

NW/946484

19 December 2022

Private & Confidential

Mr Geoffrey Blanche

By email only: 946484@swansea.ac.uk ; geoffblanche@yahoo.com

Dear Mr Blanche,

Re: Outcome of Final Review - Completion of Procedures Letter

I write in response to your application for a Final Review concerning the outcome of your academic appeal. This letter confirms that the internal procedures of the University in relation to this matter have been completed.

Outcome

I can confirm that I have not previously been involved in your case and I have, therefore, been able to assess it impartially, as nominee for the Director of Academic Services.

I have assessed whether the Committee had considered your appeal in accordance with the regulations and procedures of the University and whether the decision it reached was reasonable in all the circumstances or would be rendered unsafe on the basis of any new evidence received.

Whilst I have taken into account all documentation which had been submitted to the Committee and which has been provided by you, my decision does not necessarily refer to all the documentation provided and points raised - I have referred below to all material and points raised which I considered necessary to make my decision on your final review application.

Having carefully considered your request for review I have decided to dismiss your request for the reasons stated below.

Background

Programme of study	MSc Electrical and Electronic Engineering
Decision being reviewed	Rejection of academic appeal (outcome letter dated 29 September 2022)
Decision	Rejection of academic appeal
Key procedures and documents considered at final review	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• your appeal form and attachments submitted on 30 August 2022;• Mrs Wilkins' letter to you dated 29 September 2022;• your academic record;• your Final Review application form and attachments submitted on 20 October 2022;• your email to Mr Novis of 20 October 2022;• your email to Mr Novis of 29 October 2022;• the Academic Appeals Procedure 2021/22;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Final Review Procedure 2022/23.
Selected grounds for review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Irregularities in the conduct of the relevant procedures, which are of such a nature as to cause reasonable doubt whether the party/parties concerned would have reached the same decision had they not occurred; New evidence which was not made available to the party/ parties concerned when the candidate's case was considered and which can be shown to be relevant to the case. The student must show a compelling reason why such evidence was not made known prior to the decision being made. Where the student could have made the new evidence available prior to the decision being made, such evidence cannot subsequently be cited as grounds for review. That the decision reached was unreasonable on the information which had been available to the party/parties when the case was considered. To apply this ground the student must explain why no reasonable person could have reached the decision that was made.
Preferred outcome(s)	You explain this to be: <i>"As stated in the claims of examination rebuttal report"</i> .

Mrs Wilkins' letter to you dated 29 September 2022 explained that in determining your appeal, the Appeal Filtering Committee had noted / determined that:

- You explained within your appeal that:
 - You were advised that you were not allowed to use/reference 'Newman' in your thesis.
 - You felt that the University had an agenda against you and your ideas.
 - Your supervisory team was changed during your studies.
 - You were originally advised that your Viva would be held online.
 - You were not provided with copies of notes kept during the viva and nor were minutes made available to you. 2
 - You were originally advised that your witness to the Viva could not attend. However you were then allowed to take Miss Barbara Down with you.
 - You felt that there had been inadequate preparation of the Viva by the examiners.
 - You felt that there was a lack of knowledge amongst the lecturers based in the Faculty of Science and Engineering.
 - You feel that the Chairperson was not independent.
 - You were not privy to the Chairperson's notes which were made during the viva.
 - You note that Professor Paul Rees who is your second supervisor is line managed by Professors Huw Summers (Chairperson).
 - You feel that Ms Zoe Perry acts in dishonest manner.
 - You felt that there was a lack of communication from the internal examiner as they did not reply to all emails.
 - You felt that the Chairperson did not fulfil their role.

