

# **Analysis of Case Processing Performance in the Court of Appeals**

**September Term, 2020**



Administrative Office of the Courts

December 2021

## Introduction

The Court of Appeals adopted case time standards effective for its 2013 September Term (the period spanning September 1, 2013 through August 31, 2014). The case processing goals adopted by the Court provide that all cases argued<sup>a</sup> (or filed, depending on the appeal type) during a Term are to be decided before the Term's completion. This goal is similar to that of the Supreme Court of the United States and is an expansion of the Judiciary's commitment, which began in the trial courts, to ensure timely adjudication for all those with business before the courts. Case time standards are central to the Maryland Judiciary's mission to provide fair, efficient, and effective justice for all.

This report contains performance results against the Court's case time standards for September Term, 2020. During approximately four and a half months of the September Term, 2020, from November 30, 2020 to March 15, 2021, the Judiciary operated under Phase II guidelines as outlined in the December 22, 2020 [Seventh Administrative Order](#). Under Phase II operational guidelines, the Court of Appeals remained fully operational, with all matters heard remotely.

## Methodology

Case processing performance in the Court of Appeals is based on all cases argued (or filed for certain types of appeals) during the Court's September Term, 2020.<sup>b</sup> The Court's case time standards begin at the date of *argument* for appeals on its Regular Docket, Certified Questions of Law, and Attorney Grievance cases, and at *filing* for Extraordinary Writs and Bar Admissions. See [Appendix](#) for the complete table of case time standards in the Court of Appeals.

Prior to the Court of Appeals' transition to the Maryland Electronic Courts (MDEC) case management system, research staff would review the Court's docket sheets at the end of the term. With the Court of Appeals transition to MDEC, research staff pull data directly from the case management system and then enter the pertinent data fields from all cases filed or argued during the September 2020 Term, including case number, caption (case title), argument date, filing date, and disposition date (opinion, dismissal, or other order/disposition) into data analysis software. Data quality checks were performed comparing the data entry to the docket sheets and to the electronic record in the Maryland Electronic Courts (MDEC) system.

Research staff calculated the number and percentage of appeals disposed within standard as a proportion of the total number of cases argued or filed (depending on the appeal type) during the Court's September Term, 2020. Average and median case processing times for all disposed cases were also computed.

## Performance Results

The Court of Appeals achieved the case time standard goal in each of the appeal types during the September Term, 2020. See [Table 1](#) and [Table 2](#). Sixty-four Regular Docket cases were disposed within the Term, averaging 130 days from argument to disposition. The next largest number of cases was Extraordinary Writs, in which 17 filed in the September Term, 2020 reached disposition within the Term, taking an average of 57 days from filing to disposition.

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<sup>a</sup> The Court of Appeals typically hears cases from September through June.

<sup>b</sup> The Court disposed of a number of cases during the period examined (September 1, 2020 through August 31, 2021) that did not contain an argument. These cases were *not* subject to this analysis.

All seven Attorney Grievance cases that contained arguments were decided within the Term, taking an average of 108 days from argument to disposition. There were three Bar Admission cases filed in the Court in the September Term, 2020; each was disposed within that Term, taking an average of 97 days from filing to disposition. For the September 2020 Term, there were two Certified Question of Law argued, and they took an average of 132 days to dispose.

*Table 1. Cases Disposed Within Time Standard Goals, Court of Appeals, September Term, 2020*

Case Type	Time Standard	Judiciary Goal	September Term, 2020 Cases <sup>1,2</sup>	Number of Cases Disposed Within Standard	% Within Standard
<b>Regular Docket</b>	Argument to Disposition	Cases argued must be decided before the end of the term (100%)	64	64	<b>100%</b>
<b>Certified Questions of Law</b>			2	2	<b>100%</b>
<b>Attorney Grievances</b>			7	7	<b>100%</b>
<b>Extraordinary Writs</b>	Filing to Disposition	Cases filed must be decided before the end of the term (100%)	17	17	<b>100%</b>
<b>Bar Admissions</b>			3	3	<b>100%</b>

<sup>1</sup> The number of September Term, 2020 cases represent either the number of cases (1) argued or (2) filed, depending on the appeal type.

*Table 2. Overall Average & Median Case Processing Times, Court of Appeals, September Term, 2020*

Case Type	Time Standard	September Term, 2020 Average & Median Case Times (in days)	
		Average	Median
<b>Regular Docket</b>	Argument to Disposition Cases argued must be decided before the end of the term	130	93
<b>Certified Questions of Law</b>		132	132
<b>Attorney Grievances</b>		108	112
<b>Extraordinary Writs</b>	Filing to Disposition Cases filed must be decided before the end of the term	57	37
<b>Bar Admissions</b>		97	112

**Appendix: Court of Appeals Case Time Standards**

<b>Proceeding / Appeal Type</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Case Time Start</b>	<b>Stay Begins (Suspends the standard)</b>	<b>Stay Ends</b>	<b>Case Time Stop</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Regular Docket	Cases argued in term must be decided before end of term	Argument	None	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disposition</li> <li>• Opinion Filed</li> <li>• Dismissed</li> <li>• Order</li> </ul>	New Policy beginning with the 2013 Term (September 1, 2013 – August 31, 2014)
Extraordinary Writs	Cases must be decided before end of term	Filing	None	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disposition</li> <li>• Opinion Filed</li> <li>• Dismissed</li> <li>• Order</li> </ul>	
Bar Admissions	Cases must be decided before end of term	Filing	None	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disposition</li> <li>• Opinion Filed</li> <li>• Dismissed</li> <li>• Order</li> </ul>	
Certified Questions of Law	Cases argued in term must be decided before end of term	Argument	None	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disposition</li> <li>• Opinion Filed</li> <li>• Dismissed</li> <li>• Order</li> </ul>	
Attorney Grievances	Cases argued in term must be decided before end of term	Argument	None	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disposition</li> <li>• Opinion Filed</li> <li>• Dismissed</li> <li>• Order</li> </ul>	