

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS POLICY FOR ENQUIRERS & APPLICANTS 2024/25

Title: Complaint and Appeals Policy for Applicants 2024/25					
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Complaints and Appeals Policy for Enquirers and Applicants 2024/25

1. Introduction

This Policy is for Enquirers and Applicants only and applies to anyone who either contacts Enquiries and Admissions with an enquiry, or who applies to study a course taught at the University of South Wales. This policy, therefore, does not apply to Partner Colleges as the Colleges manage their own processes for enquiries and admissions, including any complaints or appeals which may arise from those.

- 1.1 At the University of South Wales, we are committed to providing excellent customer service and the Enquiries and Admissions Team continually monitors feedback and addresses concerns brought to their attention by staff, students, applicants or enquirers. The University of South Wales has a duty of care to its applicants and enquirers and this includes the provision of fair and transparent admissions procedures, as detailed in the University's Admissions Policy, for all applicants, those who apply via UCAS and those who apply via the University's direct online application.
- 1.2 We recognise, however, that there may be occasions when an enquirer or applicant will feel dissatisfied with the service provided by the University's Enquiries and Admissions Team, any procedures which are part of the enquiry and admissions process, and/or outcomes of any of these processes. When a formal complaint or appeal concerns Enquiries and Admissions staff, or enquiry or admissions procedures outside of the Enquiries and Admissions Team, it will be the responsibility of the Enquiries and Admissions Manager, Enquiries and Admissions, to lead on the investigation.
- 1.3 We strongly encourage enquirers and applicants who have a complaint or wish to appeal to initially raise the matter informally, described as the Early Resolution Stage, either by emailing the member of staff they have been liaising with or by emailing admissions@southwales.ac.uk.
- 1.4 If unhappy with the outcome of the complaint or appeal considered under the Early Resolution stage, then enquirers and applicants are able to make a formal complaint. The formal Complaints and Appeals Procedure is detailed below under section 4.2.
- 1.5 An enquirer or applicant will not be disadvantaged in any way because they have used the Complaints and Appeals Procedure.
- 1.6 Complaints and appeals can be submitted in Welsh and will not be treated any less favourably than complaints and appeals made in English.
- 1.7 Enquirers or applicants requiring reasonable adjustments to submit a complaint or appeal are encouraged to contact us directly by emailing admissions@southwales.ac.uk or telephoning 03455 767778.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 A complaint is defined as a specific concern related to an alleged procedural error, irregularity or maladministration in the enquiry or admissions procedures or our defined policies.
- 2.2 An appeal is a request for the review of an admissions decision and/or the outcome of an application or interview, or the wording or terms and conditions of an offer.

3. Guidance

- 3.1 Complaints and appeals must normally be made directly by the enquirer or applicant to the University. A complaint or appeal from a third party will only be investigated in exceptional circumstances, where an applicant has provided valid reasons for this request, together with written authorisation that they are happy for the third party to act on their behalf.
- 3.2 In exceptional circumstances, the Enquiries and Admissions Manager, Enquiries and Admissions, can approve a complaint proceeding directly to the formal stage, for example, if there was a serious allegation of discrimination.
- 3.3 Complaints which are submitted anonymously will not be investigated.
- 3.4 The University will not enter into discussions or disputes on matters it regards as those of academic judgement. Enquiries and Admissions staff will make every effort to explain entry criteria, how selection criteria works and why a particular decision has been made, but the University will not review an admissions decision simply because an applicant disagrees with or wishes to challenge the criteria set.
- 3.5 If new evidence is supplied following receipt of the original application, such as additional qualifications that weren't listed on the application or if there have been personal mitigating circumstances, then the University reserves the right to decide whether the new evidence can be considered. An applicant must provide a reason as to why the documentation or mitigating circumstances were not submitted with the original application for this to be taken into consideration.

4. Procedure

The University operates a two-stage process for complaints and appeals.

Early Resolution Stage

- 4.1 If an enquirer or applicant is unhappy with any aspect of the enquiry or admissions process, they will need to make contact with either the member of staff they have been dealing with or by emailing admissions@southwales.ac.uk within 14 days of the concern being raised. Staff will make every reasonable effort to explain procedures, allay concerns or otherwise respond to the issue raised. These discussions must be undertaken via email so that a written record is available, if required, as evidence should the complaint or appeal proceed to the formal stage.

We will respond to an informal request within 14 working days.

Formal Stage

- 4.2 Whilst most cases are resolved by the provision of informal feedback, if an enquirer or applicant remains unsatisfied with the informal feedback they have received, then a formal complaint or appeal can be submitted via this [Microsoft Form](#).
- 4.3 A **complaint** should be submitted in writing within 28 days of any specific alleged incident or action, which includes the 14 days for Early Resolution, and providing as much detail and information as possible.

- 4.4 An **appeal** should be submitted in writing within 28 working days of the University's decision, which includes the 14 days for Early Resolution by completing this [Microsoft Form](#), providing as much detail and information as possible. Appeals can only be submitted on the following grounds:

Enquirers and applicants must demonstrate one or more of the following categories:

- a) there has been an administrative error;
 - b) proper process has not been followed;
 - c) there were documented errors or omissions in the advice provided to the enquirer or applicant;
- 4.5 We will acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint or appeal within 5 working days.
- 4.6 An investigation will take place, led by the Enquiries and Admissions Manager, Enquiries and Admissions (or nominee), with input from the Enquiries and Admissions Team or other parts of the University as appropriate. If the complaint or appeal is directed at a member of the Enquiries and Admissions Team, then the investigation will be led by another Senior Manager within Future Students. If we require further information, or anticipate a delay in responding, we will email to advise of this.
- 4.7 Face-to-face meetings will not normally be part of any investigation.
- 4.8 We will respond to a complaint or appeal in writing within 20 working days of receipt of all information. The response will include details of the investigation which has taken place, will outline the response to the investigation from areas of the University involved, and will detail the findings of the investigation.
- 4.9 If a complaint or appeal is upheld, the University will take such reasonable action as is appropriate and inform the enquirer/applicant of the outcome in writing via email.
- 4.10 Reasonable action resulting from an appeal which is upheld would be, for example, to reconsider the application or conditions of offer. In such circumstances, the University may not be able to guarantee admission in the academic session initially requested; admission at an alternative point of entry may be offered.
- 4.11 Reasonable action to remedy a complaint which is upheld could, for example, include an apology or an undertaking to revise an existing procedure.
- 4.12 If the appeal or complaint is not upheld, we will communicate the reasons for this decision in writing via email.
- 4.13 The decision of the person leading the investigation will be final, and there is no further right to appeal.

5. Storage and Processing of Complaints and Appeals Information

- 5.1 All complaints and appeals will be dealt with confidentially and with due regard for privacy. Information may be disclosed to members of the University who have a need

to see it in order to investigate the appeal or complaint. The information will be stored and processed in accordance with the University's registration under the Data Protection Act (1998) and retention schedule as defined by the GDPR privacy policy. The record of the complaint/appeal and any supporting papers will be destroyed one calendar year after the applicant's relationship with the University has ended.

6. Monitoring

- 6.1 Enquiries and Admissions Managers will monitor, on an annual basis, all formal complaints and appeals which have been received and will produce an Annual Report for consideration by the University's Student Casework Committee. They will also be responsible for implementing, or recommending to the appropriate authority, changes to systems or procedures suggested by the nature and pattern of the complaints or appeals received. The outcome of such monitoring may also be used to inform other processes or activities within the University.