UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

Complaints from Applicants Procedure

Version number 3.0	**Status (draft/final)** Final	**Owning Directorate / Faculty** Plymouth Global
Summary of any amendments: Annual Review		
Document objectives: To describe how applicants may complain, to whom and within what timeframes if they are dissatisfied with aspects of their application journey		
Intended Recipients: • Individuals who have submitted an application to study at the University of Plymouth, it is not intended for applicants for courses offered at partner institutions, except where selection is the responsibility of the University of Plymouth • University of Plymouth staff		
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Contact for review:		Head of Enquiries & Admissions Service

Version	Date	Author(s)	Replaces	Comment
1.0	September 2023	Donna Strickland, Academic Policy and Quality Manager	N/A	New policy
2.0	May 2025	Jayne Hines Head of Enquiries & Admissions Service		Update to include complaints regarding agents
3.0	October 2026	Jayne Hines Head of Enquiries & Admissions Service	2.0	Annual Review Change of escalation contact from Director of Plymouth Global to Chief Marketing Officer Change of title from: Student Recruitment and Admissions to Enquiries & Admissions Service

1. Introduction

The University is committed to ensuring that we provide a high quality and fair admissions procedure in line with our Admissions Policy. We recognise, however, that there may be occasions when applicants will feel that they have cause for complaint. This Complaints Procedure sets out how applicants may seek to have complaints addressed.

2. General Principles

2.1. We will seek to ensure that all complaints are treated seriously, positively, and constructively. We will also seek to ensure that complaints are dealt with promptly, with fairness and consistency. If a complaint is found to be justified, we will take such action or provide such remedy as may be appropriate and will do so promptly. If a complaint is rejected, the reasons for the decision will be communicated to the Applicant.

2.2. Applicants will not suffer any disadvantage or recrimination as the result of making a complaint in good faith.

2.3. Applicants, and those 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 to deal with the complaint; in these circumstances, the parties concerned will be informed of such disclosure. The Applicant is referred to our Applicant Privacy Notice for further information relating to the processing of data by the University

2.4. Complaints may be made by individual applicants or by groups of applicants. A complaint may not normally be submitted by a third party on the Applicant's behalf except in exceptional circumstances upon receipt by us of the Applicant's signed written authorisation for that third party to act on their behalf. All complaints must specify the applicant's full name, UCAS number and/or Plymouth ID number, and an address for correspondence. Anonymous complaints will not normally be accepted.

2.5. This Complaints Procedure may be invoked by any individual who has submitted a formal application for full-time or part-time study at the University of Plymouth (either via UCAS or direct to the University). It applies to applicants for all levels of study. It does not apply to applicants for courses offered at partner institutions, except where selection for the full course is the responsibility of the University of Plymouth.

3. Definitions

3.1. Applicants' complaints may take one of three forms:

3.1.1. Reconsideration of admission decisions

This would be a request for the decision on an application to be reconsidered, this may be termed an 'appeal'. The Applicant's preferred outcome in such instances is likely to be that their application is reconsidered with a view to changing the original decision. Such requests may be accepted only where there are genuine grounds, with evidence, for doing so and not simply because the Applicant is unhappy with the outcome of the application or the conditions of the offer. There is no provision for appeal against the academic or professional judgement of admissions tutors.

Should an Applicant's actual performance exceed predicted performance this does not form grounds for appeal against the initial decision.

Grounds for submitting a complaint/appeal in such circumstances would relate to instances where the Applicant believes, and has evidence to support a claim, that:

- The University has not followed its procedures,
- There is evidence of bias or prejudice in the decision-making process
- The Applicant has new information which, for good reason, could not have been made available at the time of initial application

3.1.2. Complaints relating to provision or process

Complaints about the way in which an application has been handled which might relate, for example, to the services provided by us. The Applicant's desired outcome in such instances is likely to be recognition of error with an apology and a commitment to change procedures.

3.1.3. Complaints about fee assessment

This would involve complaints about the way the assessment has been handled and/or an appeal against the outcome of a fee assessment. As above, an appeal will be considered only where the student has evidence that the decision has not been taken with due regard to the current regulations, and not simply whether the Applicant disagrees with the decision reached.

