

Enquiries and Appeals policy (Graded Examinations)

1 Introduction

1.1 This policy applies to the following RSL brands:

- Rockschool
- Classical
- Performance Arts Awards (PAA)
- Career Qualifications at Levels 3, 4 and 6

1.2 This policy sets out the procedures that users of these qualifications should follow if they wish to make an enquiry about a result or an appeal.

1.3 For any advice or clarification about this policy and the procedures outlined, please contact appeals@rslawards.com

2 Issue and review

2.1 The date of issue of this policy is **June 2024**

2.2 This policy will be subject to regular review and monitoring by RSL and will be amended and updated accordingly. As part of this monitoring process, feedback from candidates, teachers and parents will be considered. All revisions of this policy will be posted on our website.

3 Submitting an enquiry about a result or appeal

3.1 The following customer options will be available:

- **re-mark** (applies to written, recorded video and live video examinations, Music Theory, Music Production, Professional Diplomas)
- **first level appeal** (applies to RSL's decision on a result, decision on a reasonable adjustment, special consideration, malpractice or maladministration investigation or a complaint.
- **second level appeal** (applies where the outcome of first level appeal has not been accepted)

- 3.2 Applications should be made by completing the prescribed form on our website and sending to appeals@rslawards.com or via post to: Head of Operations, RSL Awards, Harlequin House, 7 High Street, Teddington, TW11 8EE, UK.
- 3.3 Enquiries and appeals should be submitted no later than **10 working days** after the relevant result or decision has been received. We may not be able to investigate enquiries or appeals received later than this timeframe as evidence is time-sensitive and can become less reliable when it lies further in the past.
- 3.4 We will acknowledge all enquiries and appeals no later than 5 working days after receipt and provide an indication as to the likely timescale for resolution. This will normally be within 20 working days.
- 3.5 Please note that to ensure that full records are kept, all correspondence must be dealt with in writing. Any matters discussed by telephone cannot be considered part of the formal process.
- 3.6 Enquiries and appeals may be made by the following people:
- 3.6.1 A complaint may be made by anyone who seeks information/guidance or receives an examination service from RSL.
- 3.6.2 An enquiry or appeal may be requested by the candidate themselves if they are aged 16 or over, their teacher, or a designated person acting on the candidate's behalf (e.g. a parent, guardian or carer).
- 3.7 In certain circumstances it may be determined that an enquiry is best dealt with via RSL's Special Consideration procedures, in which case enquirers will be informed accordingly.
- 3.8 Fees are as shown in the table below.

Service	Fee	Cap for multiple candidates	Refundable
Re-mark	50% of exam fee	£100	if marks change by more than +/-5 or there is a change of assessment band
First level appeal	60% of exam fee	£150	if appeal is upheld
Second level appeal	75% of exam fee	£200	if appeal is upheld

4 Process

- 4.1 The appeals panel consists of the Director of Awarding, Head of Quality (Graded Exams) and if required the Chief Examiner for the relevant qualification.
- 4.2 Where an appeal involves further evidence to be collected or further review which will impact the stated timescale, the person making the appeal will be informed as soon as possible and a revised timescale provided.
- 4.3 If no response to the panel decision is received within 20 working days of it being communicated, RSL will close the case and no further correspondence will be entered into.
- 4.4 In order to protect the interests of all concerned, RSL will maintain appropriate confidentiality at all stages of the process unless disclosure is necessary to progress the matter. Notwithstanding this, individuals who are the subject of an appeal have the right to be informed about the nature and substance of an appeal made against them, and the outcome.
- 4.5 Depending on the nature of the appeal, and if the issues raised are deemed to be likely to have affected other candidates, for example in the same examination session, venue, or examined by the same examiner, action will be taken to ensure that such candidates are afforded the same treatment as the candidate who is the subject of appeal. In some circumstances this may result in longer timescales for resolution of the appeal, in which case the appellant will be informed of this and of the likely change to timescales.
- 4.6 Logs are maintained and are made available to RSL's Qualifications and Compliance Committee (QACC) for monitoring purposes. In some circumstances, problematic or complex cases may be referred to QACC for additional discussion and decision. QACC is a sub-committee of RSL's Board of Directors, and all senior staff are in attendance.

5 Re-mark

- 5.1 A re-mark of the examination will be conducted by a Senior Examiner who was not involved in the original decision.
- 5.2 If the mark changes when re-marked, this will stand as the final result. The result may go up or down.

