



EXAMINATIONS HANDBOOK

Standard Operating Procedure 07

Appeals Panel Procedures

Amendments and date of issue

Amendments to this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) can be authorised only by the Chair of the Qualifications Board in consultation with that Board and the Examinations Committee.

This issue is 2020 version 1 and is dated November 2020.

Register of SOP 07 amendments

Version	Brief description of Amendment	Amendment	Date approved
2020.1	New handbook		23/11/2020

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Introduction

In certain circumstances, a Candidate may submit an appeal against their result. The grounds for appeal, and the appeals procedure are set out here.

Within 28 days of the notification of results, a Candidate (the appellant) may appeal against their result by writing to the Examinations Officer, stating their reasons for an appeal. The Candidate must also submit the current appeal fee. Fees appear in SOP 04 (Cost sheet of examinations).

The grounds for appeal are that:

- i the examination had not been conducted in accordance with the examinations procedures of the Institute, or the judgements made were not consistent, fair or applied correctly, such that the result may have been adversely affected, or
- ii the appellant believed that their performance in the examination had been materially impaired by ill health or other circumstances which the appellant had been unable, for valid reasons, to divulge to the Examinations Officer or to an Examiner on the day of the examination which could be a Mitigating Circumstance (see SOP 06 - Mitigating Circumstances), or
- iii the appellant had reason to believe that one or more of the Examiners was prejudiced or biased against them.

Procedure

The following procedures are to be used by the Institute's Appeals Panel (the Panel), led by the Co-ordinating Chair, in the assessment of appeals arising from the results of the Institute's examinations and are based on the Institute's bye-laws.

They are included in the Standard Operations Procedures (SOPs) which form part of the Examinations Handbook.

The Panel comprises at least six people, up to six Blue Badge Guides and up to three tourist academics (one of whom acts as Co-ordinating Chair), appointed by the Chair of the Qualifications Board in consultation with the President of the Institute. The Panel, through the Co-ordinating Chair, reports directly to the Chair of the Qualifications Board.

Whereas the Institute's procedures and information about the Board and Committee members are available for general scrutiny, exceptionally the identity of the Co-ordinating Chair and Panel members is not disclosed to anyone but the Institute President, the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Qualifications Board and the Examinations Officer to ensure that all appeal assessments are undertaken objectively and without any bias or prejudice.

Stage One

An appeal submitted by the appellant is first checked by the Examinations Officer to ensure that it meets the Institute's timescale and fee payment criteria.

If these criteria are met, the appeal is sent to the Co-ordinating Chair, together with the Chief Examiner's report for the relevant examination, and the Examiners' mark sheets (for practical examinations) or the appellant's written answers (for written examinations), all edited to preserve the appellant's anonymity.

Stage Two

The Co-ordinating Chair will invite three members of the Appeals Panel to comprise an Appeal Committee to assess the appeal, comprising at least one tourism academic and one Blue Badge Tourist Guide. The Co-ordinating Chair may elect to participate in the process or invite a third member to be part of the assessment team.

No member of the Committee may have a direct interest in the appellant's case as an Examiner, Compiler or Moderator for the appellant's examination which is the subject of the appeal.

The Co-ordinating Chair must ensure that relevant documents and information requested by the Appeal Committee are provided by the Examinations Officer to the members of the Appeal Committee.

Stage Three

The remit of the Appeal Committee is to consider whether any of the grounds for appeal (see below) have been demonstrably met. Its remit does not extend to considering the academic judgement of Examiners or other issues of assessment.

The Committee may invite the views of the respective Chief Examiner and other Examiners, Compilers and Moderators and may call for all relevant documentation from any relevant source as it deems necessary. This will all be co-ordinated by the Examinations Officer to ensure objectivity.

