



SOUTH AFRICAN RESEARCH CHAIRS INITIATIVE

Policy, Guidelines and Criteria for Appeals against Phase 2 review outcomes

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1. POLICY OVERVIEW

1.1 Policy Purpose

This policy is intended to inform National Research Foundation (NRF) staff and panellists on the one hand, and applicants and Higher Education Institutions (hereinafter referred to as “Stakeholders”) on the other hand, of the South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI) Appeals Policy and process within the NRF. The policy is aimed at providing a formal communication channel between Stakeholders and the NRF in resolving matters arising out of decisions taken by the NRF and/or the SARChI Phase 2 Review Panel.

1.2 Policy Scope

This policy describes the policy, process and decisions of appeal that are covered by the Appeals Policy.

1.3 Policy Basis

SARChI Monitoring and Evaluation Framework;

SARChI Review Framework; and

Promotion of Administrative Justice Act, 2000 (Act No. 3 of 2000).

1.4 Policy Statement

The NRF recognizes the right to an appeal of any of its Stakeholders who has a vested interest in the manner in which the SARChI Phase 2 Review Panel conducts its business, and hereby institutes operational procedures to that effect.

1.5 Scope of Appeals

The Appeals Policy is applicable to any disputes resulting out of:

1.5.1. Approval of the nominated candidate for the Research Chair position; or

1.5.2. Approval of the nominated candidate at a Tier 1 or Tier 2 level; or

1.5.3. Approval of the proposed research plan and activities.

2. THE APPEALS COMMITTEE

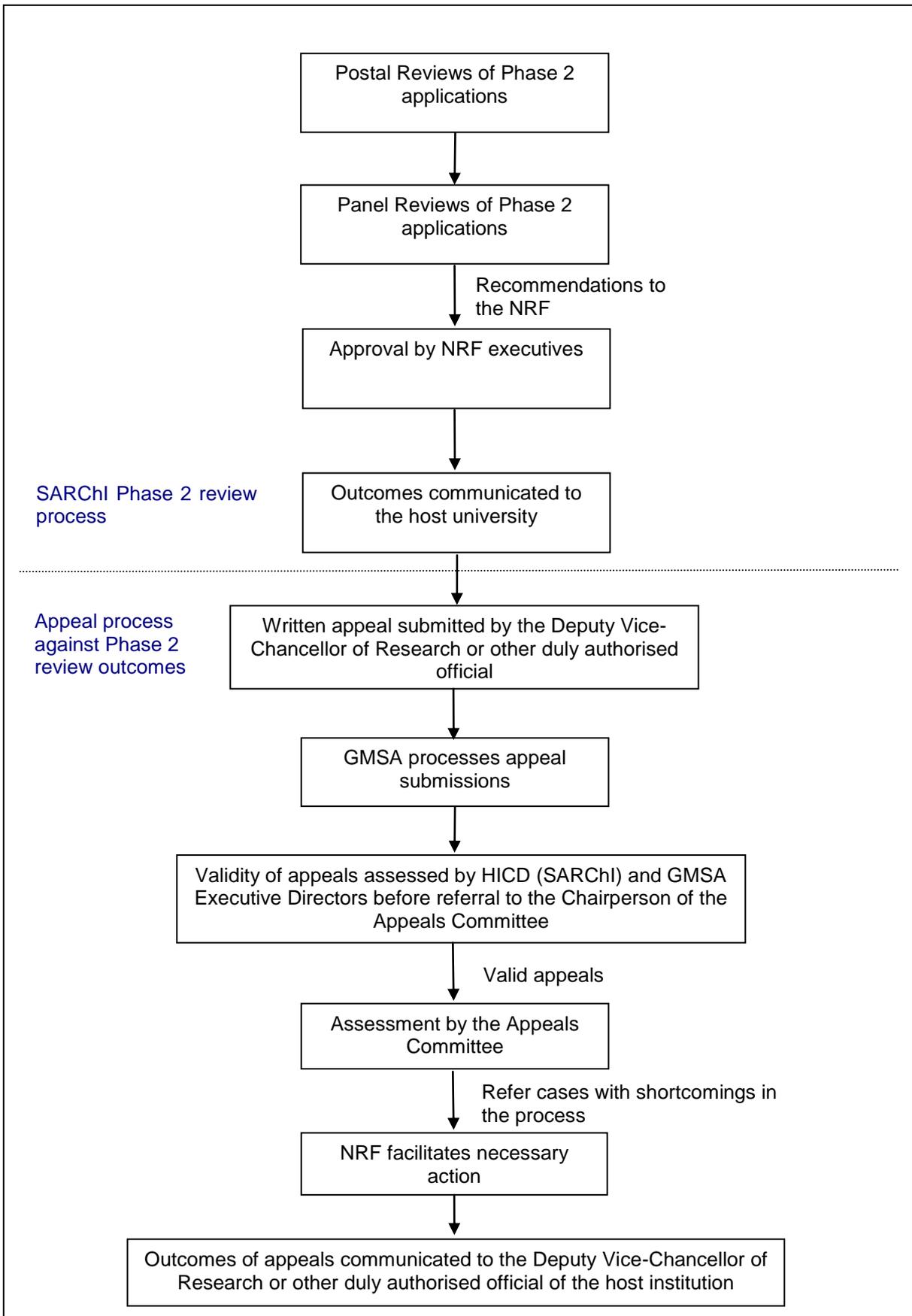
The Appeals Committee is constituted and functions in the manner set out in Appendix 1 hereto.

