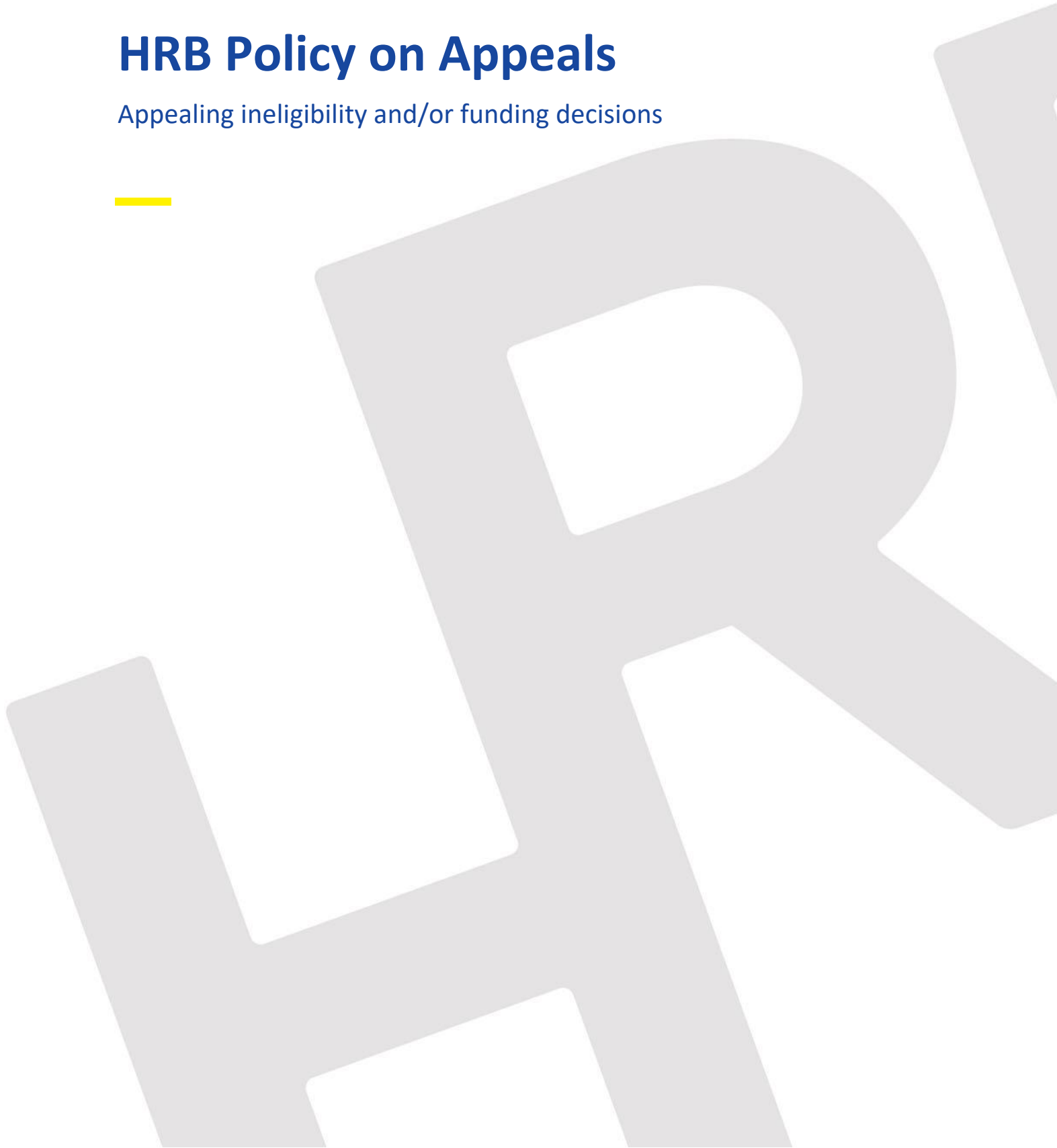


HRB Policy on Appeals

Appealing ineligibility and/or funding decisions



1 Policy statement

This policy sets out the HRB's policy for handling appeals related to either ineligibility and/or funding decisions in funding schemes where the HRB is the sole funder. It is important to note that disagreement with peer reviewers or panel members' comments are not grounds for an appeal. However, applicants may appeal if they consider that the process for assessing eligibility or reviewing their application was not adhered to or that it was not conducted fairly.

2 Appeals process

2.1 Appealing ineligibility decisions

The Guidance Notes for all HRB funding schemes clearly set out eligibility criteria, e.g., requirements for the Lead Applicant, research team, scope, timelines, funding etc. Immediately after the submission of applications to a scheme, designated HRB staff in the Research Strategy and Funding Directorate assess eligibility of all applications against the criteria and requirements publicly set out in the scheme documentation.

