



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Student
Services
Department.

Appeals and Complaints Procedure for Applicants

1 General Principles

- 1.1 The University is committed to operating a high quality admissions service which is fair, efficient and transparent.
- 1.2 We aim to handle appeals and complaints in a way that:
 - encourages informal resolution;
 - is fair and efficient;
 - is sensitive to, and understanding of, the concerns of applicants;
 - allows for the greatest degree of confidentiality, involving only those who need to be part of the resolution process.
- 1.3 Appeals and complaints are handled separately from the application for entry. An appeal or complaint made in good faith will not prejudice current or future applications. It is important to note that most appeals and complaints are resolved amicably and without recourse to the formal stage of the procedure.
- 1.5 Appeals and complaints may be submitted by an individual but not by a third party (school, parent or other representative), unless the third party has the explicit consent from the applicant to act on their behalf.

2 Scope of the Procedure

- 2.1 This procedure is relevant to applicants applying for entry to courses where the admissions regulations and selection procedures are the sole responsibility of the University.

Appeals

- 2.2 For the purposes of this procedure, an appeal is defined as a request by an unsuccessful applicant for a formal review of the outcome of an admissions decision.¹
- 2.3 You may appeal a decision by the University not to offer you a place if you feel concerned that the University did not take account of all the information provided in the application form, or that it did not appropriately consider your application.

Complaints

- 2.4 For the purposes of this procedure, a complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction about:

¹ Supporting Professionalism in Admissions, *Statement of Good Practice on Feedback*
(http://www.spa.ac.uk/good-practice/documents/Feedback_Good_Practice_Statement_Final.doc)

- the University and/or departmental admissions policies and procedures which have been used to reach a selection decision;
- the means by which a selection decision has been reached;
- the actions, or the lack of actions, by the University or its staff.

2.5 You can make a complaint about:

- any part of the admissions process where you are concerned that University and/or departmental admissions principles and procedures have been inconsistently or incorrectly applied;
- the behaviour of one or more University staff at any stage of the admissions process.

2.6 You may not make a complaint about a selection decision (normally a decision to reject the application) based on the academic or professional judgement of University staff about your suitability for entry to a particular course.

2.7 The Appeals and Complaints Procedure cannot be used where the decision not to offer a place is the result of:

- a failure on your part to fulfill academic or non-academic requirements for admission (for example a satisfactory CRB Enhanced Disclosure or medical clearance);
- the decision to accept or reject your application has been taken on the basis of feedback from a third party, such as a provider of a work or training placement which forms an integral part of the course to which you have applied.

3 The Procedure

3.1 Feedback – Stage 1

We receive many more applications than we have places. Entry to some courses is particularly competitive and applicants can feel disappointed if they do not receive an offer of a place. In the first instance, you should seek feedback from the Admissions Tutor for your chosen course or from the Admissions Service. Please see the University's Undergraduate Admissions Policy (<http://www.shef.ac.uk/undergraduate/policies/admissions.html>) for further information on feedback.

3.2 Formal Appeal/Complaint – Stage 2

3.2.1 If you are not satisfied with the feedback provided by the University, you can appeal our decision or submit a complaint to the Head of Admissions (contact details given below), stating that you are doing so under Stage 2 of the University's Admissions Appeals and Complaints Procedure.

3.2.2 We will acknowledge receipt of your request for an appeal or complaint within 3 working days.

Appeals

3.2.3 If you request a review of our decision through an appeal, the process will be led by the Head of Admissions, or nominee, who will review the available application and decision-making information with the relevant Head of Department and departmental admissions staff. Once the review is complete, we will write to you to inform you of the outcome.

3.2.4 We will aim to respond within 15 working days of receipt of the appeal. If a delay is anticipated in responding within the above timescale, we will inform you in writing of the progress being made towards the consideration of your appeal.

3.2.5 This decision will be final.

Complaints

3.2.6 If you submit a complaint, the Head of Admissions, or nominee, will investigate it, seeking relevant information from the academic department or other parts of the University as appropriate, and from yourself if necessary.

3.2.7 In making a complaint, you should provide the following information:

- the nature of, and reasons for, your complaint, giving as much detail as possible;
- any steps you have already taken to resolve the matter, if appropriate;
- details of any response you have received to date and a statement as to why the response(s) is not satisfactory;
- an indication of the outcome you are seeking.

3.2.8 We will aim to respond within 15 working days of receipt of the complaint. If a delay is anticipated in responding within the above timescale, we will inform you in writing of the progress being made towards the consideration of your complaint.

3.2.9 If your complaint is upheld, the University will take such reasonable action as is appropriate and you will be informed of the outcome. If your complaint is not upheld, we will communicate the reasons for the decision to you in writing.

3.3 Final Review (Complaints Only) – Stage 3

3.3.1 Following Stage 2, if you are not satisfied with the decision taken in respect of your complaint, you can request a Case Review by writing to the Head of Admissions stating that you are requesting a Case Review under Stage 3 of this procedure. We will acknowledge receipt of your request in writing within 3 working days.

3.3.2 Your request will be considered by a Pro Vice Chancellor who may decide:

- to carry out the Case Review;
- or that there are insufficient grounds to take further action, thus concluding the consideration of the matter under this procedure.

3.3.3 A Case Review will be undertaken by a panel of members of staff not previously involved in the processing of the complaint, and will include:

- a Pro Vice Chancellor, or their nominee;
- a member of academic staff with admissions responsibilities from outside the academic department involved;
- another member of University staff.

3.3.4 You will be informed of the date of the review and the membership of the Case Review panel in advance of the panel meeting. You will be informed of the outcome of the review in writing. If the complaint is upheld, we will inform you of the action to be taken to resolve the matter. If it is not upheld, we will communicate the reasons for the decision to you in writing.

3.3.5 The decision of the Case Review panel will be final.

4 Monitoring, Review and Approval of the Appeals and Complaints Procedure

- 4.1 Without breaching confidentiality, all formal appeals and complaints submitted under the University's Appeals and Complaints Procedure are monitored, as is the action taken to rectify any practice deemed inappropriate.
- 4.2 The University's Appeals and Complaints Procedure is reviewed annually.
- 4.3 This Appeals and Complaints Procedure was approved by the University's Admissions and Outreach Sub-Committee in January 2009.

5 Contact Information

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