

# **EUROPEAN BOARD OF OPHTHALMOLOGY GUIDELINE ON APPEAL PROCEDURES FOR EBO DIPLOMA AND FEBOS SUBSPECIALITY EXAMINATIONS**

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## **GUIDELINE ON APPEALS PROCEDURES FOR EBO DIPLOMA AND FEBOS SUBSPECIALITY EXAMINATIONS**

### **1. Introduction**

1.1 The Appeal Procedure is an internal administrative procedure and is not a legalistic procedure. The European Board of Ophthalmology (EBO) aims to deliver postgraduate European medical assessments that are objective, robust and is based on a fair process with open criteria allowing a reliable assessment of candidates. The EBO understands that, at times, problems might arise and that therefore there should be an appeal mechanism for candidates, with a mechanism for redress.

1.2 The appeal mechanism should be transparent, along the lines which follow, and make clear that only challenges to methods or conduct can be accepted, while judgment of performance of candidates will never be negotiable.

### **2. Criteria for appeal**

2.1 The Education Committee will only investigate appeals where there is evidence of any irregularities and errors listed below.

a. Procedural irregularities in the delivery of the EBO Diploma exam which have adversely affected a candidate's performance.

Examples of procedural irregularities are:

- invigilator or examiner not allowing the full allotted time for the examination;
- evidence of bias in the exam paper;
- leaving exam material unattended.

b. Invigilator or examiner's misconduct during the exam.

Examples of examiner's misconduct are:

- poor monitoring of candidates so candidates were able to use mobile phones and share answers;
- directly or indirectly helping students with exam questions;
- systematic bias in the assessment of one candidate group.

c. Administrative errors

Examples of administrative errors:

- being given the wrong examination material;
- incomplete exam papers;
- mistakes in processing exam results.

d. Exceptional circumstances occurring during the examination, for which clear evidence must be provided as soon as possible during the examination.

Examples of exceptional circumstances are:

- medical conditions/illness occurring during the exam;
- accident or injury;
- exceptionally difficult family circumstances that become evident during the exam;
- events that may threaten the health or safety of a candidate.

2.2 Candidates are reminded that there is a right of withdrawal from examinations for illness or bereavement prior to the exam and that by appearing to take the examination they are certifying themselves as fit to sit the exam.

2.3 The Appeal Procedure is intended to be an open and fair process. However, candidates must understand that it does have some restrictions and we ask you to pay close attention to the EBO instructions and rules for online examinations. Candidates have no grounds for appeals in the circumstances listed below.

- Failing the examination by not achieving pass rate. The EBO will provide candidates with a breakdown of their scores upon request at no extra cost. If a candidate thinks that he/she has been unfairly marked, they have 28 days to contact the Education committee to review their scores, detailing their reasons for requesting a review of their scores. A fee of EUR 300 applies to the review process and it has to be paid in advance by the candidate.
- Disagreeing with marks awarded by examiners.
- Questioning examiners' exercising their academic or professional judgement.
- Minor disturbances in the examination room.
- A candidate misreading the timetable and/or failing to attend an examination.
- Misreading the instructions of the examination paper and/or answering the incorrect questions.
- Any form of technological failure (laptop, mobile phones, wi-fi or internet connectivity).
- Timing errors in examinations.

### **3. How to appeal**

3.1 If you believe that your exam performance was adversely affected by a procedural error or disruption or exceptional circumstances during the examination, you should report any issues on the exam day to the invigilators and EBO administrators (using [ebo@ebo-online.org](mailto:ebo@ebo-online.org)) so it can be recorded. Follow this up by submitting an appeal email (please insert Appeal in the subject). You will receive a confirmation that the email has been received.

3.2 The following information has to be included in the appeal email:

- the examination result you are appealing against;
- date of the examination;
- grounds for appeal;
- desired outcome of your appeal;

- details of the procedural irregularity you believe affected your performance;
- evidence to back up your claims. Should an appeal be rejected there will be no opportunity to submit more evidence so please ensure you include everything you wish to be considered as part of the appeal.

