

PRACTICAL WORKBOOK 03

Specialist progression: outcomes, appeal & reapplication guide

Understand the written decision, choose a proportionate next route and convert feedback into evidence for appeal or a stronger reapplication.

Independent educational
resource

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How to use it

Write in this workbook before completing the official form or preparing for the panel. The prompts help organise your own evidence; they are not model answers and do not determine eligibility.

Important

The current official all-Wales policy and application form take precedence. Do not include patient-identifiable information or material you are not authorised to share. Seek individual employment, professional, union or legal advice when needed.

Read the outcome as two findings

Do not reduce the decision to pass or fail. Identify what the panel decided about capability and what it decided about service need.

Formal outcome	Meaning	Immediate focus
Capability met / need met	Progression to Specialist grade.	Confirm effective date and align the job plan without undue delay.
Need met / capability gap	The work is needed, but named capability areas require development.	Secure a supported plan, evidence measures and review date, then reapply.
Capability met / no immediate need	The doctor meets capability requirements, but local need was not identified.	Examine the reasoning and policy workforce response; retain capability evidence and monitor action.
Neither met	The panel was not satisfied on either condition.	Obtain detailed reasons; distinguish appealable error from gaps or changed circumstances.

Acceptance date

Under the May 2025 policy, an accepted regrade is effective from the date the form was submitted. If an appeal is upheld, implementation is backdated to the original submission date. Confirm the current wording.

Audit the written decision

Detailed in-person and written feedback should allow the doctor to understand what was accepted, what was not demonstrated and what happens next.

Question	Decision says	Evidence / policy reference	Clarification needed
Was eligibility accepted?			
Which capabilities were accepted?			
Which capability gaps were identified?			
Was current scope accurately described?			
Was service need accepted?			
How was partial Specialist-level work treated?			
Which evidence was not accepted, and why?			
What support or next action was offered?			
Are reasons internally consistent?			
What are the relevant dates?			

Ask precise questions

If the reasons are vague, ask which policy criterion was not met and what evidence would have been required. This is more useful than asking only why the application failed.

Decide whether an appeal fits

An appeal is not simply a repeat application or a statement that the doctor disagrees. It should identify a disputed process, policy, evidence or reasoning point.

Possible appeal issue	Questions to test it
Procedure	Was a required step, panel safeguard, interview opportunity or timing not followed? Did it materially affect fairness?
Policy interpretation	Was a criterion added, omitted or interpreted inconsistently with the current all-Wales policy?
Material evidence	Was evidence submitted on time apparently overlooked or inaccurately described? Can the exact location be shown?
Reasoning	Are capability and service need conflated? Do conclusions conflict with findings or reasons?
New evidence only	If the case depends on evidence created after the decision, would development and reapplication be more appropriate?

Before appealing

- Check the 20-working-day deadline from the written outcome.
- Obtain the policy version, submitted application, evidence index, outcome and feedback.
- Seek advice from the SAS advocate, union or professional association, and another suitable adviser where needed.
- Choose a small number of material grounds. Avoid personal accusations and unsupported speculation.
- State the remedy sought and why it follows from the policy.

APPEAL FIT CHECK

The exact decision point disputed

—
—

Policy provision or required process

—
—

Evidence showing the issue

—
—

Why it could have affected the outcome

—
—

APPEAL FIT CHECK

The remedy sought

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Build a clear appeal statement

Part	Content
1. Decision	Identify the application, outcome date and exact finding appealed.
2. Ground	State one procedural, policy, evidence or reasoning issue in neutral language.
3. Policy	Quote briefly or cite the relevant current section; do not reproduce the whole policy.
4. Evidence	Point to the submitted document and exact page or section. Distinguish existing from new evidence.
5. Material effect	Explain why correcting the issue could change the finding.
6. Remedy	State the fair outcome requested: reconsideration, correction or another policy-consistent action.

APPEAL GROUND 1

Decision point

Ground and policy reference

Submitted evidence and exact location

Material effect

Remedy

APPEAL GROUND 2

Decision point

-
-

Ground and policy reference

-
-

Submitted evidence and exact location

-
-

Material effect

-
-

Remedy

-
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Written submissions

The May 2025 policy provides for written submissions one week before the appeal hearing. Verify the timetable and submission route in the current policy and correspondence.

