

Recruitment and Admissions Office

APPLICANT COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURE

Introduction

1.1 The University of Bath is committed to fair, consistent and transparent admissions processes. Staff aim to work efficiently and courteously, operating under the principles and procedures set out in the [University Policy on Student Recruitment, Selection and Admissions](#) and our commitment to [equality and diversity](#) in education, employment and service provision.

1.2 This policy exists for those circumstances in which an applicant is dissatisfied with the conduct of our selection process or with its outcome. It sets out the basis on which the University will consider complaints about its admissions procedures and clarifies what applicants may do if they wish to request a review of a decision.

1.3 A separate [complaints and appeals policy](#) exists for students who are studying / who have studied at the University of Bath, relating to matters such as:

- a University service - academic or non-academic
- information about academic programmes
- teaching or supervision
- facilities
- the behaviour of a member of staff
- the behaviour of another student
- academic appeals.

1.4 In addition, a separate complaints policy exist in relation to [accommodation provision](#) at the University of Bath.

Staff Training

2.1 The University ensures that staff involved with admissions, interviews, decision-making etc are professional and receive appropriate training and development in admissions and related areas.

2.2 University staff participate in national student admission agendas through membership of various professional bodies, working parties and conferences. This facilitates the dissemination of good admissions practice across the University. Ongoing staff development is offered to staff involved in admissions in order to ensure compliance with regulations and consistency of procedures. For example these training sessions include workshops about recruitment strategy, qualifications, interviews and entry requirements as well as technical training for staff involved in recording offers. In addition, the University holds annual workshops for staff involved in Clearing and other specific events that occur during the applications cycle. External training is given via the UCAS, Higher Education in Admissions conference sessions,

advice from the Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA) team and sharing best practice with other HEI's.

Definitions and Scope

3.1 A **complaint** is a specific concern related to a procedural error, irregularity or maladministration in the admissions procedures or policies.

For example, a complaint may concern the processes or information provided regarding admissions decisions, fee waivers, bursaries or scholarship schemes, or the behaviour of a staff member involved in one of these. Complaints about external bodies (such as [UCAS](#), [Research Councils](#) or other funding bodies) cannot be accepted and must be submitted to the relevant organisation.

3.2 An **appeal** is a request for a formal review of an admissions decision, or the wording/terms/conditions of an offer, or a pre-entry fee status decision, and asks the University to check that it was made fairly on the basis of all the evidence originally submitted.

3.3 The policy applies to all modes and levels of study (full, part-time and distance learning) for all credit-bearing awards and to admissions processes for visiting and exchange students.

3.4 Complaints must be made by the applicant to the University. If a complaint is received from a parent, teacher, other adviser or relevant person, we must have written permission from the applicant to discuss their application with this third party. Any applicant may use the procedure, whether they have applied via UCAS or direct to the University.

3.5 Anonymous complaints will not be dealt with under this procedure as all investigations should be evidence-based. If a member of staff receives an anonymous complaint, they will be expected to seek advice from their line manager as to how the complaint should be dealt with.

3.6 Applicants and any individual against whom complaints are made may expect complaints to be dealt with confidentially and that their privacy will be respected. However, it may be necessary to disclose information to others in order to deal with the complaint and in these circumstances the parties concerned will be informed of such disclosure.

3.7 Applicants may not always agree with the decision the University reaches on their [fees status](#) (home or overseas for fees purposes). This policy also covers disputes about this issue. Those wishing to request a review of their fees status must do so as soon as possible and supply any further documentation to support their review. Further details are available from the Admissions Manager (Postgraduate & International Liaison), Kim Spencer, email: K.Spencer@bath.ac.uk.

3.8 There is no right of appeal against the University's decision in relation to your eligibility for financial support based on your widening participation or your academic profile. However, you may make a complaint if you believe that you have not been considered for an award because of a procedural error, or you believe that there has been some other procedural problem with our allocating and awarding system.

3.8 Applicants are encouraged to seek advice via the informal process in the first instance.

General Principles

4.1 The University will ensure that all complaints and appeals are investigated thoroughly, promptly and with due regard to the confidentiality of all parties.

4.2 Formal complaints or appeals should be submitted as soon as an applicant believes there is a concern. This should normally be within 28 days of any specific alleged incident or action.

4.3 No applicant will be disadvantaged in any way because they have exercised their rights under this policy.

4.5 If a complaint is upheld, the University will take appropriate action or provide an appropriate remedy. If a complaint is not upheld, the reasons for this will be communicated to the applicant in a timely and accessible manner.

4.6 The University will not usually consider new information about an applicant's qualifications or circumstances if this should have been made available as part of the original application. New information may be accepted in cases such as where a third party has made an error affecting the University's judgement of the applicant's suitability, where there has been a misinterpretation of the information/data contained within the original application or where medical or other mitigating circumstances can be shown to have affected the quality of the original application.

The University reserves the right to decide whether new evidence can be considered on these grounds.