3.3 Please note that appeals are not considered before candidates receive their results, but evidence collected at this stage will assist the Education Committee in their investigation. There is a time limit of 30 days after the publication of exam results for appellant to lodge an appeal. Appeals received after this time limit will not be considered.

#### 4. Appeal Panel

4.1 The composition of an appeal panel will provide a combination of necessary expertise and independence. The panel would be comprised of 3 members chosen by the Executive Committee.

**Appeal Panel Chair:** The Panel can be chaired by the UEMS Ophthalmology President, EBO President, EBO Executive Committee member or an independent appointee with relevant expertise if appropriate.

**Other Panel members:** Panel members EBO President (if not chairing the panel already), Chair of the Education Committee (unless named in complaint by appellant), senior Examiner (as long as he/she did not examine the appellant), a member of the UEMS Ophthalmology Executive Committee, EBO examination manager or an independent appointee with relevant expertise. An EBO administrator will be present as observer and he/she will be responsible for taking minutes.

4.2 No member of the Appeal Panel will have had any current or previous connection with the candidate or have been involved in assessing the candidate in the part of the examination under appeal.

4.3 In exceptional circumstances (for example, absence or illness), Appeal Panel members may nominate a representative or Deputy to replace him/her on the Appeal Panel.

4.4 The payment of the full fee for an appeal (€300) needs to be made in advance of a formal appeal hearing.

#### 5. Investigation

5.1 The Chair of the Appeal Panel carries out an initial review to consider whether a candidate has ground for appeal. The Chair will inform the Candidate if it is considered that there are no grounds for appeal. The Chair will also attempt informal resolution, for instance through a clarification letter. There is no absolute right to have a hearing as part of the appeal and appeals that are outside the permitted grounds for appeal will be struck out at the preliminary stage.

5.2 If the appeal does have grounds, it will be investigated accordingly. Invigilators, examiners or other candidates may be contacted for comments. These will be included in a Summary report which is submitted to the Appeal Panel for review.

5.3 The Appeal Panel will decide whether the appeal should be upheld based on the evidence collated and inform the candidate within 60 days. Candidates will be informed if more time is needed due to delays in collecting information.

## 6. Hearing

6.1 If informal resolution is not possible, a time and date will be arranged for the hearing. The Chair of the Appeal Panel will meet with the rest of the panel and determine the conduct of the panel, the questions and the maximum duration of the meeting. The meeting will take place online.

6.2 The appellant has the possibility to bring a friend for support. The hearing will be conducted in English. The appellant can be accompanied by a translator if arranged by the appellant in advance at their own expense.

6.3 There are 5 possible outcomes for appeals and appellants are reminded that the decision of the Appeal Panel is final.

- No valid grounds for appeal

Should there be no valid grounds for an appeal, a formal letter of rejection is sent to the candidate explaining why there are no grounds for the appeal – this could be by either the examination board chairman or the panel chairman, should it be decided later in the process. In this case, no appeal fee will be levied.

- Clarification was sufficient – no appeal required

If clarification was sufficient, there is no need for an appeal hearing, in which case 75% of the appeal fee will be reimbursed to the candidate, while 25% of the appeal fee is kept for administration costs.

- Appeal dismissed after hearing

If the examination results of the candidate are confirmed after the appeal hearing, the appeal will be dismissed. No reimbursement of the appeal fee will be made.

- Appeal partially upheld

If the appeal is partially upheld after the hearing, the appeal being considered to be valid without influencing the outcome of the examination, then the examination result should be formally confirmed. In this case, the Council for European Specialist Medical Assessments (UEMS-CESMA) advises the Boards and Sections to reserve 50% of the appeal fee as credit



allowed towards participation at a future European examination, refunding the balance of 50% of the fee charged.

- Appeal fully upheld

If the appeal is fully upheld the candidate's assessment results will be declared null and void. No charges can be made to the candidate for the next attempt at the examination, and the appeal fee is refunded to the candidate in full.

This Guideline will be revised no later than 3 years after its approval (May 2026)