

Complaints Procedure for Applicants

Introduction and Principles

1 Durham University aims to provide a high standard and quality of service and to deliver an admissions process that is consistent, fair and professional, but recognises that occasionally things may go wrong. This procedure has been established to deal with complaints in a fair and transparent manner. The University recognises that complaints may provide useful feedback from applicants and, where appropriate, will be used to improve the admissions process.

2 These procedures explain how applicants to undergraduate and postgraduate programmes may make a complaint, both informal and formal. Applicants who have a complaint to make should raise it as soon as possible, as matters that are dealt with informally at an early stage have the best chance of being resolved effectively. Only when the informal procedures have been exhausted and the applicant remains dissatisfied should a formal complaint be made.

3 It is recognised however that there may be occasions where the applicant may consider that an informal complaint is not appropriate and wishes to proceed to the formal stage in the procedure, giving their reasons for doing so. In such situations, the University, taking account of the complaint's particular nature and circumstances, will consider whether an attempt to resolve the complaint informally is appropriate or allow the complaint to be investigated formally.

Formal Stage (Stage 2)

26 If the applicant is not satisfied with the response at the informal stage or did not consider informal resolution to be appropriate in their circumstances, he or she may initiate a formal complaint by completing all sections of the Complaints Form within three months of the events complained about. The Complaint Form should be submitted to admissions.complaint@durham.ac.uk

27 In order that the University is able to investigate complaints in a timely, fair and transparent manner, the information provided by the applicant must be clear and concise. To facilitate this, the University has a Complaint Form where the applicant should provide:

- (a) A short (500 words or fewer) statement describing the main issues to be addressed or areas of dissatisfaction. This is the most critical section of the complaint form as any investigation will focus on the main issues raised here;**
- (b) A statement detailing actions already taken by the applicant to resolve the matter informally and why the response provided was considered unsatisfactory or reasons why informal action was not considered appropriate in the circumstances;**
- (c) The form of resolution or redress sought by the applicant in relation to the main issues;**
- (d) If necessary and as briefly as possible, additional related background or contextual details or descriptions of incidents and events raised as the main issues and their impact on the application. Any details or descriptions provided should directly relate to the main issues. Applicants should not expect that any details and descriptions provided here will be directly responded to;**
- (e) A list and copies of any documents or information provided in support of the main issues of the complaint. In some cases the University may request to see original documents.**

28 The Complaint Form should be signed and submitted electronically together with any supporting information. The Head of University Admissions (or Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions if the complaint is made about the Head of University Admissions) in the Recruitment and Admissions Office will acknowledge receipt of the Complaint Form within two working days.

29 Upon receipt of a Complaint Form, the Head of University Admissions/Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions in the Recruitment and Admissions Office will conduct a formal investigation into the issues raised in the complaint, in consultation with appropriate staff as necessary. The raising of the complaint and any communication between the applicant and the Head of University Admissions/Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions will be in writing.

30 It is expected that the formal procedure should be completed and a written response sent to the applicant within 42 days of receipt of the completed Complaints Form. The possible outcomes include:

- (a) The complaint is upheld in relation to one or more of the main issues specified by the applicant. A formal review of the application decision may follow if deemed appropriate, but applicants should note that any review may not necessarily change the outcome. The applicant will be informed in writing of the decision and any resolution;**
- (b) The complaint is dismissed in relation to all the main issues specified by the applicant and reasons are given to the applicant in writing.**

Monitoring

39 An annual report on admissions complaints will be made to the University's Education Committee

Contacts

Informal (Stage 1) communications should be sent to [Askus](#)