

Examination Appeals Policy

This Examination Appeals Policy sets out the process by which a candidate may appeal an examination-related decision made by the Society of Apothecaries. The policy is intended to ensure that appeals are considered fairly, consistently, and within a reasonable timeframe, while preserving the proper distinction between legitimate grounds of appeal and matters of academic judgement. This policy should be read alongside the Society's academic regulations, assessment regulations, and any procedures governing mitigating circumstances, academic misconduct, and candidate complaints.

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear, fair, and transparent procedure for the appeal of examination-related decisions affecting candidates.
- 1.2. The policy is designed to ensure that candidates have an opportunity to raise concerns where there is evidence that a decision may have been affected by procedural irregularity, previously undisclosed mitigating circumstances, bias, or other recognised grounds of appeal. See points 5 & 6 of this document.
- 1.3. This policy also supports the integrity of the Society's assessment processes by confirming that academic judgement will not be reconsidered through the appeals process where candidates solely rely on the grounds that they disagree with the mark awarded. For an appeal submission to be accepted, it must satisfy the conditions in points 5 & 6.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to candidates sitting examinations leading to an award of the Society.
- 2.2 The policy applies to examination-related decisions. For example, this includes decisions about marks, reassessment, award, withdrawal on academic grounds, and other outcomes reached by an Examination Committee.
- 2.3 This policy does not apply to general complaints about teaching, facilities, services, or the conduct of staff or candidates, which should normally be considered under other complaints procedures unless those matters are directly linked to an examination decision and fall within the grounds set out below.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 For the purposes of this policy, an examination appeal is a request for re-consideration of a decision made by an academic Examination Committee responsible for assessment or awards.
- 3.2 The Examination Committee is the team of expert examiners appointed to each individual Diploma awarded by the Society. The Examination Committees report to the Academic Quality & Standards Committee (AQSC). Overarching governance of all academic activities of the Society sits with the Academic Programme & Governance Board (APGB).
- 3.3 Society refers to the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries which is the awarding body. The Academic Team of the Centre for Health Studies, Apothecaries' Hall, carry out the administration, delivery and results processes.
- 3.4 Academic judgement means a judgement made by an academic expert on a matter requiring academic or

professional expertise, including the standard of a candidate's work, the mark awarded, the award classification if relevant, or the appropriateness of feedback.

- 3.5 Procedural irregularity means a failure to follow the Society's regulations, policies, or procedures in a way that may have materially affected the outcome.
- 3.6 Mitigating circumstances means serious circumstances beyond the candidate's control that adversely affected their assessment performance or ability to submit or attend, and which the candidate was unable, for good reason, to disclose at the appropriate time.
- 3.7 Working days means Monday to Friday excluding public holidays and days when the Society is formally closed.
- 3.8 Appellant means the candidate submitting the appeal.
- 3.9 Review Panel refers to the two examiners, appointed by the Convenor (Chief Examiner) of the Diploma and tasked with considering Stage 1 of the appeals process (see Point 9 below). They will review the paper to ensure the awarding, calculation and collation of marks has been carried out correctly.
- 3.10 Appeals Panel refers to the group considering Stage 2 of the appeals process. The Panel consists of the Chair of AQSC, the Convenor of the Diploma and the Convenor of another independent Diploma who is not already involved in the appeals process.
- 3.11 The Appeals Governance Panel refers to the group hearing the third and Final Appeal Stage. The group consists of the Chair of the APGB, the Honorary Dean and one other representative of the APGB, not directly connected with examinations or already involved in the appeals process.

4. Principles

- 4.1 Appeals will be handled in accordance with the principles of fairness, proportionality, timeliness, confidentiality, accessibility, and independence.
- 4.2 The Society will take reasonable steps to ensure that decision-makers have had no previous material involvement in the matters under review and are free from any actual or perceived conflict of interest. This will include requesting decision-makers to confirm their relevant interests on appointment and at regular points during the examination cycle.
- 4.3 Candidates will not be disadvantaged for making an appeal.
- 4.4 Appeals will normally be resolved as early as possible in the process and at the lowest appropriate level, while ensuring proper consideration of the issues raised.
- 4.5 The Society may adapt the process where necessary to ensure that candidates experiencing a disability or other specific needs are able to access the procedure fully.
- 4.6 Unsuccessful candidates may request individual feedback on their examination performance within 5 working days of receiving their examination result. The Convenor of each Diploma, or their representative, will be asked to provide a level of feedback which is considered of value to the candidate to enable them to understand areas of error and where further development is required. Any level of information and feedback provided by the Convenor will be considered for reasonableness and in line with maintaining the integrity of the examination.

5. Grounds for Appeal

- 5.1 An appeal may normally be considered only on one or more of the following grounds:
 - there is evidence of a procedural irregularity in the conduct of the assessment or in the decision-making process;

- there are mitigating circumstances that the candidate was unable to disclose earlier for good reason, and which could have materially affected the outcome;
 - there is evidence of bias, prejudice, or unfair treatment in the process leading to the decision;
 - there has been an administrative error in recording or communicating the decision.
- 5.2 The candidate must explain clearly which ground or grounds are relied upon and provide supporting evidence wherever possible.

