

HRB policy on appealing ineligibility decisions in funding schemes

This policy sets out the process for appealing ineligibility decisions made by the HRB following the submission of applications to a funding scheme. Applicants may appeal if they consider that the process for assessing their eligibility was not adhered to or that it was not conducted fairly.

How funding decisions are made

The Guidance Notes for all HRB funding schemes state a set of eligibility criteria, e.g. about Lead Applicant track record, scope of the research, research team composition etc.

Immediately after the submission of applications to a scheme, the HRB team for the scheme (Project Officer, Programme Manager and Head of Pre-Award) will thoroughly assess eligibility of applications against the criteria set for the scheme. In some case the HRB may need to follow up with the applicant to address a specific eligibility criterion and/or in other cases the HRB staff may need to consult with the Chair of the review panel, typically regarding the scope of a research proposal.

The HRB works within a tight timeframe since both eligibility and the review process must be completed for all applications before the panel meeting date. Therefore, the period for eligibility queries and the eligibility appeals process is constrained.

- If a query is sent to the Applicant and Host Institution, it will provide a specific time line to address the query (e.g. **up to 5 working days**) to respond in full. Extension to this timeline 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 will decide based on the information provided. Additional information provided after this timeframe may not be accepted by the HRB.

Lead applicants and the host institutions of ineligible applications will receive an outcome letter stating the reason for the ineligibility.

Grounds for appeal

The aim of the HRB's appeals procedure is to ensure that the eligibility to a funding scheme was determined fairly. Applicants may appeal if they think their application was not treated fairly.

Appeals Procedure

All appeals must be initiated within three working days of notification of the outcome of an application being made ineligible to fall under this policy. The appeals procedure at the HRB has three stages:

1. Contact with relevant Programme Manager or Head of Pre-Award

Applicants whose applications have been made ineligible and who are concerned about any aspect of the process, are encouraged in the first instance to talk to the relevant Programme Manager or Head of Pre-Award in the HRB, who may be able to provide additional information. Programme Manager and Head of Pre-Award will work together to address the query promptly.

2. Review of the appeal by the Director of Strategy and Funding

If the applicant is not satisfied with the response received from the Programme Manager and Head of Pre-Award, s/he should submit a written request for a review to the Director of Research Strategy and Funding within three working days from the date of the last communication under step 1. The request should state clearly 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 a response within five working days. The response will be sent to the applicant and copied to the Research Office of the Host Institution.

3. 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 step 2. 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 a written response to the Host Institution within five working days.

The decision made by the CEO is final.

The HRB will keep this policy under review and may make changes from time to time. Policy updates will be posted on the HRB website.