

Procedures for appeals by research students against confirmation of registration decisions

- 1 The University Board for Teaching and Learning has approved the following procedures drawn up by the Committee on Postgraduate Research Studies relating to appeals by research students against confirmation of registration decisions made by Schools, which are applicable in cases where the decision is to alter the registration status from PhD to MPhil.
- 2 The procedures below do not apply in cases where the recommendation of the 'confirmation of registration' process is that a student's registration be terminated. In such cases, the relevant Head of School will refer their recommendations to the Dean of Postgraduate Research Studies, who will undertake a case review in accordance with stage 2 of the *Policy on and Procedures relating to PhD and MPhil student academic engagement and fitness to study*.

Appeals relating to decisions to alter registration status from PhD to MPhil

The Timing of Appeals

- 3 A student should lodge an appeal with the Dean of Postgraduate Research Studies via the Doctoral Research Office within two weeks of receiving a formal letter from the Head of School informing them of the decision. A copy of the appeal should be provided for the Head of the relevant School by the Doctoral Research Office.
- 4 The Dean of Postgraduate Research Studies should convene an Appeals Committee and, within two weeks of the appeal being lodged, inform the student and their School of the composition of the Appeal Committee and the date set for the appeal to be heard.
- 5 The Appeal Committee should normally meet to consider the evidence for the appeal no later than six weeks after the appeal is lodged

The composition of any Appeal Committee

- 6 The Appeal Committee should comprise:
 - The Dean of Postgraduate Research Studies;
 - Two senior members of the Academic Staff of Schools which are separate from, but cognate to, the discipline in which the student is based (one of which having some knowledge of the discipline concerned)

These members of Academic Staff should have experience of supervising research students and of the confirmation of registration process (or the former upgrading procedure).

The Terms of Reference for the Committee

- 7 To consider an appeal against the decision of a Head of School to alter registration status from PhD to MPhil following the confirmation of registration procedure.

- 8 To consider such an appeal on the basis of a statement of grounds of appeal submitted by the appellant.
- 9 To ensure that the procedures employed by the School (and Department where applicable) in considering whether the transfer of registration meet the procedures set out within the University *Code of practice on research students*, and that due process was followed during the confirmation of registration procedure.
- 10 To review the available documentary evidence to ensure that it is entirely consistent with the recommendations of the School / Department Directors of Postgraduate Research Studies, and the decision of the Head of School.
- 11 To make a decision on the appeal and to report that decision to both the appropriate Head of School and to the student.
- 12 It will be open to the Appeal Committee to:
- i. Reject the appeal;
 - ii. Uphold the appeal, and confirm registration as ‘PhD’; or
 - iii. Uphold the appeal, but the student be subject to a further confirmation of registration procedure no later than three months after the first such procedure
- The decision of the Appeal Committee will be final.
- 13 To discuss the recommendation of the Appeals Committee with the parties involved as to the course to be taken by the School or Department.

The format/documentation to be provided

- 14 Where a Head of School makes a decision that a student not have their registration confirmed as PhD and should have their registration status changed to MPhil, the student should receive a written statement of the grounds on which that decision has been made.
- 15 As detailed in the section on ‘The Timing of Appeals’ above, a student wishing to appeal against such a decision will provide a statement of the grounds of his or her appeal to the Dean of Postgraduate Research Studies via the Doctoral Research Office within two weeks of receiving the Head of School’s letter indicating the decision. A copy of the appeal should be provided by the Doctoral Research Office for the Head of the relevant School.
- 16 An appeal will only be considered on the following grounds:
- If there has been a procedural irregularity
 - If there has been a bias
 - If there has been a material defect in the delivery of training which has had a significant impact on the result
 - If there has been a material default in supervision, which has normally been previously raised by the student but has not been satisfactorily addressed.
- 17 The Head of School (in consultation with the School / Department Director of Postgraduate Research Studies) should submit a response to the appeal, which should also be made available to the appellant.
- 18 The Appeal Committee should consider the following documentation and any other which the appellant or the Head of School wishes to submit:
- The documentation originally considered by the School / Department Director of Postgraduate Research Studies (the *Code of Practice* states that this should, at the very least, comprise a written report from the student providing evidence of their research ability, a written recommendation from the student’s supervisor(s), and a

recommendation from two independent assessors who have considered the above reports and will normally have interviewed the student)

- Any further written comments from the Head of School on the assessment, plus the student's comments in reply
 - Details of the assessment process in the School/Dept involved
 - All progress and monitoring reports relating to the particular student, including any letters of warning to the student relating to their progress
 - Any other submission made by the student
 - Any other submission made by the School or Department, particularly giving details as to why the original decision was reached
 - Other documentation as appropriate to the particular case
- 19 All of the above documentation should be available to the Appeal Committee, the appellant and relevant members of the School or Department, unless agreed otherwise for exceptional reasons by the Appeal Committee.

Consideration of the appeal

- 20 The appellant should have the right to appear before the Appeal Committee and may be accompanied if so wished by a 'friend', which for this purpose can be defined as a fellow student, a student advisor or Students' Union sabbatical officer, or a member of academic staff of the University.
- 21 The Appeal Committee will have the authority to require any appropriate member of the Academic Staff from the School/Department or Faculty to appear before it.
- 22 The Appeal Committee will have the authority to seek advice, if appropriate, from within or outwith the University.
- 23 Normally, no oral evidence should be heard other than in the presence of the appellant.
- 24 The Appeal Committee will report their findings to the student, and to the Head of School, along with any recommendations relating to the student's continuing studies, or to more general procedural matters within the School.

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