

# ADMISSIONS POLICY & PROCEDURES COVERING APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS FROM APPLICANTS

## 1 General Statement

1.1 The University is committed to ensuring that all admissions decisions are fair, transparent and conducted according to our published policies, procedures and relevant legislation in force at the date of our decision, and in accordance with the University of Reading Admissions Policy covering Taught programmes at Undergraduate and Postgraduate level,

1.2 This policy and these procedures should be read in accordance with the University Admissions Policy covering Taught Programmes at Undergraduate and Postgraduate level and applies to all modes of study (full, part-time and distance learning), foundation programmes, pre-sessional English programmes and degree apprenticeships.

1.3 The University will ensure that all appeals and complaints are investigated thoroughly, promptly and with due regard to the confidentiality of all parties in accordance with the provisions of this policy.

1.4 Appeals or complaints will only be considered from an applicant, unless a third party has the explicit consent of the applicant for them to act on their behalf. Appeals or complaints received anonymously will not be considered or responded to.

1.5 The appeals and complaints procedure cannot be used where a decision has resulted from a failure on an applicant's part to fulfil the academic or non-academic requirements for admission (for example a satisfactory DBS Enhanced Disclosure or medical clearance or failure to meet the conditions of admission as articulated in our offer letter).

1.6 A separate policy covering appeals and complaints from students with regard to a programme currently being undertaken at the University is available at <https://www.reading.ac.uk/essentials/The-Important-Stuff/policies-and-procedures/Student-complaints-procedure> .

## 2 Definitions

2.1 An appeal is defined as a request for reconsideration of a decision to reject an application or of the requirements for admission set out in an offer of a place. The University will not normally alter a rejection decision should an applicant's actual performance be greater than was predicted or demonstrated at the time of his or her application unless a new application is made, including via the Adjustment procedure in August of each year.

2.2 An applicant may ask for a review of a decision on any of the following grounds:

- a) they consider that The University has not adhered to its own policies or procedures or is in breach of any national policies or relevant legal requirements; or
- b) there is evidence of bias or prejudice against the applicant; or

- c) there is substantial material information that, for good reason, was not submitted at the time of the application and this information may impact on the decision made.

2.3 For the avoidance of doubt, this procedure is not available to:

- a) Applicants who accept a conditional offer of admission, but who subsequently fail to meet the condition(s) of the offer and, on consideration of the final results, the applicant is not accepted for enrolment,
- b) Applicants who wish to appeal the decisions of a third party,
- c) Applicants seeking a reconsideration of the academic or professional judgement by Admissions Tutors or Admissions Office staff, other than where there has been a significant administrative or procedural error(s) affecting the outcome of the application (as provided in section 2.2(a) of this policy,
- d) Applicants who receive an offer of admission but who subsequently decline that offer, or are deemed to have declined an offer by failure to respond by a set deadline imposed by UCAS and/or clearly identified in the Offer Letter or with the required deposit (if applicable).

2.4 A complaint is defined as a request for consideration of dissatisfaction with the service received from the University by an applicant and may be about the administration of an application or the level of customer service which has been received.

2.5 An applicant cannot complain against an academic or professional judgement, unless there are grounds under 2.2 above.

## 3 Procedure

### *Informal appeals and complaints*

3.1 The University endeavours to resolve all issues relating to the administration of applications to study at the University to the satisfaction of all parties informally and without the need for applicants to pursue a stage 1 appeal.

3.2 Before submitting a stage 1 appeal or complaint, an applicant should write to the relevant Admissions team responsible for dealing with their application within the timeframe as specified in section 5:

- Undergraduate programmes – [ugadmissions@enquiries.reading.ac.uk](mailto:ugadmissions@enquiries.reading.ac.uk)
- Postgraduate Taught programmes – [pgadmissions@enquiries.reading.ac.uk](mailto:pgadmissions@enquiries.reading.ac.uk)
- PGCE/ School Direct programmes – [teachertraining@enquiries.reading.ac.uk](mailto:teachertraining@enquiries.reading.ac.uk)
- International Foundation Programme – [ifpadmissions@enquiries.reading.ac.uk](mailto:ifpadmissions@enquiries.reading.ac.uk)
- Pre-sessional English Course – [psadmissions@enquiries.reading.ac.uk](mailto:psadmissions@enquiries.reading.ac.uk)

