

UCAS Complaints Policy

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Version:

3.0

Date:

28th November 2023

1. Purpose

This policy is designed to ensure that anyone using services through UCAS, has a clear and easily accessible means of raising a complaint. It aims to provide a clear understanding of what complaints can be investigated by UCAS and outlines processes in place to handle all complaints in a fair, transparent, and timely manner.

2. Scope

This policy applies to any external customer raising a complaint with UCAS, whether as a student, adviser, agent, Higher Education Provider, employer, organisation, or individual using a paid for or free service from UCAS or our trading subsidiaries.

3. Policy

3.1 Foreword

UCAS aims to provide a great experience for everyone who uses our services. While we strive to achieve this, we recognise that, on occasion, things may not work as intended and customers may not be satisfied with the service received.

This policy outlines our approach to complaints handling. We hope it offers reassurance and a clear route for raising a complaint.

3.2 What sort of complaints can I raise with UCAS?

We are happy to address any complaint relating to a service or information provided by UCAS. Examples of this include:

- Information on our website (with the potential exception of our Search Tools, where some information is maintained by universities and colleges).
- The behaviour of a member of UCAS staff
- A UCAS Scheme, policy, or procedure (e.g. Welsh Language Scheme)
- A technical issue with our online services (the website, Application, etc.)
- How a third party uses a UCAS service (please see section 3.4 for more information)

3.3 What if my complaint is not to do with UCAS?

It is important to know that we are not an ombudsman or a regulator and do not hold authority over the processes and decisions of other organisations. We cannot investigate complaints about:

- **Student finance.** These would need to be raised directly with the relevant student finance body e.g. Student Finance England or Student Awards Agency for Scotland
- **Exam results/marking.** These need to be raised with the exam board in questions, e.g. AQA or Edexcel, via the relevant school or college's exams officer.

- **College, Conservatoire or University.** We are unable to comment on the university or college's own processes or procedures, including their decision whether to offer a place. These would need to be raised with the college or university directly.
- **School or College.** We are unable to investigate advice, information given by a school or college supporting applicants with their application, e.g. errors in predicted grades or the reference. These need to be raised with the school, college, or referee directly.
- **Employer or Apprenticeship Provider.** We are unable to comment on an employer or apprenticeship provider's own processes or procedures. They are responsible for their own entry requirements and selection, and will be subject to normal employment rules and requirements. These need to be raised with the employer or apprenticeship provider directly.
- **Whistleblowing on other organisations.** Whistleblowing is a process for employees to raise concerns internally, within their own organisation. UCAS is unable to investigate whistleblowing in other organisations, this should be raised with them directly.

If you are not certain if it is an area that UCAS has responsibility for, please send it through to us and we will review. If we are not responsible, we will respond to let you know and, where possible, direct you to the correct channel for raising the complaint.

3.4 What if my complaint is about how another organisation uses UCAS services?

These will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and where it is found there is a part for UCAS to play, the complaint may be investigated. If you are not certain if it is an area that UCAS can look in to or comment on, please send it through to us and we will review.

With any complaint about a third party's use of UCAS services, we may need to contact the organisation to carry out further checks and verify information in line with our [Privacy Policy](#). Whilst we will take any reasonable steps to protect anonymity, we cannot guarantee this in all cases and there may be some instances where it is necessary for us to name you.

Please be aware that we may not be able to confirm the outcomes of the complaint, due to the involvement of other organisations and individuals. It is also not guaranteed that UCAS will be able to take further action and we may need to refer you to another organisation, such as an ombudsman/regulator.

3.5 Can I just talk it through first, without raising a complaint?

Absolutely. We are happy to talk through any issues you are having and see what we can do to help. Many situations can be resolved this way. To get in touch with the right team:

If you are an applicant or calling on behalf of one, contact the [Customer Experience Centre](#).

If you are an adviser at a school or college, contact the [Customer Success Team](#).

