

## **Admissions Complaints and Appeals Procedure**

### **1. General Principles**

#### **Time Limits:**

1.1 Complaints received more than one month after the event in question shall not normally be investigated. Appeals received more than one month after the date of notifying an applicant of a decision shall not normally be investigated. Complaints or appeals received after the normal time limit will be referred to the Academic Registrar who shall determine whether circumstances exist which make it reasonable for the complainant or appellant not to have made a submission within the normal time limit.

1.2 Complaints or appeals will be investigated as quickly as possible and will normally be determined within 30 calendar days from receipt of the complaint or appeal, but circumstances may require a longer period. The Complainant shall be informed of the reasons should a longer period of investigation be required.

#### **Anonymous Complaints:**

1.3 Complaints made anonymously will not normally be investigated. Exceptionally, however, an anonymous complaint may be considered when there is a compelling case supported by additional evidence.

#### **How to submit and responsibilities of complainant or appellant:**

1.4 Complaints or appeals shall be made in writing via email to the Undergraduate or Postgraduate Head of Admissions, (hereafter referred to as the 'Admissions Officer'). They shall include the complainant's full name and UCAS Personal ID number (if applicable), and as much detail as possible about the grounds for complaint or appeal, including relevant names and dates. The complaint or appeal shall also include confirmation that the complainant or appellant consents to the matter being investigated with all relevant parties and to any information disclosed in the complaint or appeal being shared with those relevant parties.

#### **Monitoring:**

1.5 An annual evaluation is undertaken by the Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions to ensure that any necessary corrective actions and procedural changes are in place. The Admissions Officer shall keep a record of complaints and appeals received and investigated under this procedure.

#### **Confidentiality:**

1.6 All information obtained within the process of consideration of the complaint or appeal will be held in accordance with Data Protection legislation and the University's Privacy Notice. <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/data.protection/>

1.7 All information which a complainant or appellant provides to the Admissions Officer, Complaints or Appeals Officer or any other officers dealing with the matter during an investigation shall be treated as confidential, subject to the need to share it with relevant parties during the investigation

and subject to any requirements of the Data Protection Act. It is equally important that the Complainant also respects the need for confidentiality throughout the complaints process.

1.8 Applicants should avoid disclosing unnecessary personal information (e.g. medical conditions etc.) in their complaint unless they feel that it is relevant to the issues raised. Applicants must also avoid disclosing personal data of another person/s in their complaint or appeal unless they have been given permission by them to do so, and this is also submitted.

1.9 Relevant members of staff involved or investigated in the complaint or appeal will be informed of the outcome, in confidence. Senior members of staff may also receive a copy of the outcome, in confidence in order for the University to learn / act on issues identified from admissions complaints and appeals.

1.10 No applicant who complains about or appeals against the decision of an admissions selector shall be disadvantaged in any way in any future applications to the University as a result of the complaint or appeal.

## **2. Complaints Procedure**

2.1 The procedure described below will be followed in cases where an undergraduate or postgraduate applicant to the University wishes to complain about the administration of the University's admissions policies and procedures. It shall not be used where a complaint relates to the service or procedures of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), in which case UCAS' own complaints procedure should be followed.

### **I) Initial Investigation**

- a) The Admissions Officer<sup>1</sup> shall, wherever possible, attempt to resolve complaints quickly and informally the Admissions Officer shall determine whether the complaint discloses sufficient grounds related to the administration of the University's admissions policies and procedures.
- b) If it is decided that the complaint does not disclose sufficient grounds, the Admissions Officer shall explain the reason(s) for this decision in writing to the complainant.
- c) If it is decided that the complaint does disclose sufficient grounds, the Admissions Officer shall investigate it, consulting all relevant parties.
  - i) Once all the necessary information has been gathered, the Admissions Officer shall judge whether the complaint may be resolved at that point by conveying information gathered, or whether the matter needs to be considered at a higher level.
  - ii) If it is judged that a resolution can be achieved, the Admissions Officer shall put the response in writing to the complainant. This will include a summary of the reasons for the decision.
  - iii) If it is judged that the matter needs to be referred for consideration at a higher level, the Admissions Officer shall refer the matter to the Dean of Education of a Faculty other than the one to which the applicant has applied. The Dean shall act as Complaints Officer.

---

<sup>1</sup> If the Admissions Officer is the object of a complaint, the Academic Registrar shall make arrangements for a senior officer from another part of the University to undertake the Admissions Officer's role in relation to the complaint

- d) A complaint which is upheld will not lead to a change to an academic decision but to the University to review and implement actions to address the issues raised

## **II) Investigation by the Complaints Officer**

- a) The Complaints Officer shall be given administrative support by an administrative officer nominated by the Academic Registrar.
- b) The Complaints Officer shall investigate the complaint and may seek any further information that is deemed necessary to come to a decision.
- c) A record of all proceedings shall be maintained by the nominated administrative officer.
- d) The Complaints Officer shall determine the outcome of the complaint.
- e) The outcome may include:
  - (i) dismissal of the complaint or
  - (ii) finding the complaint justified
- f) If the outcome is (e ii) above, the Complaints Officer shall determine the University response.
- g) As soon as possible after completion of the investigation, the nominated administrative officer shall notify the complainant in writing of the outcome and consequential action, if any, to be taken. This will include a summary of the reasons for the decision.
- h) A complaint which is upheld will not lead to a change to an academic decision but to the University to review and implement actions to address the issues raised

## **3. Appeals Procedure**

3.1 Appeals against the decisions of admissions selectors may only be made on the following grounds:

- a) Failure to apply the relevant policy or procedures
- b) Bias or Prejudice.