3. THE APPEALS PROCESS

- 3.1 The relevant authority at an institution may lodge a written appeal if it considers the result of a particular SARChI Phase 2 review outcome to be seriously out of line with the institution's own assessment of the nominated candidate and proposed research plan. Individual nominees have the right to appeal but must do so through the relevant authority at the institution.
- 3.2 Written appeals shall be lodged by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor responsible for management of the Research Chairs or such other duly authorised official of the host institution **within two months** of the date on the outcome letter.
- 3.3 Appeals shall be administratively processed by SARChI staff in the Grants Management and Systems Administration (GMSA) unit of the NRF.
- 3.4 The letter of appeal will be considered only if it:
- 3.4.1. explains the reasons for the appeal; and
 - 3.4.2. is based on one or more of the following issues related to the process of the SARChI Phase 2 peer review:
 - i. The decision taken by the panel/NRF is not congruent with the information before it; or
 - ii. Evidence of bias on the part of one or more peer reviewers; or
 - iii. Conflict of interest on the part of one or more peer reviewers; or
 - iv. Lack of appropriate expertise within the review panel; or
 - v. Factual error(s) made by one or more reviewers that could have altered the outcome of review substantially; or
 - vi. Failure by the peer review panel to follow the prescribed procedures in reaching its decision.

- 3.5 The Appellant and the host institutions must indicate the grounds for appeal in the following areas pertaining to the SARChI Phase 2 review process:
- 3.5.1. Approval of the nominated candidate for the Research Chair position; or
 - 3.5.2. Approval of the nominated candidate at a Tier 1 or Tier 2 level; or
 - 3.5.3. Approval of the proposed research plan and activities.
- 3.6 The letter of appeal based solely on differences of scientific opinion will not be accepted. A letter of appeal that does not meet the above criteria and/or does not include the concurrence of the relevant authority of the host institution will not be considered.
- 3.7 Should the Appellant be required to be present at the Appeals hearing to state his/her case or should any other person be required to provide any information in person or by other means the Appeals Panel may require, the Appellant or such person will be notified thereof by the Appeals Committee timeously.
- 3.8 Unless otherwise decided at the Appeals Committee's discretion, the costs associated with the attendance of the Appellant or the witness (as the case may be), will be for the Appellant's account.
- 3.9 The Appeals Process will follow the flow procedure set out in Figure 1 below.
- 3.10 The appeal will be heard by the Appeals Committee, whose decision will be final.

Figure 1. SARChI Phase 2 review and appeal processes against Phase 2 review outcomes



4. INFORMATION CONSIDERED IN THE APPEALS PROCESS

- 4.1 Valid appeals take the following into account when adjudicated by the Appeals Committee:
- 4.1.1. the SARChI Phase 2 proposal submitted by the host institution;
 - 4.1.2. written reports by postal reviewers;
 - 4.1.3. written reports by the lead discussants in the Review Panel;
 - 4.1.4. meeting records as well as recommendations given by the Review Panel and decisions taken by the NRF executives;
 - 4.1.5. written report of the assessor for the Review Panel;
 - 4.1.6. the letter of appeal submitted by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor responsible for management of Research Chairs or such other duly authorised official of the host institution; and
 - 4.1.7. any further documentation for clarification of issues.
- 4.2 Information coming to light subsequent to the submission of the original application will not be considered by the Appeals Committee. Accordingly, only those documents on which the original decision was based will be considered by the Appeals Committee.
- 4.3 No new documentation on research outputs achieved subsequent to the submission of the Phase 2 proposal for review may be submitted. Any scholarly achievements of the applicant postdating the submission will not be taken into account in an appeal.
- 4.4 Other reports received from reviewers, e.g., those solicited by the nominated candidate and/or host university to support the appeal, will not be considered by the Appeals Committee.

