



Writtle
University
College

Writtle University College

Complaints and Appeals Procedure for Applicants to Higher Education Courses

Writtle University College
Lordship Road, Chelmsford
Essex, CM1 3RR

Tel: +44 (0)1245 424200
Fax: +44 (0)1245 420456
Email: info@writtle.ac.uk
www.writtle.ac.uk



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Complaints and Appeals Procedure for Applicants to Higher Education Courses

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1. Purpose and scope

- 1.1 This procedure should be used where you are dissatisfied with the conduct of the University College's admissions process, or where you wish to appeal the outcome of an admissions decision. It sets out the basis on which the University College will consider complaints about its admissions procedures and clarifies what applicants may do if they wish to request a review of a decision.
- 1.2 This procedure concerns applications made to higher education courses at undergraduate, postgraduate taught or postgraduate research level. A separate procedure exists for appealing or raising a complaint about admission to further education courses.
- 1.3 Separate procedures exist for current students or those who have recently left the University College, as follows:
 - Complaints: http://writtle.ac.uk/pdfs/complaints_procedure.pdf
 - Academic appeals: http://writtle.ac.uk/pdfs/Academic_Appeal_Procedures.pdf

Complaints

- 1.4 A complaint is a specific concern related to a procedural error, irregularity or maladministration in the admissions procedures or policies, or about the treatment or service provided by WUC staff involved in the admissions process. Complaints about external bodies (such as UCAS, the Student Loans Company or Research Councils) cannot be accepted and must be submitted to the relevant organisation.
- 1.5 Complaints must be made by the applicant to the University College. If a complaint is received from a parent, teacher, other adviser or relevant person, we must have written permission from the applicant to discuss their application with this third party.

Any applicant may use the procedure, whether they have applied via UCAS or direct to the University College.

- 1.6 The University College will not normally respond to anonymous complaints.
- 1.7 Applicants and any individual against whom complaints are made may expect complaints to be dealt with confidentially and that their privacy will be respected. However, it may be necessary to disclose information to others in order to deal with the complaint; in these circumstances the parties concerned will be informed of such disclosure.
- 1.8 A complaint will not result in the amendment of an admissions decision.

Appeals

- 1.9 An appeal is a request for a formal review of an admissions decision, or the wording/terms/conditions of an offer, and asks the University College to check that it was made fairly on the basis of all the evidence submitted.
- 1.10 You may also use this procedure to dispute the decision made by the University College about your fee status (i.e. home or overseas for fee purposes).
- 1.11 The following are not grounds for appeal and will normally be rejected automatically by the Head of Registry and Admissions:
 - a) appeals against the academic judgement of the University College;
 - b) appeals where the application was received after the published deadline;
 - c) retrospective reporting of extenuating circumstances that might have been reasonably made known at the time of application;
 - d) failure by the applicant to attain the entry qualifications specified as a condition of the offer.
- 1.12 There is no right of appeal against the University College's decision in relation to your eligibility for WUC bursaries or scholarships. However, you may make a complaint if you believe that you have not been considered for an award because of a procedural error.

2. Principles

- 2.1 Complaints or appeals should be submitted as soon as possible and no later than 30 days of the admissions decision being communicated to you, or of any particular alleged incident or action.
- 2.2 The University College will ensure that all complaints and appeals are dealt with promptly, fairly and consistently. If a complaint is upheld or an appeal accepted, the University College will take the appropriate action and will do so promptly. If the complaint is not upheld or the appeal is rejected, the reason for the decision will be communicated in a timely manner to the applicant.

- 2.3 No applicant will be disadvantaged in any way because they have chosen to submit a complaint or appeal under this procedure.
- 2.4 The University College reserves the right to terminate or suspend consideration of an appeal or complaint where an appellant or complainant's behaviour is unreasonable or disruptive, including where WUC staff are subject to abuse or harassment.
- 2.5 Any questions relating to this procedure should be submitted to admissions@writtle.ac.uk.

3. Procedure for submitting a complaint or an appeal

- 3.1 The University Colleges operates a three-stage process for complaints made about the admissions process.

Stage 1 – Feedback

- 3.2 You may express concerns about any aspect of the admissions process by writing to admissions@writtle.ac.uk. The Head of Registry and Admissions will respond to the issue within ten (10) working days, having sought input from academic and other staff as necessary.

Stage 2 – Formal complaint/appeal

- 3.3 If you are not satisfied with the feedback provided by the University College at stage 1, you can submit a formal complaint or appeal using the forms provided on the WUC website and available as appendices to this procedure. All applicant complaints and appeals should be submitted to admissions@writtle.ac.uk.
- 3.4 The University College will acknowledge your complaint/appeal within three (3) working days and will formally respond within twenty (20) working days. If for any reason this timescale cannot be met, we will inform you in writing and will keep you updated on the progress being made towards addressing your complaint/appeal.

Stage 3 – Review

- 3.5 If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of stage 2, you may request a stage 3 review of your complaint/appeal. A stage 3 review will only be considered on the following grounds:
 - a) that there was a procedural irregularity which rendered the process leading to the decision taken in respect of your complaint or appeal unfair (for example, there was a material failure by the University College to follow this procedure, or there is evidence of bias); and/or

- b) that material which you could not reasonably have been expected to produce at the time of the decision taken in respect of your complaint or appeal calls into question the appropriateness of that decision; and/or
 - c) that the decision taken in respect of your appeal or complaint was manifestly unreasonable (i.e. no reasonable decision-maker, properly directing him/herself, and taking into account the relevant facts, could have reached that decision).
- 3.6 A stage 3 review must be made within ten (10) working days of the stage 2 decision being communicated to you and should be submitted in writing to the University College Secretary (secretary@writtle.ac.uk). You must explain how your request for a stage 3 review falls within one or more of the grounds set out in section 3.5 and you should state your case clearly and succinctly, with supporting evidence as appropriate.
- 3.7 The University Secretary will appoint a suitably qualified member of senior staff with no previous involvement in the case to assess the basis for the review and the evidence provided by you.
- 3.8 The University College will formally respond with the outcome of the stage 3 review within twenty (20) working days of you submitting the request. If for any reason this timescale cannot be met, we will inform you in writing and will keep you updated on the progress being made towards addressing your complaint/appeal. The outcome will be provided to you in writing, with reasons for the decision taken.
- 3.9 There can be no further internal review or appeal of the decision taken under stage 3 of this procedure.

4. Record keeping and data protection

- 4.1 Information relating to applicant complaints and appeals will be kept for a period of six (6) years.
- 4.2 The University College collects data on applicant complaints and appeals and outcomes at stages 2 and 3 of this procedure. It uses the data (a) internally for reporting, evaluation, learning and training; and (b) externally for discussion with regulators in the higher education sector. This data will at all times be anonymised.
- 4.3 Your personal data and sensitive personal data as defined by the Data Protection Act (DPA) 1998 or the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) may be disclosed to the University College's members of staff and regulators only for the purposes of dealing with complaints or appeals under this procedure. Personal data will not be shared with any other third parties unless the University College has your express permission, has a statutory obligation to do so, or is otherwise permitted to do so under the DPA/GDPR.