3.2 An applicant should provide the following information when submitting an informal appeal or complaint to the Admissions Team:

- their full name and UCAS Personal ID number or Reading ID number
- the title of the course that they applied to
- whether they are asking for a reconsideration of our decision or whether they are making a complaint.
- the reason that asking for a reconsideration of our decision or for making complaint along with any supporting evidence or information
- an indication of the outcome that they are seeking

3.2 When an informal appeal or complaint is lodged, a member of the relevant team, normally an Admissions Officer, will investigate the circumstances of the informal appeal or complaint consulting relevant staff including, but not limited to, staff within the Admissions Team and staff in the School or department to which the applicant sought admission.

3.3 The University's response shall indicate whether the applicant's informal appeal or complaint is upheld (fully or partially), or rejected and will include the reasons for the decision. Where an informal appeal or complaint is upheld, the response shall indicate the outcome as provided in section 4 of this policy.

#### Stage 1 – Formal consideration of an appeal or complaint

3.3 Where an applicant's informal complaint or appeal is not upheld and they are dissatisfied with the outcome, they may write to the Head of Admissions (admissionsconfidential@reading.ac.uk) requesting that the appeal or complaint be formally reviewed under stage 1 of this Policy.

3.4 A stage 1 appeal may only be submitted on one of the grounds for review as provided in section 2.2 of this Policy. A stage 1 complaint may be submitted without reference to the grounds provided in section 2.2 of this policy.

3.5 When submitting a formal appeal or complaint under stage 1 of this policy, an applicant should submit the following information:

- their full name and UCAS personal ID number or Reading ID number
- whether they are submitting a stage 1 appeal or complaint
- In the case of an appeal, the grounds being used as a basis for submitting an appeal as provided in section 2.2 of this policy.
- the reason that they are submitting an appeal or complaint, along with copies of what communications (and outcomes) they have had with the University which are relevant to their appeal or complaint and the reason for their dissatisfaction.
- an indication of the outcome they are seeking.

3.5 The Head of Admissions will investigate the circumstances of the appeal or complaint, which may include consulting relevant staff such as the Senior Admissions Managers, staff in the School or department to which the applicant sought admission and the relevant Teaching and Learning Dean.

3.6 During the course of our review, the applicant may be asked to provide further information on, or clarification of, any points made in his or her initial correspondence.

3.7 The University's response shall indicate whether the applicant's stage 1 appeal or complaint is upheld (fully or partially), or rejected and will include the reasons for the decision. Where a stage 1 appeal or complaint is upheld, the response shall indicate the outcome as provided in section 4 of this policy.

#### Stage 2 – further consideration of an appeal

3.8 Where an applicant's informal complaint or appeal is not upheld and an applicant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of an appeal or complaint following stage 1 they may write to the Director of Global Recruitment and Admissions (admissionsconfidential@reading.ac.uk).

3.9 When submitting a formal appeal or complaint under stage 2 of this policy, an applicant should submit the following information:

- their full name and UCAS personal ID number or Reading ID number
- whether they are submitting a stage 2 appeal or complaint

- In the case of an appeal, the grounds being used as a basis for submitting an appeal as provided in section 2.2 of this policy.
- the reason that they are submitting an appeal or complaint, along with copies of all communications (and outcomes) from the informal consideration and stage 1 review of their appeal or complaint and the reason for their dissatisfaction with the stage 1 outcome.
- an indication of the outcome they are seeking.

3.10 The Director of Global Recruitment and Admissions will investigate the appeal or complaint.

3.11 The Director of Global Recruitment and Admissions decision and any consequent reconsideration by the School is final. Once this decision has been communicated to the applicant, no further correspondence will be entered into regarding the appeal or complaint and no further appeal is permitted.