If you are from a university or college, contact the [Customer Success Team](#) or your Customer Success Director.

If it relates to a commercial product or service, contact the [Customer Success Team](#) or your Customer Success Director.

If it relates to the UCAS International App, contact the [UCAS International Team](#)
If you are a journalist, all media enquiries can be raised with our [Communications Team](#)

3.6 How do I raise a formal complaint with UCAS?

If the team are unable to help address the complaint and you do wish to raise it further, the next step would be to raise it with us formally. A formal complaint can be raised via:

Email:

complaints@ucas.ac.uk

Letter:

Complaints Team
UCAS
Rosehill
New Barn Lane
Cheltenham
GL52 3LZ

3.7 When should I raise the complaint?

We always recommend raising the complaint at the earliest opportunity after the interaction or cause of the complaint. The sooner it is raised, the more likely it is that we can offer support and help to put things right where needed. We do recommend contacting us within three months of the experience you wish to complain about. All calls to our Customer Experience Centre are recorded for quality & training purposes, but we only retain call recordings for three months and will only be able to listen to previous calls if required as part of our investigation during this time.

In the situation that you contact us longer than three months after the experience, we will attempt to address the complaint to the best of our ability but may be unable to do so fully depending on what information is available to us. We will explain if this is the case.

3.8 What should I include when raising a complaint?

To ensure that we have all the information we need to investigate your complaint, please make sure you include:

- Your name
- Your Personal ID number (if you are an applicant or writing on behalf of one)
- For schools or colleges, please provide your UCAS centre number
- For providers, please confirm your provider name and code.
- A description of your complaint
- Any available information you have that shows the matter you are contacting us about (screenshots, links, etc.)
- What you would like us to do to put things right

3.9 When can I expect a response?

If the complaint is something we can offer a relatively quick answer or solution to, we will send this within 5 working days of receiving it. If not, we will tell you the reason for this within 5 working days and provide an estimated timeframe for you to receive our full reply.

If we find later it is likely to take longer than the original estimated timeframe, we will provide a further update and revised timeframe within 20 working days.

If you have written to us via letter, please take into account the time it will take for us to receive your letter when working out when you will receive a response.

We are dedicated to ensuring accessibility to this process for all. If writing to us is not an option, please [contact us](#) and let us know. We will be happy to discuss alternative options based on your circumstances.

3.10 How do you handle my complaint?

We will first review it and establish an expected timeframe for a response. Please see section 3.9 for more information on this.

We will also review the content of the complaint and make sure that we understand what the matter relates to. Should we need any clarification on this, we will contact you to ensure that we are addressing the matter fully and correctly.

We will then proceed with an investigation. How this is done will depend on the experience you have contacted us about, but it may involve steps such as:

- Listening to recorded calls
- Checking previously exchanged emails
- Interviewing members of staff involved in the matter
- Reviewing available information/documentation
- Asking our technical team to review

Once we have gathered the required information, it will be reviewed and used to establish our position. The decisions can be made based solely on the available evidence.

Our response will explain the gathered evidence in a clear and transparent way. We will also outline any steps we have taken to address the experience you contacted us about or advice that we can offer moving forward.

3.11 What are the potential outcomes of the investigation?

Based on the investigation and available evidence, one of three outcomes will be reached:

- **Upheld** – Based on the available evidence the complaint is found to be justified. In this case, we will do what we can to put the matter right and offer apologies where appropriate.

- **Partially upheld** – Elements of the complaint are found to be justified, whilst other elements are not supported by evidence or were outside of the influence of UCAS. In this case, we will do what we can to put the matters that were justified right and offer apologies where appropriate.
- **Not upheld** – Based on the available evidence, the complaint is found to not be justified or outside of UCAS influence. In this case, we will write back to explain our findings and reasoning for this outcome. We will seek to offer any additional advice or options where we can.