5. FORMAT OF THE LETTER OF APPEAL

- 5.1 Letters of appeal must be addressed to the Executive Director: GMSA and should not exceed two pages (including attachments).
- 5.2 The letter of appeal must be signed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor responsible for Research Chairs or such other duly authorised official at the host institution.
- 5.3 All appeals should be submitted using the template marked as Appendix 4.

6. CRITERIA FOR VALID APPEALS

6.1 The following guidelines will assist host institutions when considering lodging an appeal.

6.1.1. *Was the result of the review seriously out of line with the institution's assessment?*

- i. "Seriously out of line" means that the nominated candidate and/or proposal fully meet the criteria in the SARChI Phase 2 review scorecard according to the host institution.

6.1.2. *What are the main reasons for the appeal?*

- i. Institutions should carefully consider this question. An appeal should not be pursued if it is, for example:-
- based on any new research outputs, or
 - on the feedback in the form of recommendations and commendations that has been supplied. The supplied feedback is not the overriding determinant in the review outcome; it simply reflects the comments identified by the review panel that could possibly be useful to the applicant.

6.1.3. *Are the criteria for the review of SARChI Phase 2 applications well understood?*

- i. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor or any other duly authorised official of the host institution responsible for management of Research Chairs should

make sure that they understand the criteria for the review of SARChI Phase 2 applications (see Appendix 3) before lodging an appeal.

6.1.4. *Is the criteria for SARChI Tier levels understood?*

- i. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor or any other duly authorised official of the host institution responsible for Research Chairs should make sure that they understand the criteria for SARChI Tier 1 and Tier 2 Chairs and the distinction between the two (see Appendix 2) before lodging an appeal.

THE APPEALS COMMITTEE

1. Composition

1.1 Members of the Appeals Committee shall be:

- i. Individuals with substantial research and/or research management experience and have an understanding of the South African Higher Education System and NSI;
- ii. the NRF Deputy-CEO: RISA (ex officio);
- iii. One or more additional members who are or have been researchers/scholars of stature;
- iv. One member who has considerable experience with the SARChI review processes and has not been involved in the case being appealed;
- v. One individual with sound knowledge and experience in monitoring and evaluation in Science, Engineering and Technology (SET).

1.2 The following NRF staff members shall be in attendance to provide administrative and logistical support to the Appeals Committee:

- i. Manager: GMSA Grants Director;
- ii. SARChI Programme Director; and
- iii. Secretariat: Staff from GMSA.

2. Chairperson

The Chairperson of the Appeals Committee shall be appointed from the ranks of established and reputable researchers currently or previously holding senior leadership positions in institutions within the Higher Education System and the National System of Innovation and is thoroughly familiar with the SARChI review processes.

3. Appointment

- 3.1 The Chairperson will be appointed by the NRF Deputy CEO: RISA for a period of three years with the possibility of reappointment for a further maximum period of three consecutive years;
- 3.2 Other members will be appointed by the NRF Deputy-CEO: RISA in consultation with the Chairperson of the Appeals Committee.

4. Terms of Reference

4.1 The mandate of the Appeals Committee is:

- i. To consider appeals lodged against outcomes of the SARChI Phase 2 review;
- ii. To review the correctness and completeness of the process followed in specific applications against which an appeal has been lodged;
- iii. To review the and pronounce upon the fairness and objectivity in the interpretation of reviewers' reports;
- iv. To consider whether or not the criteria for SARChI Phase 2 review was interpreted correctly;
- v. To make a pronouncement on the fairness and correctness of the review outcome that is being appealed against;
- vi. To refer the case back to the GMSA and HICD Executive Directors and to point out specific shortcomings in the process that warrant review in cases where the Appeals Committee is at variance with outcomes of the Phase 2 review; andvii. Based on the evidence presented and its analysis thereof against the principles set out in this policy, the Appeals Committee will make a final and binding decision.