4.7 If an appeal is successful, the University will look again at its original admissions, fee status or financial support decision. These decisions may change as a result but this is not guaranteed. In the case of an admissions decision, applicants may be required to submit additional application materials as part of an appeal. This may include producing written work such as an essay. In these cases, appropriate timescales will be agreed with the applicant. If a selection decision is changed as a result of an appeal, all reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that the relevant application can proceed for the academic year in question. If this is not possible, deferred entry, or an application for this, may be facilitated. If an appeal does not change a selection decision, the reasons for this will be communicated to the applicant in a timely and accessible manner.

4.8 The University will not enter into discussions or disputes on matters it regards as those of academic judgement. Admissions staff will make every effort to explain how selection criteria work, and why they are appropriate for a particular programme, but the University will not review an admissions decision simply because an applicant disagrees with or wishes to challenge the criteria set. Further information relating to our selection process can be found in our [Student Recruitment, Selection and Admissions policy](#).

Procedures

The University operates a three-stage process for complaints and appeals:

Stage One – Informal

5.1 Applicants may express concerns about any aspect of the admissions, fee waiver, bursary or scholarship scheme process on an informal basis either to a member of staff in an academic department, Faculty or School (such as an admissions tutor or interviewer), or to a member of the University Admissions Team. Staff will make every reasonable effort to explain procedures, allay concerns or otherwise respond to the

issue raised. These discussions may be by telephone, email or other contact and, as appropriate to an informal process, a written record will not necessarily be kept.

In the first instance:

- Undergraduate applicants should ideally contact the [Admissions Team](#)
- Postgraduate applicants should ideally contact their [Graduate School](#)
- Exchange students should contact the [International Mobility Team](#)

5.2 Applicants concerned about the reason for an unsuccessful application or financial support decision should, before appealing a decision, obtain feedback from the appropriate department/Faculty/School or from the University Admissions Office about the reasons for the decision. Feedback is provided as set out in the Policy on Recruitment, Selection and Student Admissions. An appeal may be submitted subsequently if the applicant believes the decision contained any element of unfairness or error.

Stage Two – Formal

5.3 Complaints and appeals must be made in writing (by dated letter) or email to the Director of Recruitment and Admissions (RAO). They must provide:

- applicant name, address and application/person ID
- programme title
- specific details of the complaint/appeal with any supporting evidence, documents or correspondence
- a statement of the action/remedy sought if the complaint/appeal is successful

5.4 The Director of RAO has expertise in all admissions matters but is not normally involved in individual decision-making. They will therefore review all cases independently. They will determine the nature of the investigation required in each case and is responsible for securing departmental/Faculty/School cooperation with agreement on outcomes. Given that most applicants are not present on campus, face-to-face meetings will not normally be expected as part of any investigation.

5.5 The Director of RAO will acknowledge all formal complaints/appeals within 5 working days of receipt and is responsible for communicating a timescale for any investigation to the applicant.

5.6 A full written statement of the outcome of any investigation will be provided to the applicant. This will normally be within 4 weeks of a final decision.

Stage Three – Review by the University Secretary

5.7 If an applicant is not satisfied with the decision taken in respect of a complaint/appeal under Stage 2 above, he or she may request that the case is looked at by the University Secretary. Such a request should state the grounds for appeal, which should meet one of the following criteria:

- that there were procedural irregularities in the investigation of the complaint by the Director of RAO
- that the finding of the investigation was inappropriate in light of the evidence.

5.8 Requests must be made by dated letter or email to the University Secretary within 14 days of receipt of the outcome of a Stage 2 complaint or appeal.

5.9 The University Secretary is responsible for establishing whether the Stage 2 investigation was conducted fairly and that all decisions relating to it were reasonable and justified in the light of the evidence. New evidence will not normally be permitted

at this stage. The University Secretary's decision on whether any new information may be submitted is final. The University Secretary may call upon the assistance and expertise of other University staff members to inform his judgement but is not required to do so. Their decision on a complaint/appeal is final and there is no further right of or process for appeal within the University.

Retention of records

6.1 All records are held in line with the University's retention of records policy.

<http://www.bath.ac.uk/library/services/records/policy-index.html>

Recording of complaints and appeals will be held by the Director of RAO. They will carry out statistical reporting of these to the University Secretary and Deputy Vice Chancellor and Provost on an annual basis.

Contact Information

Further information on these procedures and submitted complaints and appeals may be sent to:

Mr Mike Nicholson
Director of Recruitment and Admissions
Wessex House
University of Bath
Bath
BA2 7AY
Email: M.Nicholson@bath.ac.uk

In the rare circumstance where the Director of RAO has been involved in the informal stage of a complaint or appeal then a stage 2 complaint or appeal may be submitted to:

Professor Bernie Morley
Deputy Vice Chancellor and Provost
Vice-Chancellor's Office
The University of Bath
BA2 7AY
E-mail: B.J.Morley@bath.ac.uk

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor will then determine an appropriate authority to investigate the complaint or appeal.

Stage 3 Complaints/Appeals should be made to:

Mr Mark Humphriss
University Secretary
University Secretary's Office
University of Bath
BA2 7AY
Email: M.G.W.Humphriss@bath.ac.uk

DOCUMENT CONTROL INFORMATION

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