SECTION 4

Assessment Regulation 11: Appeal against the recommendation of examiner (students on approved courses of supervised research)

Students are advised to seek impartial help, advice, guidance and support from sabbatical officers in the Students’ Union and Students’ Union Advice Centre.

11.1 Candidates may in the circumstances set out below request a review of the examiners’ recommendation, whether at the first examination or on re-examination.

10.1.1 An ‘appeal’ is defined as a request for a review of the recommendation of the examiners, whether at the first examination or on the re-examination. Such an appeal will always be concerned with the conduct of the examination and not with questioning the academic judgement of the examiners.

Grounds for an appeal

11.2 An appeal may only be made in relation to the decision made on the recommendation of the examiners. Given the existence of procedures for complaint during the study period, alleged inadequacy of supervisory or other arrangements during the period of study do not constitute grounds for requesting a review of the examination decision. By submitting for or attending a formal examination, it will be assumed that the student has declared that he or she is fit to undertake that assessment and a subsequent appeal based on the grounds of a previously undeclared extenuating circumstance will not be considered.

11.3 Leave to appeal will only be granted on one or more of the following grounds:

a) that there is evidence of procedural irregularity in the conduct of the examination (including administrative error) of such a nature as to cause doubt as to whether the result might have been different had there not been any irregularity;

b) that there is evidence of unfair or improper assessment on the part of one or more of the examiners.

Candidates may not otherwise challenge the academic judgement of the examiners.

Procedure for dealing with an appeal

11.4 A notice for an appeal against the recommendation of the examiners shall be made in writing to the Head of Registry’s office as soon as possible and normally not later than ten working days from the date of notification of the outcome. The candidate must submit the detailed written case for the appeal within a further twenty working days from the date of giving notice.

11.5 On receipt of either the notice of intention to appeal or the detailed written case, the Head of Registry or nominated deputy will review the documentation to identify if
one or more of the grounds under 11.3 has occurred and/or is demonstrated within the documentation. If leave to appeal is not granted, the Head of Registry or nominated deputy will write to the student with a full explanation. In cases where the student considers that the appeal has not been satisfactorily addressed, a request for a review should be made in writing within 10 working days to the Head of Registry who will arrange for the case to be reviewed by an officer of the Registry who has had no prior involvement. New evidence cannot be introduced at this stage. The student will be advised of the outcome within ten working days of the receipt of the review request. The decision of the reviewing officer will be final and a Completion of Procedures letter will be issued.

11.6 If leave to appeal is granted, the appeal will be considered by a Committee convened by the Head of Registry. The Committee will consist of three persons having experience of supervising and examining research degrees and who have had no previous involvement in the case nor be drawn from the School in which the candidate is based. No student or research degree candidate may be a member of a Research Degree Appeal Committee.

11.7 The Head of Registry or a nominated deputy shall act as secretary and convenor of the Research Degree Appeal Committee, but shall not be a member.

11.8 The Research Degree Appeal Committee shall normally hold its first meeting within one month of the submission by the candidate of the written case for the appeal. Its meetings shall be held in private and its proceedings shall be confidential.

11.9 The candidate may, if he/she wishes, present his/her case to the Committee in person and has the right to be accompanied by a friend when presenting the case to the Committee. Notification of the date of the Committee will be forwarded to the candidate at least ten working days in advance of the meeting.

11.10 The meeting of the Committee may be postponed for no more than ten working days, if the candidate who has made the appeal can show good reason for not being able to attend at the originally specified time. However, the failure or inability of the candidate to attend the meeting of the Committee will not preclude the Committee from reaching a decision.

11.11 If a Committee agrees that a candidate has valid grounds for appeal, it must either:

a) recommend that the examiners be invited to reconsider their decision; or

b) recommend that new examiners be appointed.

11.12 All decisions of the Committee shall be made by a majority vote of the members. In the event of the votes being tied the decision shall be in favour of the student and the procedure laid down in paragraph 11.11 shall be followed.

11.13 A Research Degree Appeal Committee is not constituted as an examination board and has no authority to set aside the decision of examiners and thereby to recommend the award of the degree.
11.14 The decision of the Committee shall be final, with the proviso that the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) may hear complaints based on evidence that the University’s processes were not followed in relation to the Committee hearing or require in exceptional circumstances the Committee to be reconvened.

11.15 The Committee shall submit a written report of its conclusions within ten working days of its final meeting to the candidate, the examiners, the candidate’s Director of Studies and the Chair of the University Research Committee.

11.16 The University will meet reasonable and proportionate incidental expenses (for example, travel within the UK, subsistence and essential accommodation) necessarily incurred by successful appellants as a result of attending a Research Degree Appeal Committee on the production of valid receipts. The University will not meet any legal expenses.

11.17 The Head of Registry will prepare an annual statistical report on complaints and appeals for the University’s Teaching and Learning Committee and Research Committee. This report will identify any issues which need prompt attention.