3.1.4 Complaints about an agent

This would involve complaints about something an agent did, or failed to do, that had a negative impact on an applicant, or how their application was subsequently handled by us.

4. The procedure

Stage 1 – Informal complaint

4.1. Most complaints can be resolved satisfactorily on an informal basis. If possible, the Applicant should first raise their complaint in writing with the Admissions Operations Manager and UCAS Specialist stating the remedy they are seeking. The complaint must normally be made within four weeks of the actions (or lack of actions) which prompted the complaint. The member of staff receiving the informal complaint shall respond normally within ten working days of the complaint being made and shall retain a note of the substance of the complaint and any action taken. If it proves impossible to respond fully within ten working days, the Applicant shall be informed of the timescale for the receipt of a full response.

4.2. If the complaint is an appeal against an admissions decision, the Admissions Operations Manager and UCAS Specialist must satisfy themselves that the application was considered fairly and that the decision did comply with the relevant admissions criteria. Provided that they are satisfied that this is the case, a standard response explaining the correct admissions criteria has been applied is acceptable

at this stage. The response should also draw the Applicant's attention to the next stage of this complaints procedure in case they wish to pursue the matter further.

4.3. Similarly, in the case of complaints relating to an initial fee assessment, the Admissions Operations Manager and UCAS specialist (or their nominee if they have themselves been involved in the initial fee classification) is satisfied that the relevant UK legislation relating to the determination of fee classifications has been properly and accurately applied (and which can be viewed online at www.ukcisa.org.uk), a standard response explaining these regulations is acceptable at this stage.

4.4. In the case of a complaint about an agent, this will be referred to the Agent Liaison Officer in the first instance who will then arrange for the agent to be contacted and for an investigation to be carried out. They will then provide a response to the applicant and the response will also draw the applicant's attention to the next stage of this complaints procedure in case they wish to pursue the matter further.

Stage 2 – Formal complaint

4.5. If the Applicant is dissatisfied with the response they receive at Stage 1 of this process they should submit, within ten working days of receiving the response, a written complaint to the Head of Enquiries & Admissions Service. The written complaint should set out briefly: the nature of the complaint; the informal steps already taken; details of the Stage 1 response received; and a statement as to why the Applicant remains dissatisfied and the remedy they are seeking.

4.6. The Head of Enquiries & Admissions Service shall acknowledge receipt of a complaint in writing within five working days. They will investigate the complaint and will submit a written response to the Applicant, normally within 15 working days of receipt of the complaint. If it should prove impossible to respond fully within 15 working days, the Applicant shall be informed in writing of the timescale for receipt of a full response

4.7. If the complaint takes the form of an appeal against an admissions decision, Head of Enquiries & Admissions Service will arrange for the application to be reconsidered against the normal selection criteria.

Stage 3 – Final complaint

4.8. If an applicant is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 2 they may proceed to Stage 3 by writing to the Chief Marketing Officer enclosing copies of the correspondence exchanged during the earlier stages of the procedure within 10 working days of the date of the Stage 2 response. A complaint at stage 3 will only be accepted if the applicant can demonstrate:

- that they have new information which was for good reason not available at Stage 2 and this information is essential to the complaint; or
- that the University failed to follow its procedures at Stage 2 and this has significantly disadvantaged them

4.9. For stage 3 complaints relating to fee assessment decisions, the Chief Marketing Officer will review the decision made against the relevant UK legislation relating to the determination of fee classifications (which can be viewed online at www.ukcisa.org.uk) and that it has been properly and accurately applied. The

decision of the Chief Marketing Officer following completion of this review shall be considered as final

For stage 3 complaints relating to admissions decisions, the Chief Marketing Officer shall acknowledge in writing receipt of the complaint within five working days.

4.10. The Chief Marketing Officer will carry out an investigation and shall decide whether the complaint is justified or rejected and will determine what action, if any, will be taken. This will be communicated in writing to the Applicant, normally within 30 working days of the date of acknowledging receipt of the formal complaint. Applicants are requested not to contact the University until this period has expired.

4.11. The decision of the Chief Marketing Officer following completion of this process will be considered as final.

5. Further information

Further information about, or clarification of, this procedure is available from the Enquiries & Admissions Service, Plymouth Global, University of Plymouth, Drake Circus, Plymouth, PL4 8AA