

**Higher Education Admissions
Application Feedback, Appeals &
Complaints Policy for The Open
University awards 2020-21**

To be read in conjunction with the HE Admissions
Policy

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**South Essex College of Further & Higher Education
February 2020 (Draft)**

Higher Education Applicant feedback, appeals and complaints

Introduction

This policy and procedure relates to students studying for The Open University awards at South Essex College. Version 1.0 of this policy was drafted by and the responsibility of the Faculty of Higher Education (HE). This policy has now been updated to reflect the new structure outside of the Faculty of HE where The OU HE provision continues to reside, but with changed oversight and quality assurance arrangements within that structure.

Although the College does not provide automatic feedback to every unsuccessful applicant, we are happy to provide written feedback upon request. The following information provides details of the College's Applicant feedback policy, as well as details about the complaints and appeals procedures for applicants. These policies and procedures would also apply to former students of the College who had been unsuccessful in gaining re-admission (whether to their former programme or to another subject).

Feedback (defined as a request for information on why an application was unsuccessful)

- All applications to South Essex College are considered fairly, equally and in line with the College's admissions policy.
- The College believes in a holistic approach to selection. In considering applications the College therefore takes into account all aspects of the application, including qualifications achieved to date, any predicted results on qualifications that are still pending, personal statement, relevant work experience, academic reference, any mitigating circumstances that we are alerted to (such as long-term illness or personal difficulties which can be emailed in support of the application to HEadmissions@southessex.ac.uk and any contextual data. On occasion, the College may also ask for additional information, which might include additional or updated references, further information on qualifications (including transcripts), an additional or enhanced personal statement, examples of work, a set essay and/or an interview. In taking the decision to offer or reject, the College is therefore taking into account all the information that has been made available to the College.
- All decisions are checked by the HE Admissions Team.
- The College does not write automatically to unsuccessful applicants, but communicates the decision via email (*Note*: the exception to this are former students seeking re-admission or part time applications, where the decision will be issued in writing by the HE Admissions team direct to the applicant).
- The College is, however, happy to provide written feedback (upon request) to unsuccessful applicants, in accordance with the procedures set out below and as outlined in the Higher Education Admissions Policy.
- If applicants have additional information to submit in support of their application, this can be provided as part of the request for feedback.
- The most common reason for an application to be declined is that the applicant *either* does not meet a specific entry requirement (for example, having GCSE Grade C or above English/Maths or a suitable alternative qualification) *or* does not have (or is not likely to achieve) the required grades for admission (i.e. our standard offer level) as advertised in our Prospectus. Unsuccessful applicants are therefore strongly encouraged to check the College's Prospectus and College website entry profile for details of specific entry requirements *before* requesting feedback.

- If an applicant wishes to receive feedback then this will be provided on request to the CMA Compliance and Information Manager at HEadmissions@southessex.ac.uk or requested in writing to the following address:

CMA Compliance and Information Manager
 South Essex College
 HE Admissions
 4th Floor Luker Road
 Southend on Sea Essex
 SS1 1ND UK

- The request should include the applicant's full name (as declared on the application form), SEC ID number (where relevant) and programme(s) applied for. The letter/email should state that the applicant is seeking feedback on their rejection.
- Please note that requests for feedback **must** be submitted within the same admissions cycle as the application about which the feedback is requested.
- When the request for feedback arrives, the applicant will be sent a letter or email acknowledging receipt of the request and giving an indication of the date by which they can expect to receive written feedback. Whilst every effort will be made to respond to requests quickly, at certain times of year this is not possible. The College will aim to respond within 28 working days, but the acknowledgment letter will give a better indication of the expected length of time required to reply.
- Feedback, where appropriate, may include advice on possible courses of action. Advice on possible courses of action is merely guidance aimed at helping the applicant. Applicants are reminded that independent guidance is also available from advisers within their existing school or college or from careers services or Connexions service and applicants should consider consulting these sources for help.
- Requests for feedback should normally come from the applicant. The College will not respond to requests for feedback from those advising applicants (whether parents, guardians, teacher or careers advisers) *unless* that individual/parent has been explicitly appointed (in writing) to act on behalf of the applicant. A copy of the written authority to act for the applicant would need to be provided along with the request for feedback. In the vast majority of cases, however, the College would expect to receive the request for feedback direct from the applicant.

Appeals (An appeal is defined as more formal and would be a request for a formal review of the outcome of an admissions decision)

- Applicants do *not* have a right of appeal against the *academic judgment* of the College. However, if following receipt of feedback (as detailed above), an applicant feels that an error has occurred, they have the right to request a formal review of the selection decision on one of the following grounds:
 - (1) pertinent information was missing from the original application;
 - (2) there has been a misinterpretation of information or data contained within the original application; and/or
 - (3) there was a procedural anomaly in the handling of the application.

This review can only be requested after an applicant has received feedback on the reason for their original rejection. The request for a review must then be placed (in writing) within 28 calendar days of the feedback being sent to the applicant, stating clearly on what grounds the request for a review is being made. This request should be sent to the Vice Principal Quality and Compliance, South Essex College, Luker Road, Southend on Sea, Essex SS1 1ND, UK or emailed to ITTeam@southessex.ac.uk for the attention of the Vice Principal Quality and Compliance.

- As with the original request for feedback, the subsequent request for a review *must* be made by the applicant and not a third party. The College will not respond to requests from anyone other than the applicant (unless written permission has been granted by the applicant).
- Once received, the Vice Principal Quality and Compliance will review the record of the application (normally in consultation with the relevant Admissions Tutor) and will respond by letter or email. If the original decision is upheld, this correspondence will include the reasons for the decision.
- A separate fee status appeals process exists for applicants who wish to challenge their fee status assessment and these must be directed in the first instance to HEadmissions@southessex.ac.uk

Complaints (A complaint is normally a specific concern related to a procedural error, irregularity or maladministration in the admissions procedures or policies)

- Complaints are different to requests for feedback or appeals.
- A complaint does not necessarily have to be in connection with a decision to turn down an applicant. A complaint is a concern about a particular procedure, an irregularity in the administration of an application, or a belief that a policy has not been correctly implemented. Complaints may cover any aspect of the admissions process and will normally focus on a specific issue or situation (which could include the feedback request). A complaint does not necessarily question the decision of the College, but raises a concern about how the selection process has been managed.
- As with requests for feedback and appeals, the complaint must come from the applicant. The complaint must be submitted within three months of the conclusion of the admissions process against which the complaint is being made. Complaints must initially be sent (in writing or by email) to

Student Services
South Essex College
Luker Road
Southend On Sea Essex
SS1 1ND UK

or should be emailed to ComplimentsComplaints@southessex.ac.uk.
The Compliments & Complaints Policy can be found on the College website at <https://www.southessex.ac.uk/compliments-and-complaints-procedure-0>