

COMPLAINTS POLICY FOR APPLICANTS

1. Principles

The University is committed to equality of opportunity for all applicants, and the University's admissions policies, procedures and processes are designed to ensure that all applicants are considered fairly, consistently and in accordance with professional standards. The Undergraduate and Graduate Admissions Offices strive to provide a high quality experience for all applicants throughout the admissions cycle; admission processes and procedures are regularly updated to be in line with guidance from SPA (Supporting Professionalism in Admissions), CMA advice in relation to Higher Education, the QAA and other external guidance and legislation.

In the event that an applicant is dissatisfied with any aspect of the University's admissions process, they are encouraged to raise this matter informally with the Head of Undergraduate Admissions (for undergraduate applications) or the Head of Graduate Admissions (for postgraduate applications) in the first instance. The University aims to resolve the majority of applicant complaints informally, where this is possible, for example by providing detailed feedback to applicants about how a selection decision was reached. If the applicant is still not satisfied with the response at this stage, formal complaints about the admissions process can be submitted to the Director of Communications and External Relations.

Applicants will not experience prejudice, discrimination or disadvantage, as a result of submitting a complaint.

2. Definitions

- A **complaint** is a specific query or concern relating to a procedural irregularity in the University's admissions processes, procedures or policies;
- An **appeal** is a request for a formal review of an admissions/selection decision. There is no right of appeal against the University's selection decision, regardless of whether the decision was based on academic or non-academic criteria.

3. Who is covered by the policy?

This policy can be used by any undergraduate or postgraduate applicant who has applied to the University via UCAS or directly, and is dissatisfied with the way their application has been handled.

Complaints can be submitted by the applicant, or by third parties, providing the written consent of the applicant has been provided as part of the submission. Complaints received anonymously will not normally be considered, except where there are compelling reasons, supported by evidence, for the matter to be investigated.

Students already registered at the University are not eligible to use the Complaints Policy for Applicants, but are able to use the University's Student Concerns and Complaints procedure at: www.essex.ac.uk/about/governance/policies/complaints.aspx

4. Informal resolution – initial stage

Any informal complaints should be made in writing to the Head of Undergraduate Admissions (for complaints relating to undergraduate applications) or the Head of Graduate Admissions (for complaints relating to postgraduate applications) in the first instance; complaints should be submitted within 14 days of the University's decision, for example to reject an application or not to confirm an applicant's place. The relevant Head of Admissions will respond in

writing, within 14 working days of receiving the complaint (and up to 28 days during the peak periods of the admissions cycle in August and September). Informal complaints or requests for feedback should be sent to the Head of Undergraduate Admissions (for complaints relating to undergraduate applications) or the Head of Graduate Admissions (for complaints relating to postgraduate applications) at:

By email:

admit@essex.ac.uk (undergraduate applicants)

pgquery@essex.ac.uk (postgraduate applicants)

By post:

FAO Head of Undergraduate Admissions (for undergraduate applicants)

FAO Head of Graduate Admissions (for postgraduate applicants)

Undergraduate/Graduate Admissions Office

University of Essex

Wivenhoe Park

Colchester

Essex, CO4 3SQ

5. Formal resolution – second stage

Where possible, the University aims to resolve the majority of applicant complaints informally. If the applicant is still not satisfied with the response at the initial/informal stage, formal complaints about the admissions process, procedure or policy can be submitted to the Director of Communications and External Relations.

The complaint should be submitted in writing, within 14 days of the outcome of the informal resolution/feedback stage. Applicants are asked to complete the 'Applicant formal complaint form' at www.essex.ac.uk/quality/university_policies/Admissions/default.asp and should aim to provide clear and explicit information in each section. The complaint will be acknowledged within five working days after the University receives the formal complaint form. The Director of Communications and External Relations will then undertake an investigation of the complaint, and will respond to the complaint in writing within 14 working days from the initial receipt of the form.

Complaints will normally be considered to be valid only where there is evidence of procedural irregularity, including failure to adhere to the Undergraduate or Graduate Admissions Policy. The decision of the Director of Communications and External Relations at the formal complaints stage will be final.

6. Complaints made directly to the Vice-Chancellor and/or the Registrar and Secretary

All applicant complaints are dealt with by the relevant Admissions Office or by the Director of Communications and External Relations. If a complaint relating to the admissions process, procedure or policy is made directly to the Vice-Chancellor, the Registrar and Secretary or other senior officer of the University, it will be passed to the Head of Undergraduate or Graduate Admissions in the first instance, who will ensure that it is dealt with according to this policy.

7. Confidentiality and data protection

Complaints will be handled confidentially and applicants' privacy will be respected. Staff dealing with applicant complaints will operate according to the University's policies on data protection, as explained in the University's Admissions Policies (section relating to 'Data protection and communication with third parties').