

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide an opportunity for all learners to appeal against the outcomes of assessment for qualification for which they are enrolled with SIRM and registered with an awarding body.

The assessment process is intended to be planned, transparent, appropriate and fair. The appeals system allows learners who believe that the system does not live up to these aspirations a process within which they can challenge it.

Objectives

Assessment and verification should be undertaken in line with relevant awarding body requirements.

The involvement of staff in the academic appeal shall comply with the requirements of the relevant awarding body. The Academic Appeals policy should guarantee equal opportunity for all learners.

Grounds for appeal

Academic appeals are permitted only where the learner believes one of the following three circumstances have occurred:

1. where there is evidence that the assessment was not conducted in accordance with the regulations of SIRM or with the requirements of the awarding body
2. where there is evidence that the assessment criteria relating to the specific assessment in question were incorrectly applied in arriving at the mark awarded (only where an assessment has not been second marked or internally verified)
3. where the learner believes that he/she was subject to exceptional circumstances beyond his/her control which adversely affected his/her performance and which, for valid reasons stated by the learner, were not made known to the Assessment Board on the time of assessment.

Should any of the above circumstances occur, appeals must be submitted in writing by the learner within 21 days of the results being published or the receipt of marked work. Letters of appeal must be received no later than 12 noon on the 21st day.

Appeals procedure can only be invoked only by the learner whose work is the subject of the disputed decision.

Learners may not appeal on the grounds of academic judgment (that is, disagreement with the academic decision of assessors or examiners)

To protect the interests of the learners and the integrity of the qualification, SIRM will ensure that all learners are made aware of and understand the procedures for making an appeal. Learners should be referred to SIRM's Academic Appeal policy during induction.

Every appeal will be treated confidentially. The policy explains who will see the appeal at the various stages of consideration.

Before Making A Formal Appeal

Before making a formal appeal learner must discuss the issues with the Lecturer.

In view of the appeal deadlines, learners should inform the member of staff that he/she wants to discuss an appeal in order to schedule a meeting as soon as possible. The purpose of this discussion is to clarify questions learners may have about the general performance or specific marks. A record of the meeting will

be taken by the member of staff. It may sometimes be sufficient for an email discussion to take place, especially where it proves difficult to arrange a meeting in person.

The meeting is entirely confidential and, if learner decides not to pursue the appeal, the matter will go no further. An appeal cannot be processed unless Stage 1 is officially invoked.

Procedure

▮ Stage 1 – Informal Review with Assessor

This is an informal discussion with learner about the grounds of the appeal, in an attempt to reach agreement between the learner and the assessor at the earliest opportunity. The assessor should give a full explanation of the assessment process and how the mark was determined.

If the learner is not satisfied, the Assessor should ensure that the learner has a copy of the Academic Appeal's procedure, and knows the names of the staff who may be involved in the appeal process or for support.

▮ Stage 2 – Formal Request for Reassessment of Work

If the dispute cannot be resolved informally, the candidate may appeal in writing to the Programme Leader. This will be within ten working days of the notification of the failure to resolve the dispute informally. A written record of the request, dated and signed should be placed in the learner's file. The Programme Leader shall then make arrangements for the work to be independently re-assessed by a second assessor and IV.

A written record of the agreed second marking of the assessment, giving as full an explanation as possible should be signed by the internal verifier and second assessor. A copy should be given to the learner and a further copy placed in the Learner's file.

▮ Stage 3 – Formal Appeal

If the learner is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 2, he/she should within 5 working days of receipt of the outcome of Stage 2, lodge an appeal with the Dean of Academics. A copy of the appeal shall be placed in the learner's file.

The Dean of Academics will make arrangements for an appeals panel within ten working days of receiving the appeal.

The appeals panel normally will be composed of:

- Academic / Programme Leader
- The lead Internal Verifier (IV), or the Internal Verifier
- The Quality Manager

The appeals panel will receive evidence from the learner and staff member(s) involved, and from other sources, which it considers relevant to the disputed decision. The panel should consider all the evidence, including the original assessment and re-assessment.

The panel will consider the appeal in private and will inform the learner and staff member(s) in writing of the decision of the panel. If the panel cannot reach a decision and require further information all parties will be informed of this within 5 working days of the panel meeting.

The outcome of the appeal may be as follows:

- ▮ The panel may confirm the original assessment decision and reject the appeal
- ▮ Where the grounds on which the appeal was sought are upheld, that is where irregularities in the conduct of the assessment are found, or where there were circumstances affecting the learner's performance, the panel may declare the assessment invalid and either permit re-assessment of the original piece of work or the learner may submit an amended piece of work in line with the awarding body requirements

The panel may make conditions with which the assessor and /or learner must comply in the future

The panel may make recommendations to the Registrar, through the Quality Manager, relating to future assessment or appeals procedures

A signed and dated record of the decision which is considered as the formal notification that all internal procedures have been exhausted, is given to the learner within 5 working days of the meeting and a further copy placed in the learner's file. SIRM will inform the awarding body and external verifier of the outcome of the appeal if it has implications on SIRM results.

Copies of all documents will be held confidentially by the Dean of Academics and will be used for statistical monitoring purposes, including the Programme Annual Monitoring Report.

Academic Appeals Policy

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Making a Formal Appeal

To make an appeal, the learner should write a letter to the Academic Leader.

In the letter the learner should make clear exactly what he/she is appealing against and the grounds for the appeal. The learner should provide all information relevant to the appeal, including details of events, people and where possible, dates. The learner must support the appeal with documentary evidence (for example, a medical certificate, letter from the doctor, police & etc.). The Learner should include the learner number, to ensure accurate identification and a valid correspondence address.

The appeal with all accompanying documentation should be sent to the Academic Leader to be received within the timescales set out above.

Appeals may be:

- hand-delivered to the Reception at SIRM and addressed to the Academic Leader
- sent by post and addressed to the Academic Leader or
- sent by e-mail to appeals@sirm.ac.uk; The subject line should contain "Appeal" and the Learner ID number

Appeals received after the 21 days deadline will not normally be considered by the Academic Leader. Special consideration will only be given very exceptionally, if you provide a valid reason, supported by evidence, for any delay.

Once the appeal has been submitted, this is considered to be the definitive statement of the case. The learner will not be able to add to this other than to submit evidence which was not previously available.

The Academic Leader will acknowledge receipt of the formal appeal within 2 working days.

Operation of the Appeal Panel

The Academic Leader will make the arrangements for the Panel meeting.

The learner will be notified of the date of the Panel's meeting.

The Academic Leader will act as advisor to the panel.

The Programme Leader will offer evidence to the panel, or to explain any of the circumstances under discussion.

The Panel will reach its decision by simple majority vote. In cases where no overall majority arises, the Chair shall have a second or casting vote.

Further Action

If the learner is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 3, he/she may:

- Use SIRM Complaints procedure
- Use the relevant Awarding Body Appeals/Complaints procedure
- Contact the Relevant Regulatory Authority