## 4 Outcomes

4.1 Should the investigation of an appeal establish that a decision to reject was made in breach of any University policy or procedure or of any national policy or that the material information submitted by the applicant can be considered, the application will be re-considered. Should the reconsideration result in a decision to offer a place to the applicant, the appropriate offer will be communicated to the applicant. Should the decision be made at such a time in the admissions cycle that it is not possible for the applicant to accept the offer of study for the original entry point; the next appropriate available entry point will be offered.

4.2 Should the investigation of an appeal establish that the requirements for admission set out in an offer of a place were unreasonable or incorrect, the offer will be amended and a new offer sent out with the correct requirements for admission. Any new offer will replace the previous offer communicated to the applicant.

4.2 Should the investigation of an appeal determine that the original decision is upheld, the applicant will be informed accordingly with a statement as to why the appeal has been rejected.

4.3 The investigation of a complaint will result in either the complaint being rejected or upheld wholly or in part. Should a complaint be rejected, the applicant will be informed accordingly with a statement as to why the complaint has been rejected.

4.4 Should the investigation of a complaint determine that the complaint be upheld in whole or in part, the applicant will be informed accordingly with reasons for the decision and details of actions the University will take as a consequence of this decision, in accordance with paragraphs 4.1 and 4.2.

## 5 Timescales

5.1 An applicant wishing to lodge an informal appeal should do so within one calendar month of the communication informing him or her of the decision on his or her application. An applicant wishing to make an informal complaint should do so within one calendar month of the matter which the complaint is concerned occurred.

5.2 Once an informal, stage 1 or stage 2 appeal or complaint is lodged a member of the Admissions team will acknowledge receipt within 7 working days.

5.2 The University will then endeavour to deal with any appeal or complaint in a timely manner, and will aim to communicate a decision to the applicant within 21 days of receipt of all required information. The

applicant will be kept informed of the progress of his or her appeal or complaint if the period of investigation is likely to exceed 21 days.

5.4 An applicant wishing to lodge a stage 1 appeal or complaint should do so within one calendar month of the date of the communication informing him or her of the University's decision to not uphold their informal complaint or appeal.

5.5 An applicant wishing to lodge a stage 2 appeal or complaint should do so within 7 working days of the date of the communication informing him or her of the University's decision to not uphold their stage 1 complaint or appeal.

## 6. Admissions Deposit Refund appeals

4.1. Applicants may initially use the informal appeals process to appeal against a refusal by the University to refund a deposit paid in order to firmly accept an offer to study. Appeals may be submitted only on the grounds of misapplication of the Deposit Scheme Terms & Conditions as provided with the applicant's offer letter which provides for certain circumstances where the admissions financial deposit may be refunded. This procedure is not for use in regards to disputes regarding any other financial payments made to the University. Applicants whose appeal is not upheld may initially make a stage 1 appeal to the Head of Admissions as outlined above in sections 3.3 to 3.7 of this policy. If an appeal is not upheld by the Head of Admissions in refunding a deposit, the applicant may make a stage 2 appeal as outlined above in sections 3.8 to 3.11 of this policy.

## 7 Data protection and storage of information

7.1 The University is required by legislation to comply with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998, from May 25th 2018 onwards, the General Data Protection Regulation (2016/679) (GDPR), and all applicable laws and regulations relating to the processing of the Personal Data and privacy. All information will be treated in the strictest confidence. Personal information will only be shared with relevant staff for the purposes of investigating and responding to appeals and complaints, on a strictly need to know basis, and will not be disclosed to family, friends or any third party without the applicant's explicit consent, unless disclosure is permitted under any alternative lawful provision within Data Protection Law, Details of the University's Data Protection policy and Fair Processing Notices are published on our website.

7.2 The record of an appeal or complaint and any supporting papers will be destroyed six calendar years from the resolution of the case.

## Version control

VERSION	KEEPER	REVIEWED	APPROVED BY	APPROVAL DATE
1.0	Head of Admissions	Annually	The University Senate	28/06/2018