In some instances, the HRB may direct specific queries to the Lead applicant before making a determination on eligibility. In such cases, the query will be directed from the HRB to the Lead Applicant and nominated Host Institution, and a specific timeline will be noted (e.g., up to five working days) for receipt of a response. Extensions may be granted in exceptional cases, e.g., where the Lead Applicant is on leave or away on business. If the response to the HRB does not provide sufficient information or the Applicant fails to respond within that set time frame, the HRB make its determination decide based on the information provided. Additional information provided after this timeframe will not be accepted by the HRB.

HRB staff consult with the assigned external Chair of the review panel for input and endorsement where the scope of any research proposal is considered ineligible.

Once the HRB a determination that an application is ineligible, a letter is issued to the Lead applicant and the relevant Host Institution stating the reason for the ineligibility.

2.1.1 Grounds for appeal

The aim of the HRB's appeals procedure is to ensure that the eligibility is determined fairly and consistently. Applicants may appeal if they think their application was not treated fairly. Given the defined timeframe for the next steps in the selection process, ineligibility appeals need to be completed in a timely manner.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to make contact in first instance with the Research Office in the relevant Host Institution, as they may be able to address the concern(s).

2.1.2 Informal engagement with HRB prior to starting an appeal

Before formalising an appeal to the HRB, applicants are encouraged to make informal contact with the HRB staff responsible for that scheme to seek clarifications or further details.

Applicants should contact the relevant Programme Manager, who together with the Head of Unit may be able to provide additional information to address the query. The contact must be made within three working days of notification of the outcome of an application being made ineligible.

2.1.3 Procedure for appeal

If the applicant is not satisfied with the response received from the Programme Manager and Head of Unit, they may want to start an appeal process.

All appeals must be initiated within three working days from the date of the last communication with the Programme Manager or Head of Unit to fall under this policy.

The HRB ineligibility decisions appeals procedure has two stages:

Stage 1: Review of the appeal by the Director of Strategy and Funding

An applicant may submit a written request for a review to Dr Teresa Maguire, Director of Research Strategy and Funding, to the Appeals@hrb.ie mailbox. The request must clearly state the grounds for the appeal and must be endorsed by the Research Office of the Host Institution. The Director of Research Strategy and Funding will review the steps taken and issue the outcome of their assessment, in writing, within five working days. The response will be sent to the applicant and copied to the Research Office of the Host Institution.

Stage 2: Further review by the CEO

If still not satisfied, the Host Institution may request a further review by the CEO of the HRB within three working days from the date of the last communication under stage 1. The request must be in writing and must be signed by the President/Provost/Chief Executive Officer of the Host Institution and by the applicant. The request should explain why the institution is not satisfied with the review of the process conducted by the Director. The CEO will review this request and provide the outcome of the further assessment, in writing, to the Host Institution within five working days.

The decision made by the CEO is final.

2.2 Appealing of funding decisions

Guidelines on the HRB review process and the assessment criteria for each scheme are provided as a matter of course when the call for applications is issued. An outline of the process can be found at <http://www.hrb.ie/funding/funding-schemes/before-you-apply/how-we-assess-applications/>.

Ultimately any funding decision is based on two factors: 1) the rating of an individual application based on the specific assessment criteria for the scheme and 2) in competitive calls, the ranking of that application compared to all other applications to the scheme and the budget available.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to make contact in first instance with the Research Office in the relevant Host Institution, as they may be able to address the concern(s).

2.2.1 Grounds for appeal

The aim is not to appeal the HRB funding decision per se but to consider appeals on the grounds that the grant review process as set out in the scheme documentation was not conducted fairly.

Procedure. Such appeals must be initiated within 20 working days of notification of the outcome of an application process to fall under this policy.

2.2.2 Informal engagement with HRB prior to starting an appeal

Before formalising an appeal to the HRB, applicants are encouraged to make informal contact with the HRB staff responsible for that scheme to seek clarifications or further details.

Applicants should contact the relevant Programme Manager, who together with the Head of Unit may be able to provide additional information to address the query. The contact must be made within 20 working days of notification of the outcome of an application process.

The HRB funding decisions appeals procedure has two stages:

Stage 1: Written appeal to the Director of Research Strategy and Funding

If the applicant is not satisfied with the clarifications received above, they may submit a written request for a review to Dr Teresa Maguire, Director of Research Strategy and Funding, to the Appeals@hrb.ie mailbox . The request must clearly state the grounds for the appeal and must be endorsed by the Research Office of the Host Institution. The Director of Research Strategy and Funding will review the steps taken and issue the outcome of their assessment within 20 working days. The response will be sent to the Lead Applicant and copied to the Research Office of the Host Institution.

Stage 2: Further review by the CEO

If still not satisfied, the Host Institution may request a further review by the CEO of the HRB. The request must be in writing and must be signed by the President/Provost/Chief Executive Officer of the Host Institution and by the applicant. The request should set out why the Institution wishes to proceed with a further review of the fairness of the process. The CEO will review and provide a written response to the Host Institution within 20 working days. At the discretion of the CEO, a third-party expert may be invited to examine the case and make a recommendation.

The decision made by the CEO is final.

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