Challenges to the academic judgement of admissions selectors may not form the basis of an admissible appeal.

### **I) Initial Investigation**

- a) Applicants will be expected to have requested and received feedback before making any appeal against the decision received.
- b) The Admissions Officer shall determine whether the appeal discloses a *prima facie* case on the specified grounds.
- c) If it is decided that it does not disclose a *prima facie* case, the Admissions Officer shall explain the reason(s) for this decision in writing to the appellant.
- d) If it is decided that the appeal does disclose a *prima facie* case on the specified grounds, the Admissions Officer shall investigate it, consulting all relevant parties.
  - i) Once all the necessary information has been gathered, the Admissions Officer shall judge whether the appeal may be resolved at that point by conveying information gathered, or whether the matter needs to be considered at a higher level.
  - ii) If it is judged that a resolution can be achieved, the Admissions Officer shall put the response in writing to the appellant.
  - iii) If it is judged that the matter needs to be referred for consideration at a higher level, the Admissions Officer shall refer the matter to the relevant Faculty Education Dean other than the one to which the applicant has applied. The Dean shall act as Appeals Officer.

### **II) Investigation by the Appeals Officer**

- a) The Appeals Officer shall be given administrative support by an administrative officer

nominated by the Academic Registrar.

- b) The Appeals Officer shall investigate the appeal and may seek any further information that is deemed necessary to come to a decision.
- c) A record of all proceedings shall be maintained by the nominated administrative officer.
- d) Exceptionally, and, where deemed appropriate by the Appeals Officer, the appellant and any other relevant parties may be invited to a hearing. Any person invited to attend a hearing by the Appeals Officer may be accompanied by a friend or representative. The nominated administrative officer shall provide the appellant, as soon as is reasonably practicable, with relevant case papers. The conduct of the hearing shall be for the Appeals Officer to decide.
- e) The Appeals Officer shall determine the outcome of the appeal.
- f) The outcome may include:
  - (i) dismissal of the appeal or
  - (ii) finding the appeal justified
- g) If the outcome is (f ii) above, the Appeals Officer shall determine the University response.
- h) As soon as possible after completion of the investigation, the nominated administrative officer shall notify the appellant in writing of the outcome and consequential action, if any, to be taken. This will include a summary of reasons for the decision.

#### **4. Application for Review of Outcome**

- a) An application for review of the outcome of a complaint or appeal shall be admissible only on the ground of procedural irregularity on the part of the Admissions Officer or Complaints or Appeals Officer.
- b) A person wishing to apply for a review of the outcome of a complaint or appeal shall do so by application to the Academic Registrar within 14 days of notification of the outcome of the investigation: ([lucy.backhurst@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:lucy.backhurst@newcastle.ac.uk)). The Academic Registrar may dismiss an application which does not provide a *prima facie* case on the specified ground.
- c) If the Academic Registrar, having reviewed the original complaint or appeal file and sought any evidence as appears to be necessary to reach a decision, considers there to be grounds for review, the matter shall be referred to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education).
- d) The Pro-Vice-Chancellor shall determine the outcome of the review which shall be final. There shall be no further opportunities for review within the University.
- e) Consideration of an application for review of the outcome of a complaint or appeal will normally be determined within 30 calendar days from receipt of the request for review but circumstances may require a longer period. The complainant shall be informed of the reasons should a longer period of investigation be required.

#### **Queries about this Policy**

Any queries about the policy and procedures set out in this document should be directed to:

Undergraduate – [ug-admissions@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:ug-admissions@newcastle.ac.uk)

Postgraduate – [pg-admissions@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:pg-admissions@newcastle.ac.uk)

**Complaints or Appeal should be sent by email (see 1.4) to:**

Head of Undergraduate Admissions – [dawn.bell@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:dawn.bell@newcastle.ac.uk)

Head of Postgraduate Admissions – [hung.truong@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:hung.truong@newcastle.ac.uk)

#### **Document Control:**

Date approved:	
----------------	--

Approving body:	Student Recruitment Management Group
Version:	Version 1
Previous review date:	March 2024
Next review date:	February 2025
Related Policies:	Criminal Convictions Policy and Procedure Under 18s Policy and Procedure MBBS Admissions Policy School of Dental Sciences Admissions Policy Contextual Admissions Deposit Refund Policy English Language Policy
Related Procedure and Guidance:	Criminal Convictions Declaration Process Under 18 Process Good Practice Applicant Feedback Procedure Admissions Fraud Procedure: detection, reporting and response
Lead contact:	Annie Shuker, Deputy Director Recruitment and Admissions