

Guidelines for Candidates: Procedure for Consideration of Representations by Candidates for Research Degree Examinations

1. These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the Procedure for the [Consideration of Representations by Candidates for Research Degree Examinations](#) [henceforth referred to as the “Procedure”]. Further advice or clarification on any points may be obtained from the Academic Registrar. The College Tutors, Officers of the Imperial College Union and/or the Imperial College Union Advisor may also be approached for advice.
2. An appeal should be submitted within two months from the date of notification of the result of the examination by the College, unless, having regard to the circumstances of a particular case, the Vice Provost (Education), Director of Student Support and the Academic Registrar determine that a representation may be made outside of that period may be allowed to be made.
3. Problems arising during the course of the programme of study, including any problems with supervision, are not grounds for appeal against the result of the examination. An appeal will not be accepted where the basis of the appeal is on such grounds alone.
4. There is no set format for an appeal submission, but appellants should note the following:
 - i. The burden is on the appellant to prove their case, i.e. to satisfy the Committee on the balance of probabilities that the complaint should be upheld. The Committee also needs to be satisfied that the error or defect is such that the examiners’ decision should not be allowed to stand: “on the balance of probabilities” means that it is more likely than not that the appellant’s account of events is true or correct;
 - ii. The ground or grounds of the appeal must be set out and must clearly relate to one of the permitted categories for an appeal set out in paragraph 3 of the Procedure. Each ground must be supported by evidence;
 - iii. “Evidence” for this purpose means the facts on which the appellant wishes to rely to support the ground in (a), (b) or (c) of paragraph 3 of the Procedure. It may take the form of statements by the appellant of what was said, of documents, or of statements or comments by others. This supporting evidence must be sufficiently clear and precise so that, if its truth or accuracy is accepted by the Committee, it would offer a reasonable prospect of the appeal being allowed. An appeal application that does not set out the grounds of supporting evidence as described above will not be allowed to proceed to a hearing and will be dismissed.

- iv. Guidance as to the Evidence which may be submitted
 - (a) *illness*: for example, a certificate or letter from a medical practitioner setting out the condition and its symptoms and effect, together with a statement from the appellant describing the condition and the difficulties s/he experienced. The Committee will be particularly concerned to establish that the illness affected the appellant's performance on the date of the oral examination.
 - (b) *Matters affecting thesis preparation*: evidence should be supplied to demonstrate how the preparation of the thesis had been adversely affected such that this caused or contributed to the examination referral or failure.
 - (c) *Prejudice, bias or inadequate assessment*: for example, a statement by the appellant, or comments emanating from a third party, reporting comments or remarks made by the examiners, whether at the oral examination or otherwise, disclosing prejudice or bias or suggesting inadequate assessment. The comments, remarks or facts which in the appellant's view indicate prejudice, bias or inadequate assessment, must be set out fully and clearly.
 - (d) *Procedural irregularities*: the appellant must set out clearly and fully what in their view are the irregularities or error, how and when they occurred and the person responsible, to the extent that this is known, and how it may have or did affect the outcome.
- v. The examiners' reports are automatically made available to the Appellate Committee, as is the abstract of the thesis. The latter is provided to give the Committee some idea of the subject matter of the thesis;
- vi. The Committee is not charged with re-examining the thesis; the members will not have or be expected to read the thesis; its sole purpose is to determine whether or not the examination was properly conducted;
- vii. Witnesses may be called if permission has been sought in advance from the Chair. Requests for permission should be addressed to the Academic Registrar.
- 5. An appeal not well made in the sense that evidence in support of the ground(s) of appeal is absent or inappropriate will not be considered by the College.
- 6. All those concerned with an appeal hearing, i.e. the members of the Appellate Committee, the appellant and the examiners, receive the same documentation. As members of the Appellate Committee are provided with copies of the examiners' independent preliminary reports, the appellant will receive copies also if these have not previously been made available. The preliminary reports will be provided to the appellant when an indication is given that a submission will be made under the Procedure.

6. Once the appeal submission has been received by the Academic Registrar, copies will be sent to the examiners, who will be asked whether they wish to make a written response to the submission. There is no requirement for them to do so. At the same time the examiners will be invited to attend the meeting of the Appellate Committee. Once the examiners have submitted their response (if any) and indicated whether they wish to attend the meeting of the Appellate Committee, the meeting itself will be arranged. If there are periods of time or any specific dates on which it is impossible for an appellant to attend a meeting, this information should be given to the Academic Registrar. An appellant living abroad at the time of making an appeal, who wishes to be present, will be asked if there are any particular periods when it would be more convenient to attend a hearing. If the appellant is unable to attend on the date fixed for the hearing – perhaps because their supervisor is unable to accompany them – a new date will be arranged on the understanding that no guarantee can be given as to when the re-arranged date might be. It is not easy to find dates mutually convenient for all members of the Committee, the examiners and the appellant, but every endeavour will be made to arrange it as soon as possible after the cancelled date.
7. An appellant may be accompanied at the Appellate Committee hearing by a friend or representative, who is often the supervisor, and who may address the Committee. If an appellant is unable to attend the meeting of the Appellate Committee, they should ensure that any person representing them is appropriately briefed to speak for the appellant. The name of any such friend or representative must be submitted to the Academic Registrar at least a week before the meeting of the Appellate Committee.
8. The Appellant Committee will comprise three members of the academic staff of the College: a Chair from a Faculty other than that which appointed the appellant's examiners, a Consul from a Faculty of which the student is a member and one other member normally drawn from membership of the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee (PRQC). The latter may or may not have knowledge of the appellant's field of study, but will not be expected to have direct knowledge of the specific research. As mentioned above, the members of the Appellate Committee will not have read the appellant's thesis, apart from the abstract, and will not form a judgement on the academic merits or otherwise of the work.
9. The purpose of the hearing is to establish the facts in the light of all the evidence. The procedure is not therefore an adversarial one and all questions by those present will be put through the Chair of the Committee. The appellant and the examiners will normally be present throughout the proceedings until such time as the Committee retired to determine its conclusions. The appellant and/or his/her representative may address the Committee and, during this part of the proceedings, may call witnesses if this has been agreed in advance. The examiners shall then be invited to make any observations. The Committee through its Chair will give both the appellant and the examiners an opportunity to respond to any points made orally by the other party. The appellant may make any concluding remarks. The members of the

Appellate Committee may put questions to any of those present at any time during the proceedings.

10. The decision of the Appellate Committee will not normally be given to the appellant on the day of the meeting. The Appellate Committee will provide its decision in writing and this will be sent to the appellant as soon as possible, normally within 10 days.
11. Once a student has completed the College's internal procedures, the College will issue the student with a Completion of Procedures Letter. If the student is still dissatisfied, the student may direct their complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator within 12 months of the date on which the Completion of Procedures Letter was issued. Information on the complaints covered by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator and the review procedures is available at: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>

Approved by Students Records and Data
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