

Policy name: Appeals Policy and Procedure

Approved: 25th November 2016

Revision 1 approved 10th March 2017

Revision 2 approved

Revision 3 approved by Trinity Academic Council 13th May 2020

1. Context

- 1.1 All undergraduate and postgraduate programmes offered by the Royal Irish Academy of Music, hereinafter referred to as RIAM or the Academy, are delivered by RIAM and validated by the Designated Awarding Body, Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin, hereinafter referred to as Trinity. RIAM recognises that in the context of its examination and assessment procedures, students may wish to appeal a decision made in relation to their academic progress. The appeals procedure may be used only when there are eligible grounds for doing so and may not be used simply because a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of a decision concerning his/her academic progress.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 This policy sets out the procedure for students wishing to appeal a decision concerning their academic progress and/or request a reconsideration of their academic results.

3. Benefits

- 3.1 Ensures the transparent management and equitable conduct of academic appeals.
- 3.2 Protects students from incorrect or unfair examination practice.
- 3.3 Manages student expectations of what does, and does not, constitute an academic appeal.

4. Scope

- 4.1 This policy applies to all Undergraduate and Postgraduate programmes delivered by RIAM and validated by Trinity.
- 4.2 Students registered and taught on courses in RIAM are subject to RIAM's appeal policy and do not have recourse to the appeals process of Trinity.
- 4.3 Students who are no longer registered, for example, those whose programme has been terminated or those who have recently complete their studies must appeal within the prescribed timescale (see 7.2 below).

5. Definitions

- 5.1 **Appeal:** An Academic Appeal is a request to review a decision of the Board of Examiners in relation to assessment. Such decisions may affect a student's progress, award, or classification of their degree or qualification.
- 5.2 **Complaint:** An 'appeal' differs from a 'complaint', which is defined as a formal expression of dissatisfaction about the provision of the programme, including teaching and supervision, or an academic or non-academic RIAM service or facility, and are considered under the separate Student Complaints Procedure.

6. Principles

- 6.1 RIAM is committed to ensuring that the management and conduct of appeals are equitable and consistent.

7. Policy

7.1 *Grounds for an academic appeal*

- 7.1.1 An application for a review of a decision of the Board of Examiners may be made only on grounds alleging:
- i) that there exists, or existed, extenuating circumstances affecting the student's performance of which the Examiners would not have been aware when their decision was taken and there is reasonable or good cause for that omission;
 - ii) that there were procedural irregularities in the examination and other assessment processes;
 - iii) that there is evidence of prejudice or bias on the part of one or more of the Examiners;
- 7.1.2 An appeal which questions the academic or professional judgement of those charged with the responsibility for assessing a student's academic performance or professional competence shall not be permitted. A student may not therefore question a mark or degree classification just because they feel they could have done better or are disappointed/surprised by the result.
- 7.1.3 Complaints on the grounds of inadequate teaching, supervisory or other arrangements during the period of study should be raised at the time they occur and addressed through RIAM's Student Complaints procedure.

7.2 *Timescale for submission of an academic appeal*

- 7.2.1 An appeal must be submitted, with evidence, as soon as possible and normally not later than 10 calendar days after the publication of the student's examination results. Delays in obtaining evidence should not prevent a request for appeal within the deadline and should be discussed with the Administrative Officer (Registry).
- 7.2.2 A late application for an appeal shall only be accepted if the Administrative Officer (Registry) is satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist which make it reasonable for the applicant not to have applied within the period specified above.
- 7.2.3 Students with outstanding appeal requests which may affect their degree outcomes are advised not to proceed with their degree conferral until the outcome of the appeal has been confirmed.

7.3 *Stages of the Academic Appeals Procedure*

7.3.1 Informal Resolution

Prior to taking a final decision as to whether or not to request an appeal, students are advised to discuss any concerns about their results or Board of Examiners' decisions

informally with the relevant Head of Faculty or the Administrative Officer (Registry) to attempt to resolve the issue. In cases where a re-check of marks indicates that a simple error has been made, this may normally be resolved by Chair's action on behalf of the Board of Examiners without the need to invoke the formal Academic Appeals Procedure.

7.3.2 Stage 1 – Initial Review of Appeal

- (i) If the student decides to make a formal request for an appeal, the student can seek advice from the Administrative Officer (Registry) prior to submitting an application for review.
- (ii) An application for review shall be submitted by the student in writing to the Administrative Officer (Registry). The student shall:
 - specify the ground(s) upon which the appeal is made; If a request for an appeal is advanced citing grounds under 7.2.2 above, the student shall state the reason for not making the evidence known in time for the Board of Examiners' meeting;
 - provide full particulars of their case;
 - provide supporting evidence.
- (iii) On receipt, the Administrative Officer (Registry) will review the appeal and shall decide whether *prima facie* grounds for an appeal are established, but without exercising judgement on academic grounds as to its validity. In doing so the Administrative Officer (Registry) shall undertake such enquiries as may seem appropriate to reach a decision.
- (iv) If, following the review by the Administrative Officer, Registry, it appears there is sufficient evidence for the appeal to proceed, the Academic Appeals Panel shall be convened. Meetings of the Panel are provisionally scheduled to follow meetings of the Board of Examiners, in accordance with the timescale for appeals to be made.
- (v) In certain circumstances it may be deemed more appropriate to consider the application under other RIAM policies, such as the Student Complaints Policy. The Chair of the Academic Appeals Panel will make such a decision based on the evidence presented. In such instances the Administrative Officer (Registry) will forward the application to the relevant staff member in RIAM.
- (vi) Submissions will be rejected that are clearly out of time with no valid reason as to why, or do not meet one or more of the specified grounds for appeal (including those based on academic and/or professional judgement, and those which form the basis of a student complaint).
- (vii) If the appeal is rejected at this stage, the student will be advised within 10 working days of submission, with reasons given, and informed if the matter should be dealt with under the Student Complaints Policy.
- (viii) If, following a review of the application, the Administrative Officer (Registry) is satisfied that grounds for appeal may have been established, students whose registration status is terminated will be reinstated until the appeal is resolved.

