



# Exam Appeals Procedure

## FPM Board of Examiners

*The attention of candidates is drawn to the FPM's **Policy for Candidates with Special Requirements**, which covers exceptional personal circumstances arising before the start of the examination, as well as other permanent or temporary disabilities. In particular, candidates should note that there is a right to withdraw from an examination due to exceptional circumstances arising before the examination; if a candidate elects to continue with the examination, these circumstances cannot be considered valid grounds for subsequent appeal.*

## Grounds for Appeal

Candidates may appeal against a decision of the Board of Examiners. An appeal may be based on one of the following two reasons:

1. Exceptional personal circumstances arising at the start of or during the examination; the candidate must make the invigilator /examiners aware of such circumstances. The candidate may, but it is not required to, state their intention to appeal at this time.

The report of the circumstances should be before the end of the examinations but if sudden illness prevented communication could be reported afterwards. Documentary evidence to confirm communication difficulty should be submitted with the appeal.

2. Deviation from the examination procedures (including the policy for candidates with Special Requirements) that disadvantage the candidate.

## Who is involved in the Appeals Process?

### a) Appeals Panel

Members of the Appeals Panel must have had no involvement in the examination that the appeal concerns or with the person making the appeal. At least one member of the Appeals Panel shall have experience of the conduct of examinations, e.g., recently (within 3 years) conducted examinations as a member of the MRCP Board or, for a university examination.

The Appeals Panel will normally comprise:

- A representative of the Royal College of Physicians with examination experience
- The Chair of the FPM Education Committee
- President of the FPM or Chair of the FPM Professional Standards Committee (Chair of Appeals)

In the event that any of these people are inappropriate, for example because they were involved with the examination concerned, an **appropriate** deputy will be appointed e.g., FPM Vice-president.

## b) Appellant

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The Appellant is the candidate making the appeal. The Appellant may be accompanied to meetings of the Appeals Panel by no more than one supporter.

## c) Board of Examiners

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The FPM Board of Examiners will be represented by its Chair or appointed deputy.

## d) Others

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The Appeals Panel may seek input from other relevant sources as it considers appropriate and relevant e.g., invigilator, medical certificate.

# The Process of Appeal

## Stage 1 – Appeal

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The Appellant must make the appeal in writing to the Chair of the Education Committee via the FPM office, specifying the claimed grounds for the appeal. The Appeal must be received by the FPM office within *five* weeks of the date of the letter informing the candidate of their examination result.

If the reason for appeal is exceptional personal circumstances, the appeal should include the Appellant's assessment as to the impact that these circumstances had on his/her performance.

The Appellant should indicate whether they wish to attend the adjudication meeting should the Appeals Panel consider that there were adequate grounds for appeal.

The FPM office will promptly forward a copy of the Appeal, identified only by candidate number, to the Chair of the Board of Examiners who can, if appropriate, submit a written response for consideration by the Appeals Panel.

## Stage 2 - Validation of Appeal

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The Appeals Panel shall meet at a pre-arranged time two to four weeks after the deadline for receipt of appeals to consider the grounds for appeal. The date for this meeting shall be fixed before adjudication of the results of the examination.

The Appeals Panel will consider the written appeal and, if applicable, the written response from the Board of Examiners. If the Panel considers that there are inadequate grounds, an appeal may be dismissed at this stage. If the Panel considers there are adequate grounds for appeal, it will be referred to Adjudication.

In the period between Validation (stage 2) and Adjudication (stage 3), the Chair of the Appeals Panel shall collect information that may be relevant to a decision on the outcome of the appeal.

## Re-marking of Examination Papers

In exceptional circumstances, *only when there are valid reasons for considering that an error in examination procedures could have resulted in an erroneous mark that affected the examination outcome for the Appellant*, the Appeals Panel can ask for one or more questions to be re-marked. Re-marking is not appropriate simply because the Appellant considers his or her efforts were under-marked or if the reason for appeal is personal circumstances that could have affected performance.

To ensure that the quality and reliability of the re-mark is consistent with normal examination procedures, at least two independent experienced examiners who were not involved in marking the original scripts will mark the question(s) to be re-marked for at least 10 candidates selected by the FPM Office to represent a range of performance.

The examiners conducting the re-marking will be blind both to the original marks and to the candidate number of the Appellant. The outcome of the re-marking will not be used to change the result of any candidate that has not appealed.

## Stage 3 – Adjudication

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In the Adjudication, the Appeals Panel shall meet to consider whether an appeal can be upheld and, if so, what outcome is appropriate.

If the Appellant has previously indicated that they do not wish to attend the Adjudication and the Appeals Panel considers it has sufficient evidence on which to base a decision, the Adjudication may be conducted at the same meeting as the Validation.

If the Appellant has previously indicated their desire to attend the Adjudication, this will be held at a mutually convenient date no later than four weeks after the Validation. If the candidate wishes to be accompanied by a supporter, they must provide the FPM office with the name, address and role of the nominated person and the reasons for their involvement not less than five working days before the Adjudication meeting. The Board of Examiners will also be invited to send a representative.

The Appeals Panel can ask questions of the Appellant (who can confer with the supporter in their responses) and the representative of the Board of Examiners. The Appellant, supporter, and representative of the Board of Examiners will not be allowed to cross examine the Appeals Panel or other participants of the Adjudication meeting.

Having collected as much evidence as felt necessary and taken account of representations by the Appellant and the Board of Examiners, the Appeals Panel shall deliberate in private.

## The Outcome of the Appeals Process

Following deliberation, the Appeals Panel may uphold or reject the reason for appeal.

The Appeals Process allows any result or pass/fail decision to be changed only if it has been determined that there was an error in the results as originally communicated to the candidate and the correct result can be determined.

If the Appeals Panel cannot accurately or numerically determine the effects of any procedural irregularity or extenuating circumstance on a candidate's performance, it will not revise a candidate's result even if an appeal is upheld and the likely effects of the circumstances on a candidate's performance are judged to be severe. Instead, the Appeals Panel may delete the attempt from a candidate's record and offer a re-take of the examinations without charge.

The final decision of the Appeals Panel will be communicated to the Appellant and to the Board of Examiners within *one* week of the formal meeting. No further appeal against rejection of an appeal is permitted. The decision of the Appeals Panel is final.