4.2 The Appeals Committee shall further have the power and authority:

- i. to call upon any person (including NRF staff and review panellist) to attend in person at an appeal hearing and/or furnish it with any document or material that the Appeals Committee considers necessary I the execution of its mandate;
- ii. determine who should bear the costs associated with the attendance of any person at the appeal hearing;

Table1. Criteria for SARChI Tier 1 and Tier 2 Chairs

Tier I Research Chairs	Tier 2 Research Chairs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be appointed at the level of a full Professor benchmarked nationally; • Should be an outstanding and innovative researcher whose accomplishments have made a major impact in their field; • Should be recognised internationally as an undisputed leader in their field and/or have received substantial international recognition for their research contributions; • Should have a superior record in attracting and supervising post graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, taking into account the practices of the field; and • Should reside full time in South Africa for the duration of the Research Chair award. Candidates from abroad, including African scholars and South Africans in the diaspora, that are willing to spend at least spend 50% of their time within South Africa are eligible for consideration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be appointed at the level of an Associate Professor or full Professor benchmarked nationally; • Should be an established researcher, generally under the age of 40 (forty) years, with a strong research, innovation and human capital development output trajectory; • Should have the potential to achieve substantial international recognition for their research contributions in the next five to ten years; • Should have demonstrated the ability to attract and successfully supervise postgraduate students and postdoctoral fellows; and • Should reside full-time in South Africa for the duration of the Research Chair award. Candidates from abroad, including African scholars and South Africans in the diaspora, who are generally under the age of 40 (forty) years, are eligible for consideration.

Table 2. Scorecard for peer review of SARChI Phase 2 proposals

SCORE	5	4	3	2	1
DESCRIPTOR	Internationally leading	Internationally competitive, leading nationally	Leading nationally, not internationally competitive yet	Nationally competitive	Nationally uncompetitive
REVIEW CATEGORY					
Track record of nominated candidate:	The candidate is outstanding and has a track record that is world leading in terms of the quality and impact of research outputs and, training and mentoring of postgraduate students and researchers.	The candidate is excellent and has a track record that is internationally competitive in terms of the quality and impact of research outputs and, training and mentoring of postgraduate students and researchers.	The candidate has a track record that is at the forefront nationally and is becoming internationally competitive in terms of the quality and impact of research outputs and, training and mentoring of postgraduate students and researchers.	The candidate has a track record that is satisfactory but is not at the leading edge in terms of the quality and impact of research outputs and, training and mentoring of postgraduate students and researchers.	The candidate has a track record that is unsatisfactory in terms of the quality and impact of research outputs and, training and mentoring of postgraduate students and researchers.
Research outputs					
Impact of research					
National and international standing					
Masters and doctoral postgraduate training					
Training of emerging researchers, e.g., postdoctoral fellows and academic staff	The candidate meets the requirements for appointment as a Tier 1 SARChI Chair.	The candidate meets the requirements for appointment as a Tier 1 SARChI Chair.	The candidate meets the requirements for	The candidate does not meet the requirements for appointment as a	The candidate does not meet the requirements for appointment as a SARChI Chair

			appointment as a Tier 2 SARChI Chair.	SARChI Chair	
Scientific merit	The proposed research programme is highly innovative with novel design and methodologies.	The proposed research programme is innovative with novel design and robust methodologies.	The proposed research programme is original with robust design and methodologies.	The proposed research programme is original with sound methodologies but has a limited number of flaws or omissions that require significant revision.	The proposed research programme has major omissions or conceptual flaws and requires comprehensive revision.
Impact	The research programme addresses a crucial knowledge gap and will be an internationally unique resource in the discipline. The research outputs have a high potential for scientific innovations or for social or economic benefits.	The research programme addresses a crucial knowledge gap and will be a unique resource in South Africa. The research outputs have a high potential for scientific innovations or for social or economic benefits.	The research programme addresses a knowledge gap in South Africa and will be a useful resource. The research outputs have a reasonable potential for scientific innovations or for social or economic benefits.	The research programme addresses worthwhile scientific questions. The research outputs have a moderate potential for scientific innovations or for social or economic benefits.	The research programme addresses potentially worthwhile scientific questions but requires comprehensive revision. There is a low probability for producing scientific innovations or for social or economic benefits.
Human resource development	The proposed human resource	The proposed human resource	The proposed human resource	The proposed human resource	The proposed human resource