7.3.3 Stage 2 - Meeting of the Academic Appeals Panel

- (i) The Academic Appeals Panel membership is:

The Senior Librarian (Chair);

Two members of the relevant Course Committee who have not taught the student, drawn from a panel of Course Committee members;

A co-optee from the wider academic music profession, appointed on a three-year cyclical basis, nominated by the Chair and approved by the Board of Studies;

The Administrative Officer, Registry (*Secretary to the Panel - in attendance*).

The Academic Appeals Panel may, as appropriate, invite the relevant External Examiner to submit a written opinion on the appeal application and shall take any such opinion into account. The Appeals Panel shall report its decision to the External Examiner, but the External Examiner, will have no veto over the Panel's decision. External Examiners may request to attend Academic Appeals Panels as part of their examining role.

(ii) The terms of reference of the Academic Appeals Panel are:

To consider and determine whether or not the academic appeal against a decision of the Board of Examiners is upheld or not upheld under the regulations governing academic appeals approved by the Board of Studies;

To recommend to the Board of Studies, where an appeal is upheld, an appropriate course of action for the case;

To monitor and review both the operation and outcomes of the academic appeals process, making recommendations to the relevant body;

To report cases and their outcomes to the Board of Studies and provide an annual report to the Board of Studies;

Quorum: The Chair and at least two other members of the Panel must be present for meetings to be quorate.

- (iii) A student who submits a request for an appeal has the right to appear in person before the Academic Appeals Panel and will normally be provided with five working days' notice of the hearing (unless the student waives this right). The proceedings of the Academic Appeals Panel shall not be invalidated by the absence of the student. If the student is at a distance and a face-to-face meeting is not possible, alternative arrangements shall be made, which may include a virtual meeting.
- (iv) The student has the right to be accompanied by a fellow student or member of staff, provided that the person in question is not a member of staff referred to in the appeal and is not a member of the Board of Studies. Normally, the person accompanying the student will be allowed to speak at the student's request.
- (v) The Administrative Officer, Registry will provide the Chair of the panel with any comments and documentation relevant to the appeal. This information and documentation will be disclosed to the student and members of the panel in advance of the meeting.
- (vi) At the meeting, the student will be asked to explain his/her appeal and present the supporting evidence. Members of the panel may ask questions.

- (vii) The Academic Appeals Panel shall have the power to accept or reject the appeal. Decisions shall be relayed to the Board of Studies, which shall determine referrals and deferrals, having regard to the recommendations made by the Panel, and confirm the results for each student in relation to their progression or continuation.
- (viii) Notice in writing of the outcome of the Academic Appeals Panel shall be sent by the Administrative Officer, Registry, to the student normally within five working days of the Panel meeting. This shall include reasons for reaching the decision, and where an appeal is upheld, the Board of Studies' decision on the assessment.

7.4 Further Consideration of an Appeal

- 7.4.1 There shall be no further appeal within RIAM in respect of the decision of the Academic Appeals Panel. However, students who believe that their case has not been dealt with properly by RIAM, or that the outcome is unreasonable, may be able to complain to the Office of the Ombudsman, if they wish to challenge the outcome of the formal academic appeal process.
- 7.4.2 Students must complete the internal RIAM procedures before applying to the Ombudsman.
- 7.4.3 The Ombudsman will consider complaints connected with welfare issues, contractual issues, breach of Academy procedures, discrimination or poor practice, but it will not consider complaints connected with academic judgement, matters which are the subject of court or tribunal proceedings or employment matters.
- 7.4.4 RIAM will comply with any recommendations of the Ombudsman.

8. Responsibility

- 8.1 The Chair of Board of Studies is responsible for overseeing this policy and its three yearly cyclical review. The Administrative Officer (Registry) is responsible for its operating procedures in relation to all undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

9. Legislation and Regulation

- 9.1 [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act 2012.](#)
- 9.2 [Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area \(2005\).](#)
- 9.3 [Code of Practice for Provision of Education and Training to International Learners \(2015\).](#)
- 9.4 [National Framework of Qualifications \(NFQ\).](#)

10. Related Documents

- 10.1 Academic Assessment and Progression Policy.
- 10.2 Student Complaints Policy and Procedure.

11. Document Control

Approved by Board of Studies 25th November 2016.

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