

Applicant Appeals and Complaints Policy and Procedure

Policy

1. Guiding Principles

- 1.1 Through the *Applicant Appeals and Complaints Procedure* below, the University aims to investigate appeals and complaints in a timely, transparent and fair manner.
- 1.2 The University will seek to resolve the matter at the earliest possible opportunity.
- 1.3 Appeals and complaints that require particularly swift action will be identified quickly.
- 1.4 The University will investigate fairly and thoroughly.
- 1.5 Each party will be given an opportunity to present their case.
- 1.6 If there are allegations of a criminal offence, the University may suspend its own investigations until the outcome of any criminal proceedings are known.
- 1.7 All appeals and complaints will be treated with the utmost confidentiality as far as reasonably practicable.
- 1.8 No applicant will be disadvantaged as a result of making an appeal or complaint.

2. Who can appeal?

- 2.1 This procedure applies to all applicants to the University of Buckingham.
- 2.2 An appeal is a formal request for the review and reconsideration of an outcome of an admissions decision if you feel that:
 - a) The University did not appropriately consider the application in accordance with published procedures.
 - b) Not all of the information provided in the application was taken into account.
 - c) New information has come available and you can provide a good reason for it not being disclosed earlier in the process.
 - d) There is evidence of discrimination or bias.
- 2.3 The procedure below cannot be used where the issue relates to the service or procedures of UCAS.
- 2.4 Anonymous appeals will not be considered.
- 2.5 Appeals lodged by third parties will not be considered.

3. Who can complain?

- 3.1 This procedure applies to all applicants to the University of Buckingham.
- 3.2 A complaint is an expression of concern or dissatisfaction with the services or conduct you have received during the application process.
- 3.3 We cannot consider complaints about responses to general enquiries prior to or outside a Stage 2 application.
- 3.4 The procedure below cannot be used where a complaint relates to the service or procedures of UCAS.
- 3.5 Anonymous complaints will not be considered.
- 3.6 Complaints lodged by third parties will not be considered.

4. Sources of advice and information

- 4.1 Before making a complaint, you may wish to seek advice from one of the following:
 - a) Departmental Admissions Administrators
 - b) Admissions Tutor
 - c) Central Admissions
 - d) Marketing
 - e) Citizens Advice Bureau

Procedure

5. Informal Stage

- 5.1 In most cases, it may be possible for issues to be addressed at an early stage by discussing them with a member of staff in Admissions and/or requesting feedback.
- 5.2 Issues must be raised within two weeks of taking place and the staff member will aim to resolve the issue, where practicable, within two weeks.
- 5.3 Any delay to this timing will be communicated to you by the staff member you have consulted.
- 5.4 You are advised to keep a record of any informal contact with staff.
- 5.5 Staff will keep a record of action taken in response.

6. Formal Stage

If your concerns remain unaddressed after the informal stage, or if resolution is not possible due to the complexity or seriousness of the case, you can lodge a formal appeal/complaint as follows:

- 6.1 The Applicant Appeals/Complaints Form must be completed and submitted to the Admissions Manager, together with evidence that you have previously raised the issue informally.
- 6.2 The Admissions Manager will check the eligibility of the appeal/complaint to ensure that the *Applicant Appeals and Complaints Procedure* is applicable.

Appeals

- 6.3 You will be provided with written acknowledgement by the Admissions Manager of receipt of your appeal within five days of submitting your form.
- 6.4 The Admissions Manager will review the application and decision-making information with the relevant academic department.
- 6.5 If your appeal is upheld, you will be informed of the outcome and the action taken.
- 6.6 If your appeal is not upheld, the Admissions Manager will detail the reasons for the decision to you in writing.
- 6.7 The University seeks to review all appeals **within two weeks** of receipt of an Applicant Appeals/Complaints Form.
- 6.8 Any delay in this timing will be communicated to you.

Eligible complaints:

- 6.9 You will be provided with written acknowledgement by the Admissions Manager of receipt of your complaint within five days of submitting your form.
- 6.10 The Admissions Manager, or nominee, will investigate it.
- 6.11 You will be notified of the outcome by the Admissions Manager in a Completion of Investigation Letter, detailing the decision and an explanation for it.
- 6.12 The University seeks to resolve all complaints **within two weeks** of receipt of an Applicant Appeals/Complaints Form.
- 6.13 Any delay in this timing will be communicated to you.

Ineligible complaints:

- 6.14 Malicious or vexatious complaints will not be considered.
- 6.15 If a complaint is deemed to be malicious, frivolous, vexatious or ineligible, the Registrar and Director of Professional Services will inform the applicant.
- 6.16 In such circumstances, the applicant will have the right of appeal to the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Pro Vice Chancellor or Vice Chancellor.
- 6.17 Such appeals must be made in writing to the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Pro Vice Chancellor or Vice Chancellor within two weeks of the decision of the Registrar and Director of Professional Services.
- 6.18 The decision of the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Pro Vice Chancellor or Vice Chancellor will be final.

7. Review Stage

- 7.1 If you are unsatisfied after the investigation into your appeal/complaint, you have the right to ask for a review of your case **within two weeks** of receiving the outcome.
- 7.2 You will need to complete The Applicant Request for Review Form and submit it to the Student Appeals and Complaints Officer.
- 7.3 No new grounds may be raised, but new evidence can be submitted.
- 7.4 You may be invited to a meeting to discuss the appeal/complaint where an administrator will be present to take notes.
- 7.5 A friend or representative may attend the meeting with you.
- 7.6 The Registrar and Director of Professional Services will review the case **within one month**.
- 7.7 She may uphold the appeal/complaint in part or whole and take appropriate action or dismiss the appeal/complaint if there is no case to answer.
- 7.8 If the Registrar and Director of Professional Services has a conflict of interest, the case will be referred to the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Pro Vice Chancellor or Vice Chancellor for review.
- 7.9 You will receive a Completion of Procedures Letter from the Student Appeals and Complaints Officer informing you of the outcome.
- 7.10 Central Admissions will keep confidential records of all formal complaints that have been lodged.