

Complaints and Appeals Policy for Applicants

1. Introduction

The University of Essex Online (UoEO) welcomes applications from all candidates with the potential to succeed in higher education. Our admissions procedures are designed to ensure that all applicants are considered wholly based on their aptitudes, skills and abilities in relation to their chosen programme of study. We are committed to operating procedures which are fair, efficient and transparent. Our procedures are regularly reviewed, considering Consumer Markets Authority (CMA) guidance in relation to higher education, Quality Assurance Agency guidance and other external legislation.

1. We recognise, however, that there may be occasions when applicants may feel that we have not adhered to our policies and the high standards that we set ourselves. This Complaints and Appeals policy describes the process to follow if an applicant believes that they have grounds for an appeal or complaint.
2. UoEO have Admissions policies which outline the general principles and procedures that we apply to admissions:
 - **Admissions Policy**
 - **Readmission Policy**
3. In the event that an applicant is dissatisfied with any aspect of the admissions process, they are encouraged to raise the matter informally with an Admissions Team Leader in the first instance. We aim to resolve most 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, a formal complaint through this procedure can be submitted to the Head of Admissions.

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

2. Definitions

- A **complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction with admissions procedures and their implementation or about actions or lack of actions by the University of Essex Online or its staff.
- An **appeal** is a formal request for reconsideration of a decision on the application, usually, but not exclusively, where the decision has been to decline to offer a place.

Appeals will normally be allowed only if there is evidence of a material irregularity in the decision-making process.

1. The Complaints and Appeals for Applicants policy may not be used where the decision not to offer a place arises from the applicant's failure to fulfil any academic requirement (e.g. specific academic achievements or English language requirements) or non-academic requirements for admission (e.g. specific work experience).

3. Who is covered by this policy?

1. This policy can be used by any applicant who has applied to UoEO and is dissatisfied with the way that their application has been handled.
2. Complaints or appeals can be submitted by the applicant, or by third parties, providing the written consent of the applicant has been provided on the **Applicant Third Party Authorisation Form** as part of the submission. Complaints and appeals received anonymously will not normally be considered, except where that are compelling reasons, supported by evidence, to do so.
3. Students already registered with UoEO are not eligible to use the Complaints and Appeals Policy for Applicants, but are able to use the **Student Complaint Policy**

Informal resolution – timeframe

4. Complaints or appeals should be submitted via email to the Admissions Advisor within 14 working days of the admissions decision being communicated to the applicant. Applicants should ensure that they explain their concerns clearly and give an indication of the outcome that they are seeking. An Admissions Team Leader will respond to the complaint within 14 working days from the initial receipt of the email. Team Leaders will keep a central record of any informal complaints that they have dealt with, which will be reviewed by the Head of Admissions to identify trends and monitor consistency of decision making.

Formal resolution – timeframe

5. If it has not been possible to resolve the complaint or appeal via the informal route the applicant may submit a complaint or appeal within 14 working days of the outcome at the informal stage. Applicants should complete the **Formal Complaint Form for Applicants** and submit this to the Head of Admissions via **admissionscomplaints@online.essex.ac.uk**. Applicants should ensure that they provide details of the circumstances of their case, give an indication of the actions they have already taken to try and resolve the matter, explain why they are dissatisfied with previous response(s) they have received and what outcome they are now seeking.
6. The complaint or appeal will be acknowledged via email within five working days after the UoEO receives the formal complaint form. The Head of Admissions will then undertake an investigation of the complaint and will respond in writing via email within 14 working days of the initial receipt of the formal complaint form.
7. The decision of the Head of Admissions at the formal resolution stage will be final.

4. Monitoring

1. The Head of Admissions will keep a record of the complaints/appeals that have been referred to them and monitor, on an annual basis, to identify any areas for enhancement. They will be responsible for implementing, or recommending to the appropriate authority, changes to systems or procedures suggested by the nature and pattern of the complaints received. The

outcome of such monitoring may also be used to inform other processes or activities. An annual report on the complaints received and dealt with will be submitted to the Operations Management Board.

Responsible Manager(s)	Title(s)	Related Policies
Faye Coates	Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions	<u>Admissions Policy</u> <u>Readmission Policy</u> <u>Accredited Prior Learning Policy</u>