	development plan for training masters and doctoral students and postdoctoral fellows is realistic and achievable within the timeframe. There are low probability risks that can be managed and that present negligible consequences for the Chair programme.	development plan for training masters and doctoral students and postdoctoral fellows is realistic and achievable within the timeframe. There are low probability risks that can be managed and that present moderate consequences for the Chair programme.	development plan for training masters and doctoral students and postdoctoral fellows is realistic although there are some potential risks that may present significant consequences for the Chair programme, that the Chair is advised to bear in mind.	development plan for training masters and doctoral students and postdoctoral fellows is satisfactory although there are some potential risks that may present high consequences, for the Chair programme, that the Chair must address.	development plan for training masters and doctoral students and postdoctoral fellows is unsatisfactory and requires comprehensive revision.
Collaboration	The proposed national and international collaborations, partnerships and networks to be formed are outstanding and represents world leading standards. Collaborators and partners have been identified to develop	The proposed national and international collaborations, partnerships and networks to be formed are comprehensive. Some collaborators and partners have already been identified to develop and maintain	The proposed national and international collaborations, partnerships and networks to be formed are good although there are some omissions that may present significant consequences for the programme, that the	The proposed collaborations, partnerships and networks to be formed are satisfactory although there are some omissions that may present high consequences, for the programme, that the Chair must address.	The proposed collaborations, partnerships and networks to be formed are unsatisfactory and require major revision.

	and maintain excellence in this research area.	excellence in this research area.	Chair is advised to bear in mind.		
Succession plan	The proposed succession plan for developing and mentoring emerging researchers and new leadership is realistic and achievable within the timeframe. There are low probability risks that can be managed and that present negligible consequences for the continuity of the Chair programme.	The proposed succession plan for developing and mentoring emerging researchers and new leadership is realistic and achievable within the timeframe. There are low probability risks that can be managed and that present moderate consequences for the continuity of the Chair programme.	The proposed succession plan for developing and mentoring emerging researchers and new leadership is realistic although there are some potential risks that may present significant consequences for the continuity of the Chair programme, that the Chair is advised to bear in mind.	The proposed succession plan for developing and mentoring emerging researchers and new leadership is satisfactory although there are some potential risks that may present high consequences, for the continuity of the Chair programme that the Chair must address.	The proposed succession plan for developing and mentoring emerging researchers and new leadership is unsatisfactory and requires comprehensive revision.
Research activity plan	The proposed activity plan is outstanding and represents world leading standards. It is realistic and achievable within the five-year timeframe.	The proposed activity plan is comprehensive. It is realistic and achievable within the five-year timeframe.	The proposed activity plan is good although there are some potential risks, that may present significant consequences for the programme, that the Chair is advised to	The proposed activity plan is satisfactory although there are some potential risks that may present high consequences, for the programme, that the Chair must address.	The proposed activity plan is unsatisfactory and requires comprehensive revision.

			bear in mind.		
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Budget	The resource allocation of the SARChI grant is reasonable. There are other sources of research funding available. Overall there is the potential for a high return on investment.	The resource allocation of the SARChI grant is reasonable. There are other sources of research funding available. Overall there is the potential for significant return on investment.	The resource allocation of the SARChI grant is reasonable. There are other potential sources of research funding. Overall there is the potential for return on investment.	The budget section has a limited number of omissions or flaws that require significant revision.	The budget section has major omissions or flaws and requires comprehensive revision.
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SOUTH AFRICAN RESEARCH CHAIRS INITIATIVE

LETTER OF APPEAL AGAINST PHASE 2 REVIEW OUTCOMES

Instructions

- All appeals against SARChI Phase 2 outcomes must be submitted using this template
- Any supporting documents may be submitted as attachments to this letter
- The signatory of the letters of appeal shall be the Deputy Vice-Chancellor responsible for managing Research Chairs or a duly authorised official at the host institution. Duly signed letters must be submitted in to the NRF in two formats:
 - A electronic copy in PDF format to Dr Bernard Nthambeleni, the Executive Director: GMSA at bernard@nrf.ac.za; and
 - A signed hard copy, to be mailed to SARChI, c/o Ms Marjorie Julies, PO Box 2600, Pretoria, 0001 or hand delivered to the NRF Offices, Brummeria
- The appeal must be lodged **within two months** of the date on the outcome letter

Details of Research Chairs

Name of Research Chair	
Name of Incumbent	
Host-university	

Grounds for Appeal

Tick next your basis for lodging an appeal against the SARChI Phase 2 review outcomes

Basis of Appeal	
Approval of the nominated candidate for the Research Chair position	
Approval of the nominated candidate at a Tier 1 or Tier 2 level	
Approval of the proposed research plan and activities	

1. Motivation for the Appeal

Please provide a motivation supporting the appeal of the SARChI Phase 2 outcomes

(Supporting documents may be submitted as an attachment to this form)

2. Approval by Deputy Vice-Chancellor responsible for managing Research Chairs or a duly authorised official at the host institution

Name:		
Designation:		
Institution:		
Signature:		Date