- *You are dissatisfied that the Report and Results form was not returned to Academic Services immediately.*
- *You disagree with the Report and Results form and addendum form completed by Professor Dhammika Widanalage, Professor Lijie Li and Professor Huw Summers.*
- Whilst noting your disagreement with the examiners' decision relating to your thesis, this decision is a question of academic judgment – *"your appeal was essentially questioning the academic judgment of your examiners"* and this is not grounds for an appeal.
- *That you had made reference with your appeal to the following issues.*
 1. *That you were prevented from using the work of Newman in your research.*
 2. *That you believe the university failed your work to please investors.*
 3. *That there were changes within your supervision team.*
 4. *That you were originally advised that your viva would be held online, however this took place face to face in May 2022.*
 5. *That no minutes of the viva were kept.*
 6. *That you were originally advised that you could not bring a witness into the meeting, however you explain that you were later allowed to do so.*
 7. *That you were not privy to the notes kept by the Chair and Examiners and have still not had sight of these.*
 8. *That you do not believe the examiners read your full submission.*
 9. *That the Examiners were not experienced and portrayed little knowledge of electromagnetism, as-well as showing some very inept basic science understandings' which you believe is demonstrated by the questions asked by the external and internal examiners during the examination*
 10. *That the Chair was not independent and did not fulfil their role.*
 11. *The Chair delayed providing notes.*
 12. *That your second supervisor Professor Paul Rees is line managed by Professor Huw Summers and therefore not independent.*
 13. *You believe Ms Zoe Perry 'lies and is being told what to say by Summers, and she is the go between of deceit, one will notice that lots of the communication in emails is with the Postgraduate research team email address, that all the staff seem to have the privilege of using. This really does show they are all in it together.'*
 14. *The internal examiner failed to reply to your emails.*
 15. *The Report and Results form was not returned to Academic Services immediately.*
 16. *The original Report and Results form was not provided to the student.*
 17. *You believe the findings of the examiners set out in the R and R form are incorrect for the reasons set out by you within your rebuttal document*
- In relation to the issues you had raised numbered above 1-17, it was agreed by the Filtering Committee that those issues were issues of complaint and need to be thoroughly investigated by your School. Therefore pursuant to Regulation 1 of the Academic Appeals procedure, your appeal had been reclassified as a complaint.

I note that Mrs Wilkins' letter to you dated 29 September 2022 asked you for information if you wished to pursue a Stage 2 complaint in relation to the above issues. Subsequently, you confirmed within your email to Mr Novis on 29 October 2022: *"I am not asking for a complaint procedure. The appeal was incorrectly handled and I have requested a final review of the appeal."*

Issues for review

In your final review, you state

“The outcome was based on a false claim and you didn’t follow your own rules. Scientific fraud by examination board, [THIS IS STATED ON THE FRONT COVER OF THE EXAMINATION REBUTTAL REPORT] also, academic misconduct by postgraduate research committee, Misconduct in a public office, pre-meditated procedural fraud with intent to fail, fail to meet gdpr regulations and freedom of information act are concerns.

13. Particular Role of Chair of Examining Board

It is the responsibility of the Chair to ensure that the process is rigorous, fair, reliable and consistent with University regulations and procedures. In the event of a review of an examination decision or an appeal, the Chair is required to provide a written report on the conduct of the examination as necessary.

WHERE WAS THE CHAIR’S written report on the conduct of the examination as necessary?

New evidence became available.”

You submit two Reports you have written with your final review application, namely:

- Report titled “Addendum Report to Examination Rebuttal Report” dated 9 October 2022
- Report titled “Examination Rebuttal Report download from appeal” dated 1 September 2022 – I note that this Report had previously been submitted with your academic appeal.

Reasons for decision

Firstly, I have assessed whether the Filtering Committee had considered your appeal in accordance with the regulations and procedures of the University and whether the decision it reached was reasonable in all the circumstances.

Within your ‘Addendum Report to Examination Rebuttal Report’ you explain:

“Mr Paul Boyle is the Filtering Committee.

The filtering committee is an unknown entity, with data protection protecting the identity of what appears to be fictional people. Therefore, for on-going purposes of this fraud investigation, the filtering committee will be regarded as non-existent...”

However, I note that your appeal was considered and determined by two Student Case Officers within the Student Cases Team within Academic Services, as ‘the Filtering Committee’ and that this accorded with Section 5.2 of the Academic Appeals Procedure, which states:

“Once acknowledged, all appeals shall be initially considered by appropriately trained and experienced staff members of Academic Services, referred to as the Filtering Committee.”

I can confirm that Mr Boyle, the Vice Chancellor, had not received a copy of your academic appeal, nor was he involved in the determination of your appeal.

I have proceeded to consider whether the decisions reached by the Filtering Committee had been reasonable and had accorded with the Academic Appeals Procedure.

Firstly, I have considered the Filtering Committee's finding that your disagreement with the examiners' decision relating to your thesis was a question of academic judgment, that "*your appeal was essentially questioning the academic judgment of your examiners*", and this was not grounds for an appeal. I note that within your 'Examination Rebuttal Report download from appeal' in support of your academic appeal you dispute comments and the decision reached by the examiners during your examination (viva voce). Essentially, you are questioning the examiner's decision to fail your work.