Prepare for the appeal hearing

The appeal panel is independent of the original application and includes senior clinical, SAS advocate and senior HR representation under the policy.

- Prepare a short opening that identifies the decision, grounds and remedy.
- Use a paginated bundle and one index. Avoid duplicating the whole portfolio unless instructed.
- For each question, distinguish what was submitted originally from later evidence.
- Keep responses criterion-based and professional, even where relationships have been difficult.
- Arrange permitted assistance or representation and clarify whether any expert evidence is needed.
- Protect patient and colleague confidentiality.

Likely question	Your answer plan
What exact error do you say occurred?	
Where is the policy provision?	
Where was this evidence in the original submission?	
Why was the issue material?	
What outcome do you ask the appeal panel to make?	

Turn capability feedback into development

A genuine gap is not a permanent judgement. Convert every feedback point into a supported, time-limited plan that produces assessable evidence.

Gap / capability	Development activity	Support / owner	Evidence produced	Review date	Complete when

Make the plan operational

- Put agreed opportunities into job planning, appraisal or a documented development arrangement.
- Choose activities that genuinely exercise the capability, not only courses or attendance.
- Identify who will observe, supervise or corroborate the work.
- Define the evidence before starting: outcome, feedback, activity, reflection or sign-off.
- Review progress at set dates and change the plan if the opportunity is not being delivered.
- The policy may provide development support for up to two years where appropriate; check the current terms.

Prepare a stronger reapplication

Reapplication is not an admission that the original work lacked value. It is a new opportunity to show how the stated gaps or changed service circumstances have been addressed.

Previous feedback	What changed	New or clearer evidence	Capability / need mapped	Verified by

Resubmission check

- Address every previous reason directly, including points you believe were misunderstandings.
- Do not merely attach more material; show what it proves.
- Update scope, activity, job plan, appraisal and corroboration.
- Reassess service need rather than assuming it is unchanged.
- Retain the previous decision and show the development trail.
- Ask a trusted reviewer to test whether the new application can be understood without prior knowledge.

Support and key timings

Stage	Policy timing / point	Your record
Manager declines support	Written criterion-focused reasons within five working days under the policy route.	Date requested / received:
Panel identified	Within 20 working days.	Date notified:
Panel consideration	Within 20 working days after panel convened.	Date / follow-up:
Appeal lodged	Within 20 working days of written outcome.	Deadline / submitted:
Appeal submissions	One week before hearing.	Deadline / submitted:
Appeal decision	Within 15 working days after hearing.	Expected / received:

Possible support

- SAS advocate
- SAS tutor and HEIW SAS support
- Trade union or professional association
- Trusted senior colleague or mentor
- Employer HR or medical workforce team
- Appropriate independent employment or legal advice where required

Keep your own record

Retain the submitted application, attachments, confirmation, correspondence, feedback, development plan and deadline calculations. Use secure authorised storage.

Official sources and disclaimer

All-Wales Specialty to Specialist progression policy

<https://nhs-alliance.uksouth01.umbra.co.io/media/ka0nx4bj/policy-for-the-management-of-speciality-to-specialist-career-progression-regrading.pdf>

NHS Wales Employers SAS resources and current forms

<https://thenhsalliance.org/resources/specialty-specialist-and-associate-specialist-sas-doctors-wales>

NHS Employers generic capabilities framework

<https://www.nhsemployers.org/system/files/2022-09/Generic-capabilities-framework-for-new-specialist-grade.pdf>

NHS Employers Specialist grade appointment guidance

<https://www.nhsemployers.org/publications/specialist-grade-appointment-guidance>

HEIW SAS education and development support

<https://heiw.nhs.wales/education-and-training/sas-doctors/>

BMA Cymru Wales SAS Charter

https://www.bma.org.uk/media/7796/bma-2023_11_06-sas-charter-for-wales.pdf

Independent guidance

This guide cannot determine whether an appeal will succeed or whether reapplication is preferable. Deadlines and legal or employment consequences require individual checking. Use the current official policy and obtain appropriate advice.

An unsuccessful application is not presented here as a permanent failure. The useful question is what the reasons show, which route fits, and what evidence or support is needed next.