The grounds for appeal are that:

- i. the examination had not been conducted in accordance with the examinations procedures of the Institute, or the judgements made were not consistent, fair or applied correctly, such that the result may have been adversely affected, or
- ii. the appellant believed that their performance in the examination had been materially impaired by ill health or other circumstances which the appellant had been unable, for valid reasons, to divulge to the Examinations Officer or to an Examiner on the day of the examination which could be a Mitigating Circumstance (see SOP 06 - Mitigating Circumstances), or
- iii. the appellant had reason to believe that one or more of the Examiners was prejudiced or biased against them.

Though there is no set time for the Committee to reach a decision, in the interests of the appellant, Chief Examiner and Course Director the assessment must be thorough and completed in a timely fashion. The decision can be unanimous or by a majority.

Each assessment must take into account the current issue of the Institute's Examinations Handbook and its Standard Operating Procedures.

Stage Four

Where the appeal is upheld the Committee may decide that:

- i. the appellant's result in the examination under appeal be changed to PASS
- ii. the appellant's work be re-assessed
- iii. the appellant be given a further opportunity to take the examination with or without fee payment

The decision of the Appeal Committee is final and shall not be subject to further appeal or challenge. The Appeal Board need not provide any reasons for its decision, and if it provides any reasons or comments, it may specify to whom they may be sent.

Stage Five

The Co-ordinating Chair composes a letter informing the appellant of the decision of the Appeal Committee, together with (where appropriate) the Appeal Committee's reasons.

The letter is then sent to the Examinations Officer who forwards it to the Chair of the Qualifications Board to be signed.

The letter is returned to the Examinations Officer who adds the relevant personal contact details and sends the signed letter to the appellant

The decision, comprising the appellant's number, examination and (where appropriate) the Appeal Committee's reasons for its decision, is reported to the President of the Institute, Examinations Committee Chair, the relevant Programme Director, the Operations Manager and the relevant Chief Examiner.

The Chair of the Qualifications Board reports to its next meeting the number and results of all appeals assessed by the Panel since the previous meeting.

Communication Chain

All appeals are submitted to the Examination Officer.

The Examinations Officer forwards them to the Co-ordinating Chair of the Panel, having first excised all of the appellant's personal details.

After the appeal has been assessed and a decision reached by the Appeal Committee, the Co-ordinating Chair of the Panel compiles a letter to the appellant, reporting the decision and forwards it to the Examinations Officer.

The Examinations Officer forwards it to the Chair of QB, who signs it and returns it to the Examinations Officer.

The Examinations Officer then enters the appellant's contact details and sends the signed letter to the appellant and to the Course Director.

If the appeal is upheld, the Examinations Officer arranges for the fee to be refunded.

The Examinations Officer sends the decision (suitably anonymised) to the President, Chief Examiner and the Examinations Committee Chair.

Guidance notes for the Appeal Committee

Different appeals raise different issues and may need to be handled in different ways. The Appeal Committee may consider whether the following procedure is appropriate to any particular appeal.

1.	Institute (Examinations Officer) informs Co-ordinating Chair of the Appeals Panel when notice of appeal is received.	Week 1
2.	Co-ordinating Chair appoints three members of the Panel (who may include the Co-ordinating Chair) to be the Appeal Committee.	Week 1
3.	Institute sends copies of notice of appeal to members of Appeal Committee, along with a. Chief Examiner's Report on relevant exam(s); and b. Examiners' mark sheets or appellant's written paper(s) for relevant exam(s).	Week 1
4.	If requested by Appeal Committee, Examinations Officer sends copies of notice of appeal to Chief Examiner, other examiners, compilers and/or moderators, and possibly the Course Director; inviting comments within 2 weeks	Week 2
5.	Appeal Committee requests any additional materials or information via the Examinations Officer. Such information might include statistics for other exams taken by same exam group, and for the exams under appeal in previous years.	Week 2
6.	Appeal Committee considers papers from 3, 4 and 5 above, communicating by email, phone or in person, and makes decision	Weeks 5/6