6. Matters Excluded from Appeal

- 6.1 An appeal will not normally be considered where it is based solely on:
- disagreement with the academic judgement of examiners or the Examination Committee;
 - dissatisfaction with marks or award classification where no permitted ground of appeal is established;
 - matters that could more appropriately be considered under another procedure, unless the Society determines that it is reasonable to consider linked issues together;
 - information or evidence that was available earlier but was not submitted without good reason;
 - minor errors that did not materially affect the outcome.

7. Submission of an Appeal

- 7.1 Appeals must be submitted in writing using the prescribed form notified by the Society.
- 7.2 The appeal must normally include:
- the decision being appealed;
 - the date on which the candidate was notified of the decision;
 - the ground or grounds for appeal;
 - a clear statement of the facts and the remedy sought;
 - copies of all relevant supporting evidence.
- 7.3 Appeals should normally be submitted within 10 working days of the date on which the candidate was notified of the examination decision.
- 7.4 An appeal submitted outside the deadline will normally be rejected as out of time unless the candidate demonstrates good reason, supported by evidence, for the delay. Acceptance of an appeal submission beyond the published timeframe is at the discretion of the Society.

8. Preliminary Assessment

- 8.1 On receipt of an appeal, the Society will carry out a preliminary assessment to determine whether the appeal has been submitted on time, whether it falls within the scope of this policy, and whether valid grounds have been presented. The Preliminary Assessment will be carried out by the Executive Director of the Centre for Health Studies (CfHS), who is responsible for the administration of the examination process on behalf of the Society and the Deputy Chair of the AQSC, or their designated representatives.
- 8.2 At this stage the Society may seek clarification, request missing evidence, correct an obvious administrative error, or refer the matter to another procedure where more appropriate.
- 8.3 Candidates will be normally be informed within 5 working days of receipt, if their submission has met the Appeals Policy criteria and is now being considered under Stage 1 of the process below, or if it has been rejected. Where the appeal does not meet the relevant criteria, candidates will be informed of the reasons

for this. Should any delay occur with the Preliminary Assessment stage of the process, candidates will be notified and informed of the reasons for this.

9. Formal Consideration of the Appeal

9.1 Where an appeal passes preliminary assessment, it will be referred for formal consideration under three stages:

Stage 1- Review Panel

The Review Panel will meet to look at the candidate's paper to ensure the awarding, calculation and collation of marks has been carried out correctly. Candidates will normally be informed of the outcome of stage 1 within 10 working days of the Review Panel meeting. Should any delay occur with the Review Panel stage of the process, candidates will be notified and informed of the reasons for this.

Outcomes following the Review Panel meeting:

The appeal may be:

- Rejected, if there is no evidence of errors or cause for concern;
- upheld, where there is evidence of an administrative error and resolved. For example, if the Panel found marks to be missing and not accounted for, a correction would be made at this stage.
- Referred to the Appeals Panel (Stage 2) for further consideration, if concerns were identified that could have potentially impacted the candidates results, such as a failure to follow the Society's regulations, policies, or procedures in a way that may have materially affected the outcome (Procedural Irregularities).

If the candidate is not happy with the decision of the Review Panel, they are able to request that the Appeals Panel consider a full appeal. Candidates must request a Stage 2, full appeal, within 5 working days of receiving the outcome from the Stage 1 Review Panel.

Stage 2 – Appeals Panel

A meeting will be arranged for the Appeals Panel, who will consider further the grounds upon which the candidate is appealing, the result issued by the Review Panel and any supporting documentation submitted by the candidate. The Appeals Panel will consider the appeal taking into consideration whether the relevant criteria has been met under point 5 of this document, the outcome of Stage 1 of the appeals process, any further documentation provided by the candidate and if there is evidence that errors have occurred which need to be addressed and rectified.

If an appeal reaches Stage 2 of the process, the Appeals Panel has the discretion to allow the candidate to attend the meeting, either in-person or online, to present details of their appeal should they wish to. Candidates must submit a request to attend and state the reason why they would like to personally present their appeal details. If the request to attend is approved, the candidate may also be accompanied at the meeting by another person, such as a friend or colleague, to offer support such as note taking or prompts to ensure that all details have been presented. Attendance by the candidate is only allowed at Stage 2 of the appeals process and is at the discretion of the Appeals Panel.

Attendance by the candidate is not compulsory at this meeting. A detailed written summary of the findings

and decision of the Appeals Panel will be provided to the candidate, post-meeting, regardless of attendance.

Candidates will normally be informed of the outcome of Stage 2, in writing, within 5 working days of the Panel sitting. Should any delay occur with the Appeals Panel stage of the process, candidates will be notified and informed of the reasons for this.

