Analysis Procedure](#) in May 2022.
- 10.3 If you would like this document in a different format please email [appeals@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:appeals@bournemouth.ac.uk)

## **11. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 - [Academic Appeals Form for Research Awards](#)