As cited within Mrs Wilkins' letter to you dated 29 September 2022, the Academic Appeal Procedure stipulates (at Sections 2.2 and 5.5):

"The experience and knowledge of a student, the student's performance and whether they have reached the required academic standard, and an awareness of best practice in higher education are combined to allow an examiner to make an academic judgement on the ability of a student. Academic judgement is the decision made by academic staff on the quality of academic work or the criteria being applied to mark work (rather than the administrative marking process). Academic appeals which question this academic judgement shall not be considered."

"The following shall not be considered to satisfy the grounds for appeal:

- Questioning the academic or professional judgement of the examiners.*
- A candidate's disappointment with a result where marks have been accurately recorded, assessment regulations correctly followed and where no evidence of material irregularity exists."*

Although you contend that there was prejudice / bias or inadequate assessment on the part of one or more of the Examiners, there have not been any findings made to date to support this.

In the absence of any findings made to support your contention of prejudice / bias or inadequate assessment, I am satisfied that the Filtering Committee's decision that your appeal had questioned the academic / professional judgement of the examiners to fail your work accords with the Appeals Procedure and is reasonable.

Turning to the decision of the Filtering Committee to reclassify the issues you had raised numbered above 1-17, as issues of complaint, I note that the Academic Appeals procedure stipulates (at Section 1):

"Where an academic appeal also contains within it a complaint and vice versa, Academic Services may reclassify the appeal or complaint (at whatever stage they may have reached) and process it under the most relevant regulation or procedure if this is likely to lead to a more appropriate outcome for the person(s) appealing or complaining. Candidates will be notified in writing (via email) by Academic Services of any reclassification."

I consider that the decision of the Filtering Committee to reclassify issues 1-17 within your appeal as a complaint had accorded with the Academic Appeals Procedure and had been reasonable. The purpose of the Complaints Procedure is to enable issues of complaint to be thoroughly investigated and for findings to be made upon the issues of complaint alleged based on all evidence collated through the investigations. Whilst the Filtering Committee can request information from the relevant Faculty / Chair of Examination Board to assess whether appeal grounds have been met, it does not have the capacity to carry out in depth investigations and determinations of issues of complaint.

Indeed, I note that the issues 1-17 you had raised, would require investigations into:

- the conduct of your supervisors;

- whether the supervision you had received accorded with the University's regulations and Guide to Research Supervision;
- the selection and conduct of the examiners;
- whether the arrangements and conduct of the viva voce examination had accorded with the University's assessment regulations;
- whether the University / examiners had a financial / other agenda to fail your work; and
- the conduct of other staff members.

In the absence of these issues 1-17 having been investigated and determined as being substantiated or not through the complaints process, I am satisfied that the grounds of appeal you relied upon were not supported on the evidence provided to the Filtering Committee, namely:

- *The Examination Board failed to take into account all work submissible and properly submitted for assessment.*
- *Evidence of prejudice or of bias or of inadequate assessment, not of an academic nature, on the part of one or more of the examiners.*
- *Defects or irregularities in the conduct of the examination or in written instructions or in advice relating thereto which are of such a nature as to cause reasonable doubt as to whether the examiners would have reached the same decision had they not occurred.*

In summary, I have satisfied myself that the Filtering Committee considered your appeal in accordance with the relevant Academic Appeal Procedures and that the decision of the Filtering Committee to reject your appeal and to reclassify issues raised as issues of complaint, had accorded with the Academic Appeals Procedure and had been reasonable on the evidence provided to the Filtering Committee.

Option Available to You to Pursue a Formal (Stage 2) Complaint:

Although you have indicated subsequent to the appeal outcome that you do not wish to use the University's Complaints Procedure, I note that within your 'Addendum Report to Examination Rebuttal Report' you raise further issues, which I would also advise would need to be fully investigated in accordance with the University's Complaints Procedure for any findings to be made on these issues, such as (but not limited to):

- That the Vice-Chancellor had a reason and motive to instigate a failure of your thesis and censor you "using all persons and committees identified" because you had challenged the Vice-Chancellor against his Covid-19 response and the University has a vested financial interest in Covid-19 products.
- That the Chairperson, Huw Summers, has motive to instigate a failure of your thesis and censor you because he has a vested interest in vaccine technology.

With regard to the University's Complaints Procedure, I would wish to reassure you that *"Complainants will not suffer any disadvantage or recrimination as the result of making a complaint in good faith"* [as stipulated at Section 2.3 of the Complaints Procedure].

