

# Appeals Procedure for Taught Degrees

## 2014-2015

These regulations must be read in conjunction with the *General Regulations for Students* and the appropriate *Taught Degree Regulations* (Certificate and Diploma, Undergraduate or Postgraduate Taught), *Codes of Practice* and *Guidelines*.

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## 1. **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This procedure applies to all students on taught undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes. There is a separate procedure for postgraduate research students (MPhil and PhD).
- 1.2 Appeals must be referred to the Director of Student and Registry Services. Chairs of Boards of Examiners and examiners must not communicate with candidates about their performance in assessments.
- 1.3 The assessment arrangements in respect of work contributing to a final award include moderation by visiting examiners; therefore appeals against the academic judgement of examiners are not permissible.

## 2. **GROUNDS FOR APPEAL**

- 2.1 Students can appeal on the following grounds:

- (a) **Irregularity in the conduct of the assessment or administrative error.**

The Director of Student and Registry Services will need to be satisfied that the assessment has been conducted in accordance with the relevant Instructions and/or Regulations for that particular assessment. Such an allegation may be referred back to the appropriate Board of Examiners for consideration.

- (b) **The presentation of new evidence of mitigating circumstances which might have adversely affected a candidate's performance**

The Director of Student and Registry Services will consider the adequacy of the evidence and whether there is good reason why this evidence was not made available to the Board of Examiners at the time the circumstances occurred. The Director of Student and Registry Services will also consider whether the new evidence is likely to have affected the decision of the Board of Examiners had it been available to the Board at the time the decision was taken. Generally, new cases of mitigating circumstances will only be considered where a candidate's performance was on the borderline or where it could have become borderline if the mitigating circumstances had been known to the Board of Examiners at the time when the decision was taken. If good reason is shown for non-presentation of mitigating circumstances, the Chair of the Board of Examiners will be invited to reconsider the case, in consultation with appropriate visiting examiners.

- 2.2 In considering an appeal under (a) or (b) the Director of Student and Registry Services will consult appropriate staff members. This will include the relevant Associate Dean or the

Chair of the SOAS Board of Examiners (for undergraduate finalists).

### **3. PROCEDURE FOR MAKING AN APPEAL (STAGE 1)**

- 3.1 A candidate who wishes to make an appeal concerning assessment results should write to the Director of Student and Registry Services, giving full details and providing appropriate documentary evidence.
- 3.2 Any appeal must be received within **three weeks** of the formal notification of results to the candidate. Appeals received after this deadline must be accompanied by a statement explaining the reason(s) for lateness. Late appeals will only be considered if the reasons given are found to be acceptable.
- 3.3 Appeals must be made by the candidate and not by third parties. The Director of Student and Registry Services will not engage in correspondence with third parties concerning an individual's assessment results without the written permission of the candidate.

### **4. NOTIFICATION OF STAGE 1 DECISION**

- 4.1 Candidates will be informed in writing by the Director of Student and Registry Services of the outcome of their appeal as soon as is practicable.
- 4.2 Students who are unhappy with the outcome at Stage 1 may request an appeal against this decision under Stage 2 of the procedure.

### **5. APPEAL AGAINST DECISION (STAGE 2)**

- 5.1 A candidate who wishes to appeal against the decision made in respect of their Stage 1 appeal should write to the Director of Student and Registry Services within **fourteen days** of the date of the letter communicating the decision.
- 5.2 The Director of Student and Registry Services will refer the case to an Appeals Panel.

### **6. APPEALS PANEL**

- 6.1 The Appeals Panel will consist of three members:
- An Associate Dean unconnected with the student (Panel Convenor)
  - A member of SOAS academic staff (nominated by the candidate)
  - A member of SOAS academic staff who serves as Chair of a Board of Examiners unconnected with the student making the appeal (nominated by the convenor)

- 6.2 The Appeals Panel will consider the available evidence and may interview the candidate and/or members of academic and administrative staff. The candidate has the right to address the Panel in person. The candidate may be accompanied by a friend, who does not have the right to address the Panel.
- 6.3 The Appeals Panel will make one of the following decisions:
- (a) To dismiss the appeal
  - (b) To require the relevant Board of Examiners to reconsider its original decision. The Panel's convenor will inform the Board of the reason(s) for the Panel's decision.
- 6.4 The Panel does not have authority to direct or overturn the decision of a Board of Examiners. Its authority only extends to requiring a Board of Examiners to reconsider its original decision.

## **7. NOTIFICATION OF STAGE 2 DECISION**

- 7.1 The Director of Student and Registry Services will inform the candidate in writing of the Panel's stage 2 decision.
- 7.2 Where the Panel requires a Board of Examiners to reconsider its decision, the Director of Student and Registry Services will inform the candidate in writing of the outcome.

## **8. OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT ADJUDICATOR (OIA)**

- 8.1 At the end of the internal appeal procedure the student has the right to submit a request for the School's decision to be reviewed by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). The OIA provides an independent scheme for the review of student grievances under the Higher Education Act 2004.
- 8.2 Once the internal appeal process has been completed the School's Information Compliance Manager will issue a Completion of Procedures letter (CoP) informing the student that the internal procedures of SOAS have been exhausted and of their right of appeal to the OIA in accordance with the guidance from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/guidance-good-practice-and-events/good-practice-guidance.aspx>
- 8.3 Further information on the OIA can be obtained from the SOAS Information Compliance Manager and from the Students' Union and from the OIA website here: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>.