
UNIVERSITY FOR THE CREATIVE ARTS

Applicant Complaints Policy

Background

1. The University for the Creative Arts is committed to delivering to all applicants a high quality, efficient and fair admissions service. However, we recognise that there may be occasions when applicants will feel that they have cause for complaint.
2. The University will seek to ensure that all complaints are treated seriously, positively and constructively. It will also seek to ensure that complaints are dealt with promptly, with fairness and consistency and with due regard to the University's Equality & Diversity Policy. If a complaint is upheld, the University will take appropriate action and will do so promptly. If a complaint is not upheld, the reasons for the decision will be communicated to the applicant.
3. Applicants have no right of appeal against the academic decision not to offer them a place at the University. Providing that the decision can be shown to have been reached fairly and in accordance with the University's published entry requirements and selection criteria, the original decision will not be overturned. However, should an applicant believe that the University's admissions procedures have been inconsistently or incorrectly applied, these complaints procedures will provide the mechanism for review by the Head of Admissions (UK) / Head of International Admissions.
4. The vast majority of applicant complaints can be handled fairly, amicably, and to the satisfaction of all concerned without recourse to the formal complaints procedure. In the first instance, applicants with a complaint should raise it informally with the relevant member of staff. If this course of action proves unsatisfactory, then the formal complaints procedure detailed below should be followed.
5. An applicant who wishes to make a formal complaint must lodge his/her complaint in writing with the Head of Admissions (UK) / Head of International Admissions within 30 working days of the action causing concern. Complaints received after 30 days will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. A complaint made by e-mail will be accorded the same level of thorough consideration and will be addressed within the same timescale as any other written complaint.
6. If a complaint is not resolved on an informal basis and moves to a formal complaint, the Head of Admissions (UK) / Head of International Admissions will determine whether there is an initial case to answer.

7. To comply with data protection law, and the University's policy on disclosure, the University will only correspond on any issue regarding an application with the applicant themselves, unless the applicant has provided written permission for the University to discuss it with another person (e.g. a parent, guardian or school adviser) or has identified that person as their proxy.
8. Anonymous complaints will not be dealt with under this procedure. Staff who receive anonymous complaints will be expected to use their discretion and judgement as to how to handle such complaints.
9. It is the University's expectation that the confidentiality of the documentation generated by a complaint will be respected by all parties.
10. Complainants will be advised of the outcome of the investigation in writing by the Head of Admissions (UK) or the Head of International Admissions within 30 working days of receipt of the initial complaint. This will include the decision as to whether the complaint has been upheld or rejected and will include an indication of the evidence on which the decision has been based.
11. Formal complaints referred to the Head of Admissions (UK) or the Head of International Admissions will be monitored and a report will be received on an annual basis to Academic Board, which may inform future policies and procedures.
12. Applicants' complaints may only be made through this Applicant Complaints Procedure. The University operates a separate Student Complaints Policy for registered students who wish to raise complaints about aspects of their student experience once they have been accepted (and started) on their course. Applicants are not eligible to make use of the Student Complaints Policy.

Informal Complaints Procedure

13. If possible the informal complaint should initially be directed to the Campus Registry Office or to UK or International Admissions, depending on the source of the complaint.
14. The informal complaint must normally be made within 14 working days of the actions (or lack of actions) that prompted the complaint. The appropriate staff member shall respond to the complaint normally within 10 working days of a complaint being received and will retain a record of the correspondence and any action taken. If it proves impossible to respond in full within ten working days, the complainant shall be informed of the timescale for the receipt of a full response.
15. Responses to informal complaints should include details of the formal complaint process. If the complainant does not feel the complaint has been satisfactorily resolved, he/she may choose to submit a formal complaint.

Formal Complaints Procedure

16. A formal letter (or email) of complaint should be submitted to the Head of Admissions (UK) or the Head of International Admissions within 30 working days of the action causing concern, stating clearly the complaint, outlining the case in full and how the complaint has been pursued to date including full details and the outcome of any informal complaint made. Complaints received after 30 days will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.
17. All complaints should be made by the complainant, not a third party. Complaints should be emailed to admissions@uca.ac.uk / internationaladmissions@uca.ac.uk or addressed to the Head of Admissions (UK) / Head of International Admissions, University for the Creative Arts at Farnham, Falkner Road, Farnham, Surrey GU9 7DS.
18. The Head of Admissions (UK) or the Head of International Admissions shall reply to the complainant within 7 working days stating that the complaint is being dealt with and that a full, written reply will be sent within 30 working days of receipt of the complaint.
19. All complaints received will be referred to the appropriate School or department. In the case of a complaint made against a member of staff, this will normally be the person with line management responsibility for that member of staff. Where a complaint includes an allegation of serious misconduct by a member of staff, the investigation of that part of the complaint may be informed by the relevant internal HR policies and procedures.
20. The appropriate department or line manager will have 10 working days to send a response to the Head of Admissions (UK) or the Head of International Admissions. Clear and reasonable timescales relating to how long a complainant has to respond to requests will be provided with requests for additional information requested.
21. All complaints will be fully investigated and the complainant will receive a written communication advising them of the outcome and the grounds on which the Head of Admissions (UK) or the Head of International Admissions has reached their decision.
22. Complaints from applicants who have applied to a UCA course delivered at a partner institution should be sent to the admissions team which manages the application process. For the degree course delivered at the Royal School of Needlework, this would be the Head of Admissions (UK) or the Head of International Admissions at UCA in line with this procedure. For other partners, this would be the Admissions team at the partner institution.

Appeal

23. If on receipt of the formal written response, the applicant is dissatisfied with either the response or the way the complaint has been dealt with, the applicant may appeal within 10 working days of receipt of the decision, stating what remains unresolved. This appeal should be made to the Director of Academic Services, who will review the case and either:
 - i) confirm that the complaint has been resolved satisfactorily or
 - ii) resolve the complaint.
24. Applicants have no right of appeal against the academic decision not to offer them a place at the University.
25. The applicant will be notified in writing of the decision within 15 working days of receipt of the appeal.