

Appeals and Representation - Additional Guidance in light of COVID-19 Policies and Regulatory Changes

1) Background

The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated the adaptation of our regulations, policies and student support mechanisms to account for personal impacts that could reasonably be expected to affect our students. As these adaptations were global and inclusive, the need for students to present an appeal relating to their personal mitigating circumstances were reduced or removed. Examples of these adaptations include:

1.1) No Detriment Policy 2019/20

Key features include:

- I. Change of assessments for non-graduating cohorts to become formative rather than summative.
- II. For non-graduating cohorts, ability to progress to the next-stage of study regardless of formative assessment outcomes.
- III. Where formative results were below the threshold normally required to progress, additional support to remediate areas of concern as identified in mandatory Student Performance and Development (SPD) return to study meeting.

1.2) Safety Net Policy 2020/21

Key features include:

- I. Reversion to summative assessment as described in course Assessment and Award Regulations.
- II. Removal of capping at re-sit for summative assessments.
- III. Opportunity for students who initially reached an assessment pass threshold to take the assessment at the next assessment point to improve upon their existing pass mark without penalty.
- IV. For students who did not achieve the overall threshold required to remain on their chosen course, removal of the need to make an individual appeal to remain on the course (although SPD meeting required).

1.3) Adjustments for Postgraduate Research students

Adjustments to postgraduate research (PGR) study were agreed on an individual basis for PGR students and included extensions to submission dates and funding.

1.4) Further information

Further detail for all of policy and regulations updates made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic are available at <https://www.rvc.ac.uk/about/coronavirus/rvc-students/faq>.

2) Return to individual appeals processes

As we navigate out of the pandemic, the need for the global policies as exemplified above is reduced. These policies are limited to the assessments associated with the stated academic years only.

Where there is no global policy in place to account for individual student mitigating circumstances that can affect academic performance, students will need to make an individual appeal to remain registered on their chosen course/module as described in course Assessment and Award Regulations.

3) Consideration of information provided as part of a student appeals

Individual student appeals must be submitted in line with the [Appeals and Representation procedure](#).

When considering student appeal information and evidence, the appeals panel will take account of the policies and procedures in place at the time of any personal mitigating circumstances. It is expected that in the majority of cases the global policies in place, or individual adjustments made for PGR students, will already have accounted for any disadvantage during the pandemic and will therefore not be taken into consideration by the appeals panel.

Students are therefore advised to focus their appeal information and evidence on mitigating circumstances that have most recently affected their performance and are not already accounted for in policy and regulatory adjustments in response to the pandemic.

Example A:

A student was required to self-isolate for 10 days in June 2021 as they had symptomatic COVID-19. As they were unwell, they were unable to take their exams at the first opportunity and deferred their exam until late summer. The student took the assessment in late summer 2021 and passed. However, they believed that they underperformed at this point and were therefore granted a further assessment opportunity in June 2022. They failed to improve upon their existing pass mark in June 2022 so their first-sit mark was maintained. Additionally, the student failed to reach the required threshold in their 2021/22 assessments to progress to the next stage of the course and must therefore appeal if they wish to remain on the course as per the Assessment and Award Regulations for 2021/22. No information or

evidence was received from the student of any mitigating circumstances beyond June 2021.

In this example, the appeals panel would not uphold the student appeal as the mitigating circumstances cited were already accommodated within the Safety Net Policy 2020/21.

However, this is not to say that any COVID-19 related impacts will not be considered by an Appeals Panel:

Example B

A student was required to self-isolate for 10 days in June 2021 as they had symptomatic COVID-19. As they were unwell, they were unable to take their exams at the first opportunity and deferred their exam until late summer. The student took the assessment in late summer 2021 and passed. However, they believed that they underperformed at this point and were therefore granted a further assessment opportunity in June 2022. They failed to improve upon their existing pass mark so their first-sit mark was maintained. Additionally, the student failed to reach the required threshold in their 2021/22 assessments to progress to the next stage of the course and must appeal if they wish to remain on the course as per the Assessment and Award Regulations for 2021/22. The student provided evidence from health professionals that they had suffered continuing impacts following their COVID-19 infection, including fatigue and mental health challenges, which continued until March 2022 but are now thankfully resolved or, in the case of the on-going mental health challenges, being effectively managed.

In this example, the appeals panel would likely uphold the student appeal as the mitigating circumstances cited and evidenced continued into the 2021/22 academic year and were therefore not already accounted for by RVC policy. Provided that the student's academic record gave reasonable confidence that they could successfully complete the course, they would be permitted to re-take the failed year in 2022/23. Additionally, they would still have the option to re-take the examination originally missed in June 2021 to improve upon the pass mark already achieved.

4) Sources of further information and support

- I. [Appeals and Representation Policy](#)
- II. Student Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Officer via studentappeals@rvc.ac.uk
- III. RVCS – www.rvc.org.uk
- IV.

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