

RVC Final Formal Review (FFR) Procedure

Student Guidance FAQs

This guide provides an overview of the Final Formal Review (FFR) process to help you understand the key steps and essential information. It is designed as a quick reference to support you through your FFR request. You are encouraged to read the full [Final Formal Review Procedure](#) before submitting your request.

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Glossary

Final Formal Review

A **Final Formal Review (FFR)** is an appeal submitted by a student (the *Appellant*) after receiving the outcome of a hearing or decision made by the Professional Requirements Committee, Appeals Panel, Misconduct Panel, Academic Misconduct Panel, or following the conclusion of a formal Complaint. An FFR enables the Appellant to request a review of the formal decision made by these procedures.

Academic judgement

Academic judgement, as defined by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator Higher Education (OIAHE), *is a judgment that is made about a matter where the opinion of an academic expert is essential. So, for example, a judgement about marks awarded, degree classification, research methodology, whether the feedback is correct or adequate, and the content or outcomes of a course will normally involve academic judgement.*

Administrative error

An administrative error refers to a human error that could affect the accuracy of the marks under consideration by the Board (e.g., incorrect calculation or inputting of marks).

Completion of Procedures Letter

A Completion of Procedures Letter is a letter that educational providers issue at the end of their internal procedures.

Procedural error

A procedural error refers to the RVC failing to follow a published procedure or process.

FFR Panel

A group that is responsible for reviewing, considering, and providing an outcome during a qualified Final Formal Review hearing.

Where can I get support during the FFR process?

It is important to seek support and advice if you have any queries or concerns in relation to your FFR request. We have listed all the support and advice which can help provide additional information on deciding how to proceed.

- Tutor

- Senior Tutor
- Supervisor
- Departmental Postgraduate Research (PGR) Advisor
- [Student Union Representative](#)
- Course Director or Academic Head of the Graduate School
- Year Leader
- Pathway/Module leader
- [Advice Centre](#)
- [Study Skills Team](#)
- [Student Resolution and Compliance \(SRC\) Team](#)
- [Disability Advisor](#)
- [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Unit](#)

What is a reasonable adjustment under the Student Resolution and Compliance (SRC) Procedures?

A reasonable adjustment is a change or support measure that helps ensure students with disabilities, learning differences, or personal circumstances are not disadvantaged during the Final Formal Review (FFR) process. This may include providing information in alternative formats, offering extra breaks in meetings, or holding meetings via videoconference so the Appellant can take part fully and fairly.

Reasonable adjustments are designed to ensure *equal opportunity* during the FFR process, not to provide an advantage, so all students start from the same position regardless of disability, learning differences, or personal circumstances.

What is an unacceptable reasonable adjustment?

Some requests cannot be approved because they would give an unfair advantage or compromise the integrity of the SRC procedures.

For example, an **unacceptable request** would be asking for a family member or supporter to answer FFR Panel questions on your behalf. These go beyond providing a fair adjustment and could give an unfair advantage.

Can I request reasonable adjustments to the process?

If you require adjustments to the process, you should submit this in writing to ffr@rvc.ac.uk. Requests are considered on a case-by-case basis. Students are

encouraged to submit their requests at the earliest opportunity so that the necessary support can be provided without delay.

I have received a procedural outcome. What grounds can I request a review of the decision under the Final Formal Review Process?

You can only submit an FFR request if your case meets one or more allowable grounds:

- **New evidence** that you could not reasonably have provided earlier, and that may change the original decision.
- **Procedural or administrative error** that may have had a significant impact on the outcome.
- **Manifestly unreasonable** decision, meaning the original outcome clearly falls outside what a reasonable decision-maker could have decided.

How do I submit an FFR request?

You must complete the [FFR Request Form](#) and provide evidence that supports the grounds you are relying on. Clearly explain why you believe the original decision may be unreliable. Submit your form to ffr@rvc.ac.uk.

How long do I have to submit an FFR request?

You must submit your request within the deadline stated in your outcome letter, usually **14 calendar days** from the date of that letter. Late requests will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances.

What issues can the FFR process consider, and what can it not change?

The FFR process does not re-hear or re-investigate your original case, evidence, or circumstances. Instead, the Review Panel considers only whether there is sufficient evidence to cast doubt on the reliability of the original decision based on the allowable grounds you have submitted. The Panel cannot consider issues outside these grounds or question academic judgment.

What is a procedural or administrative error?

A procedural error means a published process was not followed.

An administrative error means a mistake was made in handling your case (i.e. missing a key piece of evidence in the case).

To be relevant to an FFR, the error must have had a significant impact on the previous decision and/or outcome.

My case relates to a procedural or administrative error. How will the FFR process consider this?

The FFR Panel assesses whether the error constitutes a procedural error within the context of the previous decision and whether it was sufficiently serious to have influenced the outcome.

They will consider key points such as:

- Did the error have a significant impact on the outcome?
- Would the decision have been different if the error had not occurred?
- If the answer is “yes,” this may cast doubt on the reliability of the original decision.

My case relates to manifestly unreasonable. What evidence is acceptable?

