

## **Admissions Complaints and Appeals Procedure**

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### **A Introduction**

#### *Complaints*

Part C of the procedure described below shall be followed in cases where an undergraduate or postgraduate applicant to the University wishes to complain about the administration of the University's admissions policies and procedures. It shall not be used where a complaint relates to the service or procedures of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), in which case UCAS' own complaints procedure should be followed.

The policies and procedures of relevance are<sup>1</sup>:

#### Admissions Policy

MBBS Admissions Policy (for admissions to the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) degrees)

School of Dental Sciences Admissions Policy

English Language Policy

Policy and Procedures for admitting Students Under 18

General Entrance Requirements (contained in the Undergraduate Progress Regulations)

Postgraduate Entrance and Admissions Requirements (contained in the University's Postgraduate Taught Progress Regulations; Regulations for Research Masters Degree Programmes (excluding MPhil programmes); and Master of Philosophy Progress Regulations; and Doctor of Philosophy Progress Regulations)

Criminal Convictions Policy and Procedure for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Admissions

Procedure for Dealing with UCAS Applications Identified through UCAS' Similarity

Detection Service.

#### *Appeals*

Part D of the procedure shall be used in cases where an undergraduate or postgraduate applicant wishes to appeal against the decision of an undergraduate or postgraduate admissions selector.

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<sup>1</sup> If you wish to obtain any of the policies and procedures listed, please telephone 0191 208 3333 or enquire online at [www.ncl.ac.uk/enquiries](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/enquiries)

Appeals against the decisions of admissions selectors may only be made on the following grounds:

- a) Failure to apply the relevant policy or procedures
- b) Bias or Prejudice.

Challenges to the academic judgement of admissions selectors may not form the basis of an admissible appeal.

### *Queries*

Any queries about this procedure should be directed to either: the Senior Undergraduate Admissions Manager or the Senior Postgraduate Admissions Manager, Marketing and Student Recruitment Directorate, Newcastle University, King's Gate, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 7RU.

## **B General Provisions**

These provisions apply to both Part C and Part D.

### *Time Limits*

Complaints received more than one month after the event in question shall not normally be investigated. Appeals received more than one month after the date of the letter notifying an applicant of a decision shall not normally be investigated. Complaints or appeals received beyond the normal time limit shall be referred to the Academic Registrar who shall determine whether or not circumstances exist which make it reasonable for the complainant or appellant not to have made a submission within the normal time limit.

### *Anonymous Complaints*

Complaints made anonymously shall not be investigated.

### *Responsibilities of Complainant*

Complaints or appeals shall be made in writing to the Senior Undergraduate Admissions Manager or the Senior Postgraduate Admissions Manager, (hereafter referred to as the 'Admissions Officer'), Newcastle University, King's Gate, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 7RU. They shall include the complainant's full name and UCAS Personal ID number (if applicable), and as much detail as possible about the grounds for complaint or appeal, including relevant names and dates. The complaint or appeal shall also include confirmation that the complainant or appellant consents to the matter being investigated with all relevant parties and to any information disclosed in the complaint or appeal being divulged to those relevant parties.

### *Monitoring*

The Admissions Officer shall keep a record of complaints and appeals received and investigated and shall report annually to University Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee.

### *Confidentiality*

All information which a complainant or appellant provides to the Admissions Officer, Complaints or Appeals Officer or any other officers dealing with the matter in the course of an investigation shall

be treated as confidential, subject to the need to divulge it to relevant parties in the course of the investigation and subject to any requirements of the Data Protection Act. No applicant who complains about or appeals against the decision of an admissions selector shall be disadvantaged in any way in any future applications to the University as a result of the complaint or appeal.

## **C Complaints Procedure**

### *1 Initial Investigation*

- a) The Admissions Officer shall, wherever possible, attempt to resolve complaints quickly and informally.
- b) The Admissions Officer shall determine whether the complaint discloses sufficient grounds related to the administration of the University's admissions policies and procedures.<sup>2</sup>
- c) If it is decided that the complaint does not disclose sufficient grounds, the Admissions Officer shall explain the reason(s) for this decision in writing to the complainant.
- d) If it is decided that the complaint does disclose sufficient grounds, the Admissions Officer shall investigate it, consulting all relevant parties.
  - i) Once all the necessary information has been gathered, the Admissions Officer shall judge whether the complaint may be resolved at that point by conveying information gathered, or whether the matter needs to be considered at a higher level.
  - ii) If it is judged that a resolution can be achieved, the Admissions Officer shall put the response in writing to the complainant. This will include a summary of the reasons for the decision.
  - iii) If it is judged that the matter needs to be referred for consideration at a higher level, the Admissions Officer shall refer the matter to the Dean of Undergraduate/Postgraduate Studies of a Faculty other than the one to which the applicant has applied. The Dean shall act as Complaints Officer.

