



University of Cumbria Postgraduate Research Academic Appeals

August 2025

The right of appeal is available to all research students who:

1. have failed to qualify to proceed from one stage of a degree programme to the next;
2. have failed to qualify for the award of the degree for which they were registered;
3. wish to challenge, on procedural grounds, the degree to be awarded;
4. received a lower class of degree than would otherwise have been the case had plagiarism penalties not been applied.

A *prima facie* case for appeal will be deemed to exist if there is evidence of one or more of:

- (a) material administrative error or irregularity in the conduct of assessment which adversely affected the student's performance and results;
- (b) significant extenuating circumstances which adversely affected the student's performance and results;
- (c) unfair treatment or discrimination, outwith the exercise of academic judgement; which, for good reason, could not be brought to the attention of examiners at the relevant time and which could have influenced their recommendations had the information been available at that time.

Research students will not be hindered in making a reasonable appeal. All parties will act without bias or prejudice and in a sensitive, fair and prompt manner. The objective of the procedure is to establish the facts and come to a reasonable and just resolution, which is both relevant and proportionate.

Advice on how to use these procedures is available from the Students' Union or the Academic Registry.

The University uses a two-stage procedure. The potential options for outcomes available to the Academic Appeal Panel will differ depending on the nature of the case, particularly regarding the level of the award.

Stage 1

Postgraduate (Research) – pre final examination

Delegated authority (Head of the Graduate School, PVC Research) to

1. Confirm the decision of the confirmation panel regarding the student's registration.
2. Allow the student a final opportunity to go through the transfer/confirmation process.

In the case of the second option, the delegated authority will specify the date by which the student will transfer and advise the student and department of the reasons why this decision has been taken with recommended steps by which the student and supervisor(s) may prepare for the next transfer/confirmation panel.

The delegated authority, following a review of the case regarding exclusion in which the student and members of staff may be interviewed, may either:

1. confirm the exclusion, terminating the student's registration; or
2. allow the student to continue with their registration subject to appropriate academic probationary arrangements.

Postgraduate (Research) – post final examination

Delegated authority (Head of the Graduate School, PVC Research) to

1. Approve the recommendation of the examiners.
2. Determine the proper action which may include:
 - i. to recommend to the examiners that, for reasons stated, they should reconsider their action;
 - ii. to give the student permission to revise the thesis and resubmit for re-examination, for the same or lesser degree, within a specified time limit;
 - iii. To declare the examination null and void and to direct that a fresh examination be conducted.

Where fresh examination under (iii) is determined, the following shall apply:

1. new examiners will be appointed, in number not fewer than on the original board;
2. the examiners will be given no information about the previous examination except the single fact that they are conducting a re-examination on review;
3. the examiners will submit independent reports on the thesis before they examine the candidate orally, and a joint report after the oral examination.

The appellant will receive a written decision that addresses the points they have made and gives reasons for the conclusion reached. The letter will also advise the appellant of their right to refer the matter to Stage 2 and describe the means to do so.

Stage 2 – the Review Stage

If the appellant feels their appeal has not been resolved under Stage 1, they may apply via the Graduate School for a formal review within two weeks of the date of the Stage 1 written decision. In their application, they should explain why they feel dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and what remedy they seek.

A formal review will be conducted by a panel consisting of three members of the professoriate, to ensure full scrutiny of process.

Requests for Stage 2 consideration can only be made on the following grounds:

1. that there exists evidence that could not reasonably have been made available at Stage 1; or
2. that there exists evidence of a material procedural irregularity in Stage 1; or
3. that there exists evidence that the judgement at Stage 1 was perverse.

The panel will inform the Graduate School of their decision, whereupon the appellant will receive a written decision addressing the points they have made and giving the reasons for the panel's conclusion.