You must show that the original outcome falls outside the range of reasonable decisions. Acceptable evidence includes:

- Examples showing relevant information was overlooked or misunderstood
- Evidence showing the decision did not logically follow from the facts
- Proof that mitigating or aggravating factors were not considered

You cannot claim manifestly unreasonable simply because you disagree with the decision.

My case relates to new evidence. What evidence is acceptable?

To be considered, new evidence must meet all the following:

- **Unavailable Earlier:** You could not reasonably have provided it during the original process.
- **Direct Relevance:** It relates specifically to the previous case and the decision under review.
- **Material Impact:** It may significantly change or add important context to the original decision. It is **not** an opportunity to strengthen or expand on arguments already submitted.

Examples of acceptable new evidence include:

- Medical documentation that was not previously available.
- Witness statements that could not have been made available at the time.

What happens after I submit my FFR request?

An Initial Assessor will review your case to check that it:

- Was submitted on time
- Demonstrates allowable grounds
- Includes sufficient evidence to support the submitted grounds

If eligible, your case will be referred to a FFR Panel for consideration.

What if my appeal does not meet the allowable grounds or is ineligible?

You will be informed that your request cannot progress. The RVC will provide your with a Completion of Procedures letter, which will explain which grounds were not met and why.

Upon receipt of your Completion of Procedures letter, you will have the opportunity to request an external review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIAHE).

For clarity, the OIAHE will not normally review complaints that have completed all internal procedures at the institution (i.e. in circumstances where a Completion of Procedures letter has not been issued).

For full details of the OIAHE rules, please refer to: [Our Rules - OIAHE](#)

What happens at a paper-based review, and how long will it take?

A paper-based review means the FFR Panel will assess your written submission, the original decision, and any supporting evidence without meeting with you in person.

During this stage, the Panel will consider whether the grounds you have stated cast doubt on the previous decision. From the date you submit your appeal, it typically takes around 28 calendar days to receive the outcome of the paper-based review.

If the FFR Panel decides to refer your case to a full hearing, you should allow an additional 17 days for the Panel to reconvene.

What happens if the case goes to an FFR Hearing, and how long will it take?

A hearing is held when the FFR Panel identify significant gaps of enquiry in your case. If this occurs, you will be required to attend so the Panel can ask questions and you can respond. The hearing will focus solely on the stated grounds of your appeal, not on re-investigating the entire case.

Can I bring someone with me to the FFR Panel hearing?

Yes, you may bring one supporter for moral support, such as a friend or member of the RVC community. They cannot participate unless invited by the panel chair.

What are the possible outcomes?

The FFR Panel may reach one of the following outcomes:

Uphold the original decision

This means the Panel finds that your stated grounds do **not** cast doubt on the previous decision, so the decision remains unchanged.

Partially uphold the original decision

The Panel may find that some issues affect the previous outcome while others do not. In this case, parts of the decision may be amended.

Set aside the original decision

The Panel may determine that the previous decision should not stand. They have the authority to:

- Re-determine the outcome under the original procedure, or
 - Modify actions previously taken (e.g., sanctions or remedies).
- Note:** Any modifications must fall within the range of outcomes permitted under the original procedure.

What are my options if I am dissatisfied with the outcome of the FFR Panel?

If you have completed the RVC's internal processes, you will receive a Completion of Procedures letter. You can then take your case to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIAHE) for independent review.

Case Study

FFR Outcome based on manifestly unreasonable | Not Upheld

A postgraduate distance-learning student at the RVC was withdrawn after failing a module for the second time. The student appealed the decision, claiming they were disadvantaged when the RVC changed its Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). They submitted screenshots showing failed login attempts and WhatsApp conversations with other students experiencing issues with the new platform.

The student was invited to an appeal hearing so the Panel could better understand how they accessed the VLE. During the hearing, the student explained that they primarily used their mobile phone while commuting or walking in the evenings and confirmed they had not sought technical support when experiencing access difficulties.

RVC reviewed the VLE access logs, which showed that the failed login attempts resulted from incorrect passwords. The logs also indicated that the student's access pattern had remained consistent across both the old and new systems. The provider further noted that students had been advised not to rely solely on mobile devices for study. As a result, the appeal was rejected (not justified).

The student then submitted a Final Formal Review (FFR), arguing that RVC should have considered only the screenshots provided, rather than the system access logs. The FFR Panel considered whether the previous decision was manifestly unreasonable. This included assessing whether the decision fell outside the range of reasonable outcomes, whether relevant evidence was properly considered, and whether the reasoning was clear and proportionate.

The Panel determined that it was entirely reasonable for the original appeal Panel to review system access logs to verify account functionality and that the student should have sought assistance when encountering difficulties. The original decision was considered proportionate and justified.

Outcome

The FFR request was **not upheld**. The decision was within the range of reasonable outcomes, and no changes were made.

Key Points

- Manifestly unreasonable does **not** mean simply disagreeing with a decision.
- The FFR process examines whether the original decision was reasonable and proportionate, not whether the academic judgment was correct.
- Students are expected to seek support when they experience technical difficulties.
- The previous decision was reasonable to rely on system data to verify claims.