Outcomes following the Appeals Panel meeting:

The appeal may be:

- rejected, in whole or in part;
- upheld, in whole or in part and appropriate remedies put in place;
- referred back to the original decision-maker or a newly constituted examination board for reconsideration;
- resolved by correction of an administrative error or other appropriate remedy.

If the candidate is not happy with the decision of the Appeals Panel, then they are able to request Stage 3 of the process. A request for a Stage 3 appeal must be made within 5 working days of receiving the outcome of Stage 2.

Stage 3 – Appeals Governance Panel (Final Stage)

A meeting will be arranged for the members of the Appeals Governance Panel to consider the final appeal Stage 3. The final appeal stage looks at whether the decision-making itself has been conducted properly, without error or bias and does not set out to review the appeal content again (see point 10).

Candidates will be normally be informed of the outcome of a Stage 3 appeal within 5 working days of the Panel sitting. Should any delay occur with the Appeals Governance Panel stage of the process, candidates will be notified and informed of the reasons for this.

Outcomes following the Appeals Governance Panel meeting:

The Appeals Governance Panel has the authority to decide upon any of the outcomes listed under point 11.

- 9.2 The panels involved may review documentation, obtain comments from relevant staff or boards, request additional information, and, where necessary, hold meetings.
- 9.3 The Society will ensure that the candidate has a fair opportunity to present details of their appeal, under Stage 2 of the process. If attendance is granted, the Society will notify the candidate of the date, format, membership, and procedure in advance.
- 9.4 The Final Stage 3 of an appeal is a review of the decision-making process and not a re-marking of academic work, except where an administrative or procedural issue requires reconsideration under the Society's regulations. See point 10.



10. Final Stage 3 – Appeals Governance Panel

- 10.1 In Stage 3, a candidate may request a review of the formal appeal outcome from Stage 2 on one or more of the following grounds:
- there is evidence that the formal Stage 2 – Appeals Panel was affected by procedural irregularity;
 - new material evidence has become available that the candidate could not reasonably have provided earlier;
 - the outcome was unreasonable in light of the evidence considered.
- 10.2 A request for the Final Stage 3 review must normally be submitted within 5 working days of the formal appeal Stage 2 outcome, unless a different period is specified by the Society.
- 10.3 The Final Stage 3 review is not a rehearing of the appeal. It is a review of whether the formal Stage 2 was conducted properly and reached a reasonable outcome on the available evidence.
- 10.4 The outcome of Stage 3 is final within the Society's internal procedures.

11. Outcomes

- 11.1 Following the stages of formal consideration, the appeal may be:
- rejected, in whole or in part;
 - upheld, in whole or in part;
 - referred back to the original decision-maker or a newly constituted examination board for reconsideration;
 - resolved by correction of an administrative error or other appropriate remedy.
- 11.2 Where an appeal is upheld, the remedy will be proportionate to the issues identified. This may include reconsideration of the original decision, a fresh decision by a competent body, another assessment opportunity where permitted, or another action consistent with the Society's regulations.
- 11.3 An appeal outcome will not normally result in the substitution of the appeal decision-maker's own academic judgement for that of the academic body responsible for assessment.

12. Timescales

- 12.1 The Society will aim to consider appeals and reviews as quickly as possible while ensuring a fair process.
- 12.2 The Society will normally acknowledge receipt of an appeal within 5 working days and inform candidates of its eligibility to proceed.
- 12.3 The Society will normally aim to conclude formal Stages 1 & 2 of the appeal process within 30 working days of the appeal being accepted for consideration. Where this is not possible, the candidate will be informed of the reason for the delay and provided with an updated timeframe.

13. Communication of Decisions

- 13.1 The candidate will be notified in writing of the outcome of each stage of the appeal.
- 13.2 Outcome letters (via email) will normally explain the issues considered, the decision reached, the reasons for the decision, and any further steps available to the candidate.
- 13.3 Where internal procedures have been completed, the Society will issue a completion of procedures letter where appropriate.

14. Records, Confidentiality, and Data Protection

- 14.1 The Society will keep appropriate records of appeals and their outcomes for monitoring, quality assurance, and compliance purposes.
- 14.2 Information relating to an appeal will be handled sensitively and disclosed only to those who need it for the proper consideration of the case or for lawful Society purposes.
- 14.3 Personal data will be processed in accordance with applicable data protection legislation and the Society's data protection policies in force at the time.

15. Support and Reasonable Adjustments

- 15.1 The Society will consider requests for reasonable adjustments to the process where required, for candidates experiencing a disability, or other specific need, in order to support equitable access and ensure no-one is disadvantaged at any stage.

16. Monitoring and Review of the Policy

- 16.1 Responsibility for oversight of this policy rests with the AQSC and APGB on behalf of the Society.
- 16.2 The Society will monitor the number, nature, themes, and outcomes of appeals to identify learning, improve processes, and promote consistency.
- 16.3 This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as required to reflect changes in legislation, regulation and good practice.