

Lancaster University Applicant Appeals, Complaints and Feedback Policy

1. General Principles

- 1.1 Lancaster University is committed to the provision of high-quality, fair and transparent admissions procedures for all applicants. We recognise, however, that there may be occasions when applicants wish to ask why their application has been unsuccessful, or believe that they have cause for complaint.
- 1.2 Applicants who experience a problem with the admissions process should raise the matter informally in the first instance with the admissions staff who have been dealing with their application. If the matter is not satisfactorily resolved, applicants may invoke the formal process outlined in this document.
- 1.3 All feedback requests, appeals and complaints made to the University are handled confidentially in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Bill as outlined on the Rights of the Data Subject webpage.
- 1.4 The University will not consider feedback requests, complaints and appeals submitted by third parties without the written consent of the applicant.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy covers appeals, complaints and feedback requests relating to the admissions process to undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at Lancaster University. Once a student has enrolled at the University, this policy is no longer applicable. Decisions relating to funding and scholarships are not covered under this policy.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 An appeal is a request for a formal review of a specific admissions decision (eg the decision to reject an application or the level of the academic offer made) under the following grounds for appeal:
 - procedural irregularity;
 - emergence of new information which may have affected the initial decision had it been available at the time the decision was made;
 - that there has been prejudice or bias in the decision-making

Appeals cannot be based on challenges to academic judgements made on an application. If an appeal is successful the original decision may be changed.

- 3.2 A complaint is a statement of dissatisfaction concerning:

- the University's admissions procedures or policies which have been used to reach an admissions decision;
- the actions, lack of actions, or behaviour of a member of staff involved in the admissions decision.

A complaint cannot be considered if it solely constitutes a challenge to the academic criteria used to consider applications for a programme of study. If a complaint is successful, the University may offer an apology and/or a commitment to revise policy or procedures.

- 3.3 A request for feedback is an informal request for further information or clarification regarding an admissions decision. Once the University has made a selection decision, it will not review its decision, unless the applicant feels that the admissions process has not been followed correctly. In such cases, applicants must follow the appeals and complaints procedure as detailed in this policy.

4. Appeals and grounds for appeal

- 4.1 The University does not accept appeals, nor overturn its original decision, in cases where the decision can be shown to have been reached fairly and in accordance with published criteria.
- 4.2 Applicants may appeal the outcome of an admissions decision on the following grounds only:
- procedural irregularity where the processes leading to the admissions decision was not in accordance with the University's Admissions Policy;
 - emergence of new information which may have affected the initial decision had it been available at the time the decision was made;
 - that there has been prejudice or bias in the decision-making

There are no grounds for appeal where an application to a postgraduate research programme is unsuccessful due to the lack of a suitable supervisor or appropriate academic facilities.

5. Appeals process

- 5.1 Applicants who believe there are genuine grounds for appeal may request an appeal by email or in writing to the Admissions Office (ugadmissions@lancaster.ac.uk or pgadmissions@lancaster.ac.uk). The applicant should clearly state the reasons for requesting an appeal.
- 5.2 Appeal requests must be submitted within 21 days of the date of the initial admissions decision. The University will acknowledge receipt of the appeal via email.

- 5.3 Admissions staff will investigate the case to determine whether further action is required. Appeals are considered by admissions officers in the first instance and referred to either the Undergraduate Admissions Manager or Postgraduate Admissions Manager.
- 5.4 Appeals are either found to be justified or dismissed.
- 5.5 The Undergraduate Admissions Manager, Postgraduate Admissions Manager or senior nominee will determine the response to those appeals found to be justified.

6. Complaints and grounds for complaint

- 6.1 Most complaints are resolved satisfactorily on an informal basis. Complaints that cannot be resolved informally may be escalated through the formal complaints procedure.
- 6.2 Complaints should be raised as soon as problems arise to enable prompt investigation and swift resolution. Applicants may raise a complaint within 21 days of becoming aware of the issue, unless there is a good reason for delay. The University will acknowledge receipt of the complaint via email.
- 6.3 An annual review of formal complaints is undertaken by the Head of Admissions to ensure that necessary corrective actions, recommendation and process changes are in place.

7. Complaints process

7.1 Stage One – Informal Complaint

- 7.1.1 In the first instance, applicants should raise complaints with the relevant Admissions Manager (via ugadmissions@lancaster.ac.uk or pgadmissions@lancaster.ac.uk). Informal complaints can be made in person, by telephone, in writing or via email.
- 7.1.2 Admissions Managers will gather the information required for assessing the complaint and respond directly to the applicant.
- 7.1.3 If the complaint is not satisfactorily resolved, applicants may follow a formal complaints procedure.

7.2 Stage Two – Formal Complaint

- 7.2.1 If a complaint has not been resolved informally, applicants may submit a formal complaint;
- 7.2.2 Formal complaints must be submitted by email or in writing to the Admissions Office (ugadmissions@lancaster.ac.uk or pgadmissions@lancaster.ac.uk) within 21 days of receipt of the response to the original informal complaint.

7.2.3 The request will be considered by the Head of Admissions who will review all previous documentation relating to the case and may seek additional information from the applicant and/or the other parties involved. Having investigated the issues raised, the Head of Admissions may decide:

- to confirm the original decision made on the case by the Admissions Manager;
- to uphold the appeal or complaint and propose a resolution of the matter to the applicant;
- to refer the matter for consideration in line with another University procedure.

7.2.4 The Head of Admissions' decision on an admissions appeal or complaint is final and there is no further procedure within the University for such cases to be reviewed.

8 Complaints made directly to the Vice-Chancellor and/or Senior Officers of the University

8.1 If a complaint relating to the Admissions process, procedure or policy is made directly to the Vice-Chancellor and/or Senior Officers of the University, it will be passed to the Head of Admissions who will ensure that it is dealt with in accordance to this policy.