

# The London Interdisciplinary School

## Applicant Complaints and Appeals Procedure

### Introduction

This procedure is in place for those circumstances in which an applicant is dissatisfied with the conduct of the School's student selection process, or with its outcome. It describes the basis on which the School will consider complaints about its admissions procedures, and clarifies what applicants may do if they wish to request a review of an admissions decision. It has been developed in line with published guidance from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA), SPA (Good Practice Statement on Applicant Complaints and Appeals), QAA and CMA.

Separate and distinct complaints and appeals procedures exist for students who are studying or have studied at the School (Academic Appeals Procedure, Student Complaints Procedure).

### Principles

The School welcomes applications from all candidates who have the potential to succeed on its programme and who will make a positive contribution to the life of the School. The School is committed to operating fair, efficient, consistent and transparent admissions procedures, and is committed to equality and diversity in this as in all of its activities.

Information relating to the Applicant Complaints and Appeals Procedure will be clear, intelligible, and made available to students at student research, application and offer stage.

The School will ensure that all applicant complaints and appeals are investigated thoroughly, promptly and with due regard to the confidentiality and privacy of all parties. 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.

Any applicant may use this Applicant Complaints and Appeals Procedure, whether they have applied via UCAS or direct to the School.

No applicant will be disadvantaged because they have exercised their rights under the procedure.

The School will ensure that staff working in recruitment, selection and admissions roles are familiar with this Procedure and their responsibilities under them.

### Policies

Applicants may choose to challenge the School's admissions processes and decisions on the following grounds:

- An applicant may raise a *complaint* regarding a specific procedural error, irregularity, or maladministration in LIS's admissions process.
- An applicant may *appeal* an admissions decision, or the wording/terms/conditions of an offer, or a pre-entry fee status decision, on the grounds that the decision/offer was not made fairly on the basis of the evidence originally submitted.

Applicants may not appeal against admissions decisions based on the academic judgment of the School staff about their suitability for entry to a particular programmes.

An admissions appeal shall not be considered where the applicant does not meet any criteria specified for entry to the programme of study. Further, the School will not review an admissions decision simply because an applicant disagrees with or wishes to challenge the admissions criteria set by the School.

An applicant may submit an appeal or complaint only on their own behalf; a complaint or appeal submitted by a third party will not be accepted unless accompanied by written authorisation by the applicant. Given that all investigations must be evidence-based, the School cannot accept anonymous complaints or appeals under this procedure.

Applicants are expected to respond promptly to requests for additional information or documentation. In the case of appeals, delays in applicant responses to such requests may result in a place no longer being available for them in the current year of entry, should the appeal be upheld.

There is no right of appeal against the School's decisions on student eligibility for financial support. However, an applicant may make a complaint if they believe that there has been a procedural problem with the School's financial support allocation and awarding system.

## **Procedures**

The School's Applicant Complaints and Appeals Procedure follows a two-stage approach.

Applicants are encouraged to seek advice via the informal process in the first instance. An issue cannot be resolved informally, it may be escalated to formal investigation and determination.

Before submitting an application for an appeal or complaint, applicants are encouraged to review the School's general, programme-specific and discretionary criteria applying to admission for the programme for which they have applied. This information is available on the School's website.

### *Informal Stage*

Where applicants meet the admissions requirements stated for a programme of study but have not received an offer of a place, or are dissatisfied with the way in which the admissions process has been conducted, they are entitled to ask for feedback from the School by contacting the Admissions Office before submitting an appeal or complaint.

The School Admissions Office will then make every reasonable effort to explain procedures, clarify decision-making processes, and provide assurance as to the robustness of the admissions process, allay concerns or otherwise respond to the issue raised. In cases where an applicant is concerned about the reason for an unsuccessful application or financial support decision, the School Admissions Office will provide feedback to the applicant about reasons for the admissions decision.

#### *Formal investigation and determination*

Where an applicant is not satisfied that their complaint has been resolved informally; or where the applicant believes the admissions decision contained any element of unfairness or error, the applicant can submit a formal complaint or appeal. Applicants making a formal complaint or appeal are required to do so in writing, by dated letter or email, to the School's Head of Admissions, including specific details of their complaint/appeal, supporting evidence, and a statement of the action or remedy sought if the complaint/appeal is upheld. Formal complaints and appeals must be made within 15 working days of receipt of the admissions decision letter. Upon receipt of an admissions complaint or appeal, the Admissions Office will issue the applicant with an acknowledgement of receipt within five working days, which the applicant must retain as proof that a complaint or appeal has been submitted.

Formal investigation and determination of a complaint or appeal is conducted by the School's Head of Admissions and the Learning Director; or, where this is inappropriate (i.e., if one or both of these staff members is the subject of the complaint, or the maker of the decision which is being appealed), by the Director of Student Experience and/or another member of the School's Executive Committee. The relevant School staff members will review the complaint/appeal to ensure that the appropriate admissions procedures were followed and that the decision was reasonable; where necessary and appropriate, they will liaise with other members of the staff involved in the admissions process.

The applicant is then provided with a written outcome, including reasons for the decision, within 28 working days from the receipt of the appeal or complaint.

If a complaint is upheld, the School will take appropriate action or provide an appropriate remedy (this could, for example, include an apology or an undertaking to revise admissions procedures).

If an appeal is successful, the School will look again at its original admissions or fee status decision. These decisions may change as a result; however this is not guaranteed. If a selection decision is changed as a result of an appeal, all reasonable efforts will be made to

ensure that the relevant application can proceed for the academic year in question. If this is not possible, deferred entry, or an application for this, may be facilitated.

Once a decision has been made by the reviewers on an applicant complaint or appeal, that decision is final.

The School will not usually consider new information about an applicant's qualifications or circumstances if this should have been made available as part of the original application. New information may be accepted in cases such as where a third party has made an error affecting the School's judgement of the applicant's suitability, where there has been a misinterpretation of the information/data contained within the original application, or where medical or other mitigating circumstances can be shown to have affected the quality of the original application. The School reserves the right to decide whether new evidence can be considered on these grounds.

The School Admissions Office will maintain a record of each applicant complaint and appeal detailing: the grounds for the application; whether the process was completed in accordance with procedure and the specified timescales; the outcome of the complaint/appeal; and the profile by protected characteristics of the applicants. A report on admissions appeals and complaints shall be made annually to the Academic Council, including: comments on any identifiable patterns in the admissions appeals and complaints applications; feedback from applicants on their experience of the admissions complaints and appeals process; the efficiency with which the processes were administered; recommendations for changes to the procedures based upon internal experience and external changes in legislation or best practice guidelines; and a comparison of the results of the analysis with those from previous years.

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