### *2 Investigation by the Complaints Officer*

- a) The Complaints Officer shall be given administrative support by an administrative officer nominated by the Academic Registrar.
- b) The Complaints Officer shall investigate the complaint and may seek any further information that is deemed necessary to come to a decision.
- c) A record of all proceedings shall be maintained by the nominated administrative officer.
- d) The Complaints Officer shall determine the outcome of the complaint.
- e) The outcome may include:

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<sup>2</sup> If the Admissions Officer is the object of a complaint, the Academic Registrar shall make arrangements for a senior officer from another part of the University to undertake the Admissions Officer's role in relation to the complaint

- (i) dismissal of the complaint or
  - (ii) finding the complaint justified
- f) If the outcome is (e ii) above, the Complaints Officer shall determine the University response.
- g) As soon as possible after completion of the investigation, which shall be conducted as expeditiously as is reasonably practicable, the nominated administrative officer shall notify the complainant in writing of the outcome and consequential action, if any, to be taken. This will include a summary of the reasons for the decision.

## **D Appeals Procedure**

### *1 Initial Investigation*

- a) The Admissions Officer shall determine whether the appeal discloses a *prima facie* case on the specified grounds.
- b) If it is decided that it does not disclose a *prima facie* case, the Admissions Officer shall explain the reason(s) for this decision in writing to the appellant.
- c) If it is decided that the appeal does disclose a *prima facie* case on the specified grounds, the Admissions Officer shall investigate it, consulting all relevant parties.
  - i) Once all the necessary information has been gathered, the Admissions Officer shall judge whether the appeal may be resolved at that point by conveying information gathered, or whether the matter needs to be considered at a higher level.
  - ii) If it is judged that a resolution can be achieved, the Admissions Officer shall put the response in writing to the appellant.
  - iii) If it is judged that the matter needs to be referred for consideration at a higher level, the Admissions Officer shall refer the matter to the Dean of Undergraduate/Postgraduate Studies of a Faculty other than the one to which the applicant has applied. The Dean shall act as Appeals Officer.

### *2 Investigation by the Appeals Officer*

- a) The Appeals Officer shall be given administrative support by an administrative officer nominated by the Academic Registrar.
- b) The Appeals Officer shall investigate the appeal and may seek any further information that is deemed necessary to come to a decision.
- c) A record of all proceedings shall be maintained by the nominated administrative officer.
- d) Exceptionally, and, where deemed appropriate by the Appeals Officer, the appellant and any other relevant parties may be invited to a hearing. Any person invited to attend a hearing by the Appeals Officer may be accompanied by a friend or representative. The nominated administrative officer shall provide the appellant, as soon as is reasonably practicable, with relevant case papers. The conduct of the hearing shall be for the Appeals Officer to decide.

- e) The Appeals Officer shall determine the outcome of the appeal.
- f) The outcome may include:
  - (i) dismissal of the appeal or
  - (ii) finding the appeal justified
- g) If the outcome is (f ii) above, the Appeals Officer shall determine the University response.
- h) As soon as possible after completion of the investigation, which shall be conducted as expeditiously as is reasonably practicable, the nominated administrative officer shall notify the appellant in writing of the outcome and consequential action, if any, to be taken. This will include a summary of reasons for the decision.

#### **E Application for Review of Outcome**

- a) An application for review of the outcome of a complaint or appeal shall be admissible only on the ground of procedural irregularity on the part of the Admissions Officer or Complaints or Appeals Officer.
- b) A person wishing to apply for a review of the outcome of a complaint or appeal shall do so in writing, addressing the application to the Academic Registrar, Newcastle University, King's Gate, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 7RU within 14 days of notification of the outcome of the investigation. The Academic Registrar may dismiss an application which does not provide a *prima facie* case on the specified ground.
- c) If the Academic Registrar, having reviewed the original complaint or appeal file and sought any evidence as appears to be necessary to reach a decision, considers there to be grounds for review, the matter shall be referred to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Learning and Teaching.
- d) The Pro-Vice-Chancellor shall determine the outcome of the review which shall be final. There shall be no further opportunities for review within the University.

Lucy Backhurst, Head of Recruitment and Admissions