

Standing Orders Governing Research Appeals

1. The Standing Orders govern appeals against:

- 1.1 The recommendation of the examiners as set out in sections 8.6.2 – 8.6.9 of the *Regulations for Research Courses of Study*¹;
- 1.2 A recommendation made (i) by a review panel that a research candidate should not be upgraded from the degree of Master by Research and Thesis to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy; (ii) by a review panel that a research candidate should be transferred to another degree or withdraw from the University in the event of unsatisfactory progress or (iii) at submission review that a candidate, previously upgraded to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, should submit for the degree of Master of Philosophy;
- 1.3 The decision to deny a research candidate permission to (i) interrupt the prescribed period of registration for a stated length of time in cases of illness or other good cause or (ii) transfer registration to another degree or otherwise vary the conditions of their registration or (iii) to have their period of registration extended for a stated period as set out in the *Regulations for Research Courses of Study*;
- 1.4 The recommendation that a research candidate's registration be terminated in the event of unsatisfactory progress as set out in section 12 of the *Regulations for Research Courses of Study*;
- 1.5 The decision that a research candidate is no longer eligible to submit a thesis for examination, as set out in section 8.5 of the *Regulations for Research Courses of Study*.
- 1.6 Students who submit an appeal can expect to do so without risk of disadvantage or of unfair treatment. The University recognises that pursuing an appeal may be stressful and aims to conclude the process as quickly and efficiently as possible. Student well-being will be properly considered throughout the process and reasonable adjustments will be made where necessary in order to ensure equality and accessibility for all students submitting an appeal. This will ensure that the process can be navigated equally by all. The most effective route to resolution of an appeal is one in which all parties engage in a spirit of co-operation.
- 1.7 All staff involved in the consideration of appeals are required to undertake Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity training and attend training provided by the Quality Assurance and Compliance Office.
- 1.8 Advice and support for students is available from their Students' Union and students who are considering submitting an appeal are strongly encouraged to contact the Students' Union at the earliest opportunity to discuss their appeal submission. Advice on the procedure itself can also be sought from the Quality Assurance and Compliance Office.

¹ <https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/regulations/documents/regs-research-sept2020.pdf>

University of Kent

- 1.9 The University also has a complaints procedure². On occasion, students will submit both an appeal and a complaint at the same time and when this happens it may be necessary to suspend one process until the other is completed. With the agreement of the student, however, it may be decided to consider these matters together. In this situation a decision will be made by the Head of Quality Assurance and Compliance in consultation the Head of Student Conduct and Complaints about where overall responsibility of the matter lies, and who will issue the final outcome, and the student will be informed.
- 1.10 Students who are identified as making frivolous or vexation appeals will be referred to the non-academic disciplinary process. Examples of frivolous or vexation appeals include those which are obsessive, harassing or repetitive, insist on pursuing unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes, pursuing an appeal in an unreasonable manner, are designed to cause disruption or annoyance, or lack any serious purpose or value. The Quality Assurance and Compliance Manager will decide whether an appeal is frivolous or vexatious.
- 1.11 Students have the right to withdraw their appeal at any time.
- 1.12 All information and evidence submitted as part of an appeal will be treated as sensitive personal data under GDPR legislation ('special category data') and processed as such. Materials will be kept securely, with access restricted to those staff in the University who have a legitimate reason for accessing it in order to process the appeal.

2. Grounds for appeal

- 2.1 The grounds for such an appeal may include allegations of any of the following:
- 2.1.1 that there are **extenuating circumstances** affecting the student's performance of which the relevant examiners or staff members were not, for good reason, aware when their decision was taken.
- 2.1.2 that there was **administrative, procedural or clerical error** in the conduct of the procedure of such a nature as to cause reasonable doubt as to whether the same decision would have been reached had they not occurred.
- 2.1.3 that there is **evidence of prejudice or bias or the reasonable perception of prejudice or bias or of inadequate assessment** on the part of one or more of the examiners or staff members concerned.

3. A research student may not appeal:

- 3.1 against academic judgement or;
- 3.2 on the grounds of poor or inadequate research supervision. Such a matter would be the subject of an academic complaint, which should have been raised

² <https://www.kent.ac.uk/regulations/Regulations%20Booklet/student-complaints-procedure.pdf>

University of Kent

and resolved at the earliest opportunity through the academic complaints procedure.

4. Process of Appeals

- 4.1 In the first instance, students are strongly advised to resolve any issues informally. It is beneficial to resolve concerns and queries as early as possible and prior to entering the formal appeal process.
- 4.2 In order to benefit from early informal resolution, students should first raise their concern directly with their Division. Schools within each Division are expected to clearly publish the contact point for students who wish to seek early informal resolution.
- 4.3 Where a student is not satisfied with the outcome of their early informal resolution attempt, they may proceed to make a formal academic appeal.
- 4.4 Formal appeals should be submitted to the Quality Assurance and Compliance Office and will only be considered if submitted:
 - 4.4.1 by means of the online appeal form³ explaining in full the grounds for the appeal and the outcome sought⁴;
 - 4.4.2 with all necessary documentary evidence substantiating the grounds of the appeal;
 - 4.4.3 within **fifteen working days** of receipt of the decision or recommendation that the student is appealing against.⁵
- 4.5 The Appeals Case Manager(s) in the Quality Assurance and Compliance Office will determine whether it meets the technical grounds of an appeal as outlined above (see 4.1.1 – 4.1.3).
- 4.6 The appeal will be considered in accordance with the appeals process laid out in sections 6 to 11 of Annex 13 (*Appeals Against the Recommendations of Boards of Examiners*).

³ Weblink to be added in due course

⁴ If a student is not able to access the online appeal form they should contact the Quality Assurance and Compliance Office for advice. A hard copy of alternative electronic version can be provided.

⁵ There is flexibility to extend the fifteen working day deadline for submission of a formal appeal if there is good reason to do so, i.e., where a student has an Inclusive Learning Plan (ILP) that recommends adjustments in order to accommodate difficulties around meeting deadlines.