

Applicant feedback, appeals and complaints

Although we do not provide automatic feedback to every unsuccessful applicant, we are happy to provide written feedback upon request.

The following information provides details of the University's 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 University who had been unsuccessful in gaining re-admission (whether to their former course or to another subject).

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

All applications to the University of Sussex are considered fairly, equally and in line with the University's admissions policy.

The University believes in a holistic approach to selection. In considering applications we therefore take into account all aspects of the application, including qualifications achieved to date (as well as those still pending), the Personal Statement within the Academic Interests section of the application, relevant work experience, the academic references and the research proposal.

On occasions, we 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.

With research degree applications we also need to consider the availability of an appropriate supervisor(s) for the intended area of research. In taking the decision to offer or reject, we are therefore taking into account all the information that has been made available to us.

As each application is assessed on its own strengths and merits, the relative weight placed on these different aspects of selection varies from applicant to applicant, and between different courses.

If an applicant is unsuccessful they will be notified by email. The decision will also be visible via Postgraduate Apply for those who have applied using the postgraduate online application. We are, however, happy to provide written feedback (upon request) to unsuccessful applicants who are unclear why they have been unsuccessful, in accordance with the procedures set out below.

If applicants have additional information to submit in support of their application, this can be provided as part of the request for feedback.

Applicants are asked to note that the most common reasons for an application to be declined are that the applicant does not have (or is not likely to achieve) the required grades and/or level of qualification in an appropriate area of study, or that an appropriate supervisor for the intended area of research is not available.

Admission to the University of Sussex is competitive and we do not normally take students with grades or qualifications lower than those advertised in the Postgraduate Prospectus.

Unsuccessful applicants are therefore strongly encouraged to check the University's Prospectus for details of both standard offers and any specific entry requirements before requesting feedback.

If an applicant wishes to receive feedback they should put the request in writing and submit by post or email as below:

Postgraduate Admissions
Sussex House
University of Sussex
Falmer
Brighton
BN1 9RH

or email phd.applicants@sussex.ac.uk

The request should include the applicant's full name (as declared in the application), applicant number and course(s) applied for. The request should state that the applicant is seeking feedback on their rejection and should, ideally, confirm that they have read this policy document.

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. We 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.

Requests for feedback should normally come from the applicant. The University will not respond to requests for feedback from a third party unless that individual has been explicitly appointed (in writing) to act on behalf of the applicant. In the vast majority of cases the University would expect to receive the request for feedback direct from the applicant.

Appeals (defined as a request for a review of an unsuccessful decision)

Applicants do not have a right of appeal against the academic judgment of the University. However, if following receipt of feedback, 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 twenty-eight 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 or emailed as below:

Head of the Admissions Office
Sussex House
University of Sussex
Brighton
BN1 9RH
UK

or email phd.applicants@sussex.ac.uk

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 University will not respond to requests from anyone other than the applicant (unless written permission has been granted by the applicant).

Once received, the Head of Research Student Administration will review the record of the application (normally in consultation with the relevant Admissions Selector) and will respond in writing. 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.

Please note that it is not possible to appeal against the decision of the University's Criminal Convictions Panel. If you have declared a relevant criminal conviction and, following consideration by the Criminal Convictions Panel, the University has decided not to offer you a place (or to withdraw an existing offer), this decision is final.

Complaints (defined as a concern about an aspect of the admissions process, which is not necessarily connected to the selection decision)

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 University, but raises a concern about how the selection process operated.

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) as below:

Head of the Admissions Office
Sussex House
University of Sussex
Brighton
BN1 9RH
UK

or email phd.applicants@sussex.ac.uk

The Head of the Admissions Office will seek to resolve the complaint or explain the situation and will respond in writing to the applicant.

If the applicant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint from the Head of the Admissions Office, the complaint can be passed to the Head of the Office of Complaints, Conduct and Funding.

This escalation of the complaint must be submitted in writing within twenty-eight calendar days of receiving the response from the Head of the Admissions Office.

The complaint should be sent to:

Head of the Office of Complaints, Conduct and Funding
Level 1, Bramber House
University of Sussex
Brighton BN1 9QU

Email complaints@sussex.ac.uk

The Head of the Office of Complaints, Conduct and Funding will review the case on the following grounds:

1. whether there were procedural irregularities in the investigation of the complaint; or
2. whether fresh evidence can be presented which was not or could not reasonably have been made available to the Head of Research Student Administration; or
3. whether the finding of the previous investigation was against the weight of the evidence.

The Head of the Office of Complaints, Conduct and Funding will notify the applicant of the outcome of the complaint in writing. Their decision is final.