

## APPLICANT APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

All policies referred to in this document are available on the University of Suffolk website under [Our Policies and Procedures](#)

### Introduction

1. The University of Suffolk is committed to operating a fair, consistent and transparent admissions process, in accordance with the [Admissions Policy](#). We recognise, however, that there may be occasions where applicants feel that they have cause for appeal or complaint. This policy sets out the circumstances under which the University will consider appeals or complaints about its admissions processes and clarifies the procedure under which these will be reviewed.
2. This policy is for the use of applicants to the University of Suffolk only and may be used by any individual who has submitted a formal application (either via UCAS, directly to the University, or with the support of an agent) for full-time or part-time study at undergraduate or postgraduate taught level at the University or one of its partner institutions.
3. Students already enrolled on a programme of study with the University of Suffolk should refer to the [Student Complaints Procedure](#).
4. Appeals or complaints should be completed and submitted to the University by the applicants themselves; submissions from other parties will not be considered unless the University has received written and signed authorisation from the applicant that the third party acts on their behalf. If the applicant is under 18 years of age, a parent or legal guardian may act as their representative.

### Definitions and scope

5. An **appeal** is defined as a request for a formal review of the outcome of an admissions decision, either at offer stage or at confirmation of results. An appeal can be submitted under the following grounds:
  - a. Procedural irregularity, where the process leading to the admissions decision was not conducted in accordance with the University's Admissions Policy;
  - b. Emergence of new information which may have affected the initial decision had it been available at the time the decision was made;
  - c. Where there is evidence of prejudice or bias in the decision-making process.
6. An appeal cannot be submitted by:

- a. Applicants who accept a conditional offer, but who subsequently fail to meet the condition(s) of the offer and are therefore unsuccessful at confirmation stage;
  - b. Applicants seeking a reconsideration of the academic or professional judgement by Admissions Tutors or Admissions staff other than where there has been a significant administrative or procedural error(s) as outlined in paragraph 5;
  - c. Applicants who receive an offer, but who subsequently decline that offer, or who are deemed to have declined an offer by failure to respond to a set deadline imposed by UCAS and/or clearly set out by the University.
7. A **complaint** is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction about:
- a. the University's admissions procedures or policies which have been used to reach an admissions decision;
  - b. the actions, lack of actions, or behaviour of a member of staff involved in the admissions decision, including an agent working on behalf of the University or one of its partner institutions.
8. An **agent** is a person or organisation that deals directly with prospective applicants on behalf of education providers, providing a range of services such as education counselling, course matching and assistance with academic and visa applications.
9. A complaint cannot be considered if it solely constitutes a challenge to the academic criteria used to consider applications for a programme of study.

### **Feedback**

10. It is usually expected that an applicant who is unhappy with an admissions decision will first request feedback from the appropriate admissions tutor in order to determine the rationale behind the decision. Further information regarding feedback requests can be found in the [Admissions Policy](#). An appeal or complaint may be submitted subsequently if the applicant believes that the decision falls within the parameters set out in paragraph 5 (for appeals) or paragraph 7 (for complaints).

### **Submitting a Safeguarding, Suitability and Criminal Convictions Appeal**

11. The process of appealing against a decision of the Safeguarding, Suitability and Criminal Convictions panel is set out in the Admissions Policy. Any appeal must be submitted using the Safeguarding, Suitability and Criminal Convictions Appeal Form sent to the Admissions Office within ten working days of receipt of the Panel's decision. Support is available to applicants from the Student Life team (email [studentlife@uos.ac.uk](mailto:studentlife@uos.ac.uk) or telephone +44(0)1473 338833)

## Procedure

### Informal Stage

12. In the first instance, an informal appeal or complaint should be submitted via email to the Admissions Office ([admissions@uos.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@uos.ac.uk)), usually within **10 working days** of the original admissions decision or incident being complained about, outlining the reason for the appeal or complaint.

13. The Admissions Officer, or their nominated representative, will investigate the issue raised and endeavour to provide a response within **15 working days** either in writing or over the telephone.

### Formal Stage

14. If the applicant is unhappy with the outcome at the informal stage, a formal stage appeal or complaint may be submitted using the [Applicant Appeals and Complaints form](#) within **10 working days** of receipt of the response to the informal appeal or complaint.

15. The grounds for complaint or appeal should fall within the parameters set out in paragraphs 5 to 7 as appropriate.

16. The appeal or complaint should clearly outline the issue being appealed or complained about and the resolution being sought.

17. Upon receipt, the appeal or complaint will be acknowledged within **5 working days** and reviewed by the Admissions Manager (or nominated representative), who will undertake an investigation, taking into consideration all relevant information relating to the case. The Admissions Manager may contact relevant parties (which may include academic colleagues, members of the Admissions Team or the applicant) for further information or clarification.

18. Following their investigation, the Admissions Manager will provide a written response, normally within **15 working days** of the acknowledgement email. The response will include the decision reached with regard to the appeal or complaint, the reasons for the decision, and, if the appeal or complaint is upheld, indication of any specific action to be taken by way of remedy and for the prevention of a recurrence of the original cause of complaint if relevant.

### Review Stage

19. If the applicant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal stage, and believes that their appeal or complaint has not been handled properly or fairly in accordance with procedure, the applicant may request a review by writing to the Director of External Relations or nominee within **10 working days** of receipt of the formal stage outcome.
20. The grounds for a review stage appeal or complaint are limited to:
- the identification of procedural irregularity during the formal stage;
  - provision of new material evidence alongside a valid reason for why such evidence was not previously submitted; or
  - consideration of whether the outcome reached was reasonable in all circumstances.
21. When submitting a review request, the applicant should submit the following information:
- Full Name
  - University of Suffolk Applicant ID or UCAS Personal ID
  - The grounds under which a review is sought (as defined in paragraph 18)
  - An indication of the resolution sought
  - A copy of the written outcome from the formal stage.
22. The Director of Marketing, Communications and International or nominee will review all details relating to the case and undertake an appropriate investigation.
23. Following their investigation, a written response will be provided to the applicant, normally within **20 working days** of receipt of the review request.
24. The decision reached by the Director of Marketing, Communications and International or nominee is final. Once this decision has been communicated to the applicant, no further consideration of the appeal or complaint will be made by the University and no further appeal is permitted.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

25. The University of Suffolk will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the Applicant Appeals and Complaints Procedure and reflect upon the outcomes for enhancement purposes. A report will be submitted annually to the Equality and Diversity Committee, Quality Committee and Senate. The report will include equality monitoring data.

26. Where complaints are received regarding agents, outcomes will be used to inform annual performance reviews with the agent, or equivalent reviews undertaken by partner organisations.

### **Advice and guidance**

27. Advice and guidance on the procedure for making an appeal or complaint about admissions processes and decisions can be obtained from the Admissions Team (email [admissions@uos.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@uos.ac.uk) or telephone +44(0)1473 338348).

28. This procedure should be read in conjunction with the [Free Speech Code of Practice](#).