- 5.3 A tolerance of + or -5 marks will be applied to the re-mark to take account of acceptable margin of error. A re-marked examination which falls within this tolerance will be considered as within an acceptable range of the original mark (i.e. the enquiry is not upheld) unless it results in a higher or lower grade (attainment band) being awarded. For written exams, any change in the mark will be considered as the enquiry is upheld.

6 First Level Appeal

- 6.1 The Appellant should provide as much information as possible to enable a thorough investigation to be carried out, including the reasons for the appeal, the basis on which any results or decisions are being questioned where relevant, details of how it is alleged that RSL did not follow correct procedures. Additional supporting documents (for example, copies of previous correspondence with RSL) can be included and must be clearly referenced. If insufficient information is provided, we may need to ask for it and this may delay the process.

- 6.2 The investigation will consider any or all of the following as appropriate:

- evidence from statistical analysis including the result history of the candidate, results of other examinations in the same session, examiner profile, etc.
- feedback from the examiner and/or venue
- evidence provided by the marksheet / written feedback.
- evidence / information provided by the person making the enquiry.

- 6.3 The outcome will be one of the following:

- 6.3.1 **Upheld.** This may include the offer of a free re-sit of the examination at the next available opportunity, an offer to re-sit individual components of exams and/or to submit work via video.

If a re-sit is offered, RSL may agree a time limit to protect the interests of all concerned and will aim to reproduce the original conditions as closely as possible.

Acceptance of an offer of a re-sit, video submission or adjustment to marks will terminate the enquiry.

- 6.3.2 **Rejected.** No further action will be taken; however, we will provide relevant feedback / information explaining and clarifying the mark awarded.



7 Second level appeal

- 7.1 A second level appeal consists of a review by an independent person who is not involved with RSL, either currently or at any time in the past. The decision of the independent person will be final.
- 7.2 The application form must contain a clear rationale for escalating to this stage of appeal, and an indication of the action which the appellant considers appropriate. This should however *not* include new information which could reasonably have been presented as part of the first level appeal.
- 7.3 On receipt of the application RSL will collate full documentation related to the case including any additional evidence provided by the appellant at this stage.
- 7.4 Once receipt of the appeal is confirmed, there must be no further communication or correspondence between the appellant and RSL until the appeal is concluded. Under no circumstances may the appellant contact the independent reviewer directly.
- 7.5 The independent reviewer will draw upon the evidence from the previous appeal and will request any further information from the candidate or RSL staff as required.
- 7.6 The independent reviewer will consider whether RSL has followed relevant processes, procedures and policies correctly and whether it has applied them properly and fairly in arriving at judgements. They will not re-mark a candidate's work.
- 7.7 There are two possible outcomes of the independent review:
- 7.7.1 If the independent reviewer finds that appropriate processes, procedures and policies have been followed and confirms the decision of the first level appeal, the appeal will be rejected.
- 7.7.2 If the independent reviewer finds that any of the appropriate processes, procedures or policies were not followed, the first level appeal will be upheld. The independent reviewer will recommend appropriate remedial actions to RSL for its consideration.
- 7.8 The appellant will be notified as to the outcome of the independent review as soon as possible after it has been completed.
- 7.9 Please note that the independent appeal is not a court of law and appellants do not require legal representation. Issues involving points of law will not be admissible. In these cases, appellants should take legal advice on an appropriate next step.



8 Contacting the regulators and seeking legal advice.

8.1 If an appellant is unhappy with the decision reached after independent review, they may contact the relevant regulator as follows, and/or seek legal advice:

8.1.1 for England (or any country outside the UK), Ofqual www.ofqual.gov.uk

8.1.2 for Wales, Qualifications Wales www.qualificationswales.org

8.1.3 for Northern Ireland, CCEA www.ccea.org.uk

8.1.4 for Scotland, SQA Accreditation
accreditation.sqa.org.uk/accreditation/About_Us/Complaints_Handling_Procedure
SQA Accreditation is unable to overturn assessment decisions or academic judgements.

8.2 Where the complaint originated from a public body in Scotland, such as a Further Education (FE) College or local authority centre, the appellant may escalate their appeal to the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO) once the public body's and the RSL's complaints procedures (where appropriate) have been exhausted. The SPSO will not consider complaints about academic decisions, such as the outcome of an assessment. Complaints should have been raised within the previous 12 months. The SPSO's Further Education Colleges Model Complaints Handling Procedure can be found at <http://www.valuingcomplaints.org.uk/sites/valuingcomplaints/files/resources/The-FurtherEducation-Model-Complaints-Handling-Procedure1.pdf>