Given that the issues of complaint you have raised include allegations of improper conduct on the part of staff within your School and the Vice-Chancellor, I would also wish to reassure you that, if you decide to pursue a formal complaint, I would arrange for this to be referred to the University's Registrar and Chief Operating Officer (or her nominee) for investigation and determination, in accordance with Section 6.2.3 of the Complaints Procedure, rather than to the Head of your School.

If you do now wish for all / some of your issues of complaint to be investigated and determined in accordance with Section 6.2.3 of the Complaints Procedure, please let me know and I will arrange this. Although you indicate that Mrs Wilkins' list of complaint issues "*misses out the fact that it is intentional fraud with a motive*" and "*is too brief*", I note that she explained within her letter to you that if you wished to pursue a Stage 2 (formal) complaint, you would need to confirm to her "*Whether [her] understanding of the issues identified above (numbered 1- 17) are correct?*" Similarly, if you now wish to pursue a formal complaint you will have opportunity to ask for the summary list of complaint issues to be revised if you consider these incorrect / too brief.

I should point out however that any lengthy delays in complaints being submitted may limit the way in which the University can investigate the complaint or, if relevant, the University's ability to put things right. Also, Section 3.4 of the Complaints Procedure stipulates:

*"The University will not normally consider complaints received more than **3 months** after the event(s), giving rise to the complaint, first arose, unless the complainant shows there to be a compelling reason why the complaint has been submitted late."*

If you do pursue a formal complaint then (provided that your complaint submission is made in accordance with Section 3.4 of the Complaints Procedure) findings will be made on each of the issues of complaint you raise, on the balance of the evidence received. Please note however that the complaint investigation will not be a criminal investigation / prosecution. At the conclusion of the determination of the complaint, you would be provided with a letter/report confirming the investigator's findings on each issue of complaint raised, and reasons for their findings. If any issue(s) of complaint is/are found to be substantiated on the evidence, the complaint response will also detail any offer which the investigator considers to be appropriate to make by way of outcome of the complaint and will take into account the outcomes you are seeking. You would have opportunity to submit a new final review application in relation to the outcome of the complaint.

Final Decision of the University

I am satisfied that the decision reached by the Appeals Filtering Committee to reject your appeal had accorded with the Appeals Procedure and had been reasonable based on the information and evidence you had provided to it.

In addition, you have not presented any new information or evidence in support of your final review application which I consider renders the decision of the Appeals Filtering Committee unreasonable or unsafe.

In conclusion, for the reasons explained above, I do not find that you have provided compelling grounds for re-opening your academic appeal or for challenging the decision of the Filtering Committee. I must, therefore, dismiss your application for final review and your academic decision remains unchanged.

This is the final decision of the University. I appreciate that this decision will be disappointing to you, but I hope you will understand from this letter the reasons for my decision. I have enclosed an information leaflet explaining the support options available to you, for your information.

As explained above, you have the option of pursuing a formal (Stage 2) complaint in relation to issues you have raised within your academic appeal (and final review).

This letter confirms that the internal procedures of this University in relation to your final review application concerning the outcome of the academic appeal have been completed.

Swansea University subscribes to the independent scheme for the review of student complaints. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome you may be able to apply for a review of your case to the Office of the **Independent** Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) provided that the complaint you take to the OIA is eligible under its Rules.

Should you decide to make a complaint to the OIA, your OIA Complaint Form **must be received by the OIA within 12 months** of the date of this letter, that is, it must be received by the OIA **on or before 19 December 2023**.

You can fill in the OIA's complaint form online or download a copy from the OIA website: <http://oiahe.org.uk/making-a-complaint-to-the-oia/oia-complaint-form.aspx>. The OIA also publishes 'An Introduction to the OIA Scheme for Students', which can be downloaded from http://oiahe.org.uk/media/42715/oia_intro_leaflet_16pp.pdf. Alternatively, you can telephone or write to the OIA for a form. **You should send a copy of this letter to the OIA with your OIA Complaint Form.**

Guidance on submitting a complaint to the OIA and the OIA Complaint Form can also be found on the OIA's website: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/making-a-complaint-to-the-oia.aspx>. You may also wish to seek advice from the Students' Union about taking your complaint to the OIA.

Please note that the OIA will normally only review issues that have been dealt with through the provider's internal procedures.

You may wish to seek advice from the Students' Union Advice Centre about taking your complaint to the OIA. The Advice Centre operates as a free service for students and can be contacted via email at: advice@swansea-union.co.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Natalie Wathan
Student Cases Manager

Enc Student Information leaflet

Cc. Appeals Section
Faculty of Science and Engineering