



# MFDS and Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations Appeals Policy and Procedure

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## 1. Introduction

1.1 This policy and procedure applies to all candidates sitting examinations conducted by the Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations and MFDS secretariat (known as the Secretariat).

1.2 By applying to sit an examination, candidates agree to abide by all relevant regulations, including this Appeals Policy and Procedure.

1.3 Any dispute regarding the interpretation of this policy and procedure will be referred to the Secretariat Director of Examinations, whose decision will be final.

1.4 This policy and procedure addresses all examination appeals.

1.5 An appeal is defined as a request for a review of a decision made by or on behalf of an examining board concerning a candidate's performance in an examination.



## 1.6 Appeals are only permitted on the following grounds:

1.6.1 Procedural defects or irregularities: errors in the conduct or administration of the examination that could have negatively impacted the candidate's performance or result.

1.6.2 Defects or irregularities in the consideration of exceptional personal circumstances: issues such as medical or adverse personal circumstances communicated to the Secretariat before the examination date.

## 1.7 Appeals are not allowed in the following cases:

1.7.1 Misunderstanding or lack of awareness of the examination regulations.

1.7.2 Questioning the professional or academic judgment of the examiners.

1.7.3 Seeking a review of the marks given because a candidate failed by a narrow margin, or because they believe they should have passed.

## 1.8 Outcomes of an appeal may only be:

1.8.1 Rejected: unsubstantiated or outside the permitted grounds.

1.8.2 Upheld: result annulled, attempt discounted.

1.9 An appeal cannot result in a fail being changed to a pass unless it is proven that an error in collation, recording, or reporting of marks affected the outcome.

1.10 Privacy and confidentiality will be upheld throughout the complaints process. Only individuals directly involved in handling the complaint will have access to relevant information. All parties are expected to respect the confidentiality of the process and associated documentation.

## 2. Procedure

2.1 Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Secretariat within 30 calendar days of the result notification via the appeal form available at <https://dsfe.org.uk>. Candidates must include detailed grounds and supporting evidence.

2.2 The Secretariat will acknowledge receipt within five working days and confirm whether or not the appeal has been made within time and with appropriate evidence. If there is no appropriate evidence submitted in that time, the candidate will be informed and the appeal will not progress.

2.3 The appeal handler may reclassify an appeal as a complaint or vice versa to ensure fair handling.



2.4 The fee for submitting an appeal is £100. The Secretariat will acknowledge when a valid appeal has been received and share information on how to make the fee payment. Payment of the appeal fee must be made before the investigation will commence.

2.5 The fee will be reimbursed only if the appeal is upheld.

2.6 When a complete and valid appeal has been received the Secretariat will investigate and communicate a decision to the candidate.

2.7 Where a conflict of interest is identified by the Secretariat, this will be acknowledged and a suitable neutral staff member shall be identified by the Secretariat Director of Examinations.

2.8 The candidate will receive the outcome of their appeal in writing within 30 calendar days of the valid appeal being received. Should additional time be required due to complexity or unexpected circumstances, this will be notified to the candidate by the Secretariat.

2.9 If the appeal is upheld, the following outcomes may be applied, and the appeal fee will be refunded:

2.9.1 Discounting of the result. Only the most recent result will be discounted; discounting cannot be applied retrospectively to previous exam attempts. The discounted attempt will not be counted towards the maximum number of attempts at an examination permitted by a candidate.

2.9.2 A correction to the mark issued in the event of an administrative error or error in mark calculation.

2.10 An upheld appeal will not result in a failing mark being converted to a pass mark unless an administrative or calculation error (as per 2.9.2) is demonstrated.

2.11 If the appeal is not upheld, the Secretariat will write to the candidate with information on the decision and the reasons and evidence supporting this. The appeal fee will not be refunded where an appeal is not upheld.

### 3. Further Review

3.1 Candidates dissatisfied with an initial not upheld decision may request reconsideration by the relevant Executive Committee within 10 working days of receiving the outcome of their appeal, providing additional information on why they believe the outcome issued should be reconsidered. They should submit any additional evidence at this stage.



3.2 The review of the appeal and its outcome will be referred to the next Executive Committee meeting for consideration.

3.3 If the Executive Committee finds no sufficient evidence or grounds to revise the initial outcome, the Quality Assurance Team will notify the candidate, and the procedure ends. The Executive Committee's decision is final.

3.4 If the Executive Committee finds sufficient evidence or grounds to revise the initial outcome the review will be referred to an Appeals Panel.

3.5 Appeals referred to an Appeal Panel at the request of the Executive Committee require an appeal panel fee of £600, refunded if the appeal is upheld. The Secretariat will notify the candidate that the appeal is to be referred to an Appeal Panel and will share information on how to pay the appeal panel fee.

## 4. Appeal Panel

4.1 The Quality Assurance Team will convene and attend the Appeal Panel, acting as Secretary without influencing decisions.

4.2 The Appeal Panel will include:

4.2.1 The Chairperson for Dental Speciality Fellowship Examinations or the Chairperson for MFDS Examinations,

4.2.2 An Exam Board Chair or Deputy from a different speciality or MFDS, and

4.2.3 An independent examiner from another specialty in the Secretariat.

4.3 Candidates will be given at least 10 working days' notice of an Appeal Panel.

4.4 Appeal Panels will be conducted in most cases via video meeting on Microsoft Teams.

4.5 Candidates may attend and present their case, accompanied by a supporter where required. The role of the supporter is to provide emotional support to the candidate only; they are not permitted to present arguments, answer questions, or otherwise speak on behalf of the candidate.

4.6 Candidates may request to attend with a non-legal representative, for example as a reasonable adjustment. Candidates are asked to contact the Secretariat to request the attendance of a representative at least two working days before the date of the Appeal Panel. The role of the representative may be to provide emotional support to the candidate, and they are permitted to present arguments, answer questions, and speak on behalf of the candidate where the candidate clearly communicates this during the panel hearing.



## 5. Appeal Panel Procedure

5.1 The Appeal Board will meet for a hearing (remotely or in person) as soon as reasonably possible, usually within 30 working days of receipt of payment of the Appeal Board fee.

5.2 The candidate will receive notification of the Panel date and time at least 10 working days in advance. They are not permitted to submit any further evidence or information at this stage unless they are able to evidence that this was not available for good reason previously.

5.3 The Appeal Panel will convene for preliminary discussions before the meeting. This is to discuss any paperwork submitted as part of the Appeal, to confirm understanding of due process, and agree any questions to be presented to the candidate. This does not prevent the Panel asking the candidate additional questions that may arise in the course of proceedings.

5.4 Candidates may present their appeal, followed by questioning from the panel.

5.5 Before closing, candidates may make a final statement.

5.6 Following the above steps, the panel will meet to consider the evidence and reach a decision. The panel may decide:

5.6.1 Appeal rejected with no further action. No fees will be refunded.

5.6.2 Appeal upheld. One of the two outcomes detailed in 2.9 shall be applied by the Panel. The appeal fee and Appeal Panel fee will be refunded.

5.7 Candidates will be informed of the decision within 10 working days of the Panel's decision.

5.8 The decision of the Appeal Panel is final.

5.9 Outcomes will be reported to the relevant Examination Board.