



Higher Education Programmes Admissions Appeals and Complaints Policy

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1. Purpose

We recognise applicants may wish to ask why their application has not been successful or believe they have cause for complaint. These procedures outline the way the College handles admissions appeals and complaints.

2. Definition

An appeal is defined as request for a formal review of the outcome of an admissions decision. The Admissions Appeals and Complaints Procedure cannot be used where our decision resulted from:

- A failure on your part to fulfil academic requirements.
- A failure on your part to fulfil non-academic requirements, for example an unsatisfactory DBS Enhanced Disclosure or an unsatisfactory health check
- A reference from a third party, such as a provider of a work or training placement which forms an integral part of the course to which you have applied.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all applicants to, and students of University Studies at West Suffolk College unless they are covered by the policy of their awarding institution. This policy is consistent with the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education. Applicants will not be discriminated against in any further application should they make an appeal or complaint.

4. General Principles

This procedure exists in order that applicants rejected by University Studies at West Suffolk College can challenge an admissions decision if they have reason to believe that the decision was subject to procedural irregularity, prejudice or bias, or that extenuating circumstances should be, and have not already been, taken into account. The challenge would be dealt with as a form of complaint.

5. Admissions Complaint

5.1. Stage 1; Complaints procedure

- I. The initial complaint should normally be raised in writing with the Admissions Team via universitystudies@wsc.ac.uk with the title 'Admissions Complaint', outlining the nature and detail of the complaint. University Studies at West Suffolk College will not accept complaints from third party or anonymous sources.
- II. If the complaint is regarding a decision it should normally be made within 10 working days of the action. If no action has been taken by the University Studies at West Suffolk College on your application, the complainant can write in at any time.
- III. The Admissions Team will contact the complainant initially to acknowledge receipt and aims to respond within 15 working days of the acknowledgement. If it proves impossible to respond within 15 working days, the complainant shall be informed of the time scale for the receipt of a full response.

- IV. Whilst considering the admissions decision Head of Admissions may request additional information or seek clarification by email.
- V. When the Head of Admission responds they must confirm that the application was considered fairly and that the procedure for decision making was correctly applied. The response will explain the context in which the decision has been made. In the event that the complaint is upheld the Head of Admission will confirm this along with a proposed remedy.

5.2. Stage 2; Complaints procedure (formal)

- I. The formal Admissions Complaints Procedure follows the stage one process. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1, the formal process will commence.
- II. Any applicant who wishes to make a formal complaint about an admissions decision shall be referred to the Admissions Team from where the Admissions Appeals and Complaints Procedure will be coordinated.
- III. The applicant must write to universitystudies@wsc.ac.uk requesting the Admissions Appeals and Complaints Form.
- IV. Once the form has been received by the applicant they complete and send back within 10 working days from receipt, including supporting evidence where necessary.
- V. All complaints that are received from applicants, are recorded confidentially within the Admissions Team and monitored as appropriate. As part of any investigation, information may need to be shared with other persons or organisations whilst adhering to our Data Protection policy.
- VI. Failure on the part of the applicant to produce the requested documentation within a 10 working day period would result in the closure of the case by the Admissions Team.

5.3. Initial assessment of formal complaint

- I. The Admissions Team will contact the complainant to acknowledge the receipt, confirm who will be dealing with the assessment and when the complainant can expect to hear from the Vice Dean. Investigations are undertaken and completed within 15 working days of the receipt. If it is not possible to complete the investigation within 15 working days, you will be contacted by the Admissions Team giving the reasons why and if possible, a date when we expect the investigation to be completed by.
- II. In certain circumstances further information may be asked for by the Vice Dean to reach a decision, which may result in extending this timeframe.
- III. On receipt of the written details from the applicant by the Admissions Office, an initial assessment of the complaint shall be made. The assessment will be conducted by the Vice Dean. An initial decision will be taken on whether the complainant has a substantive case that should be progressed through investigation. If the initial assessment finds that there is no substantive case then the complaint should be

rejected and the complainant informed of the decision with reasons for the judgment, which shall be final.

- IV. If the initial assessment determines that there is a substantive case that should be investigated then the University will be required to produce a written response to the complaint with supporting evidence.
- V. The Executive Dean HE will respond to the complainant in writing with details of the findings indicating the outcome, and if the complaint is upheld, what the remedy will be. The Executive Dean's decision will be final.

Decisions concerning criminal convictions

2. In the case where a decision to reject an applicant has concerned a criminal conviction, a formal route exists whereby an applicant rejected following an assessment of his/her convictions can apply to the Executive Dean HE for a review on the grounds of procedural irregularity, prejudice or bias, or extenuating circumstances. The decision of the Executive Dean HE is final.

Decisions concerning disability or special educational needs

3. In the case where the University has not been able to offer a place to an applicant following an assessment of support needs, a formal route exists whereby an applicant can apply to the Executive Dean HE for a review on the grounds of procedural irregularity, prejudice or bias, or extenuating circumstances. The decision of the Executive Dean HE is final.