If we are acting to rectify the experience you contacted us about, we will ensure this is carried out at the earliest opportunity. Some resolutions may be possible immediately, while others may take longer to implement depending on the actions required and resource for teams involved. We will ensure that you are made aware of the expected timeframe for this where one can be provided.

3.12 What if I disagree with the response?

We are sorry if this is the case. If you believe there is information that has not been considered, or new information that was not included before, you can write back to the individual who responded. You can request that they review in light of the new information. They will review this and respond within 5 working days (please refer to section 3.9 for timeframes).

If there is no new information that you believe should be considered, but you disagree with the outcome, you can request an escalation. To do this, please write back to the individual who responded requesting this and explaining why you disagree with the outcome. We will make the necessary arrangements.

3.13 How will you handle the escalation?

If an escalation is requested, we will identify a member of staff of the next level of seniority who has not been involved in the case. They will be provided with all information gathered during the initial investigation and the initial response.

They will be asked to review the case and decide if all avenues of investigation have been adequately covered. If they find that there are additional lines of investigation that could be followed, these will be carried out.

Once this has been carried out, they will consider whether the original outcome was unbiased and reasonable. This will also take into consideration any new information that has come to light during the review. You will be sent a response summarising the findings of the further investigation, explaining the reason for the escalation outcome (please refer to section 3.9 for timeframes).

Please be aware that an escalation does not automatically guarantee that the previous decision will be overturned, even if new information has been considered. An escalation outcome will be reached on the basis of the unique circumstances of the case.

3.14 What if I disagree with the escalation outcome?

Once again, we are sorry if this is the case. If this happens, you can write back to request that this be escalated further. We will follow the same process as in section 3.12, identifying an appropriate manager to review the case where relevant.

They will review the case and see if there are any avenues left for investigation. If any are found, they will be carried out and a response will be sent explaining the outcome of this (please refer to section 3.9 for timeframes).

If it is found that the previous investigation was comprehensive and there are no further lines of investigation available, we will send a final response. To avoid any confusion, it will be made clear that it is a final response. It will include a summary of our findings and any actions we are taking as a result.

3.15 What if I disagree with the final response?

We hope that this is not the case, and please rest assured that we will have investigated the matter as thoroughly as possible at this point.

Once we have sent our final response, we will no longer address the matter in question as there will be no avenues left for us to investigate or any relevant information likely to change the outcome. If there are any other routes for escalation external to UCAS, such as a relevant ombudsman or commissioner, we will provide these in our final response. This will depend on the subject of the complaint.

Whilst we will no longer be able to address the original complaint, rest assured that we remain happy to address any new complaints that you may have. These can be raised with us following the same procedures as above.

3.16 Is the complaint held on record?

Yes, we retain a copy of the complaint for our records along with all written communication exchanged during our investigation. This information is retained in case the complaint requires revisiting later, whether for internal purposes (e.g. escalated review) or external (e.g. legal action). It also enables us to monitor ongoing themes, that help inform our developments and improve our systems.

The documentation will be deleted after a 3-year period. Some information about the complaint will be retained to allow us to monitor themes and the success of fixes. The data retained for longer than three years is anonymised so that an individual cannot be identified. The data that will be retained will include:

- Topic of the complaint
- Dates
- Application scheme it related to
- Outcome of the complaint

3.17 Accessibility

If any medical conditions, disabilities, or learning difficulties you have could cause difficulties or delays with the above policy, please let us know. We will consider making reasonable adjustments to ensure you are still able to raise your complaint, such as handling the complaint solely by email or phone.

If you require help with this or are unable to write in, please contact the appropriate team below. They will be able to identify and liaise with the appropriate team for you.

If you are an applicant or calling on behalf of one, contact the [Customer Experience Centre](#).

If you are an adviser at a school or college , contact the [Customer Success Team](#).

If you are from a university or college, contact the [Customer Success Team](#) or your Customer Success Director.

If it relates to a commercial product or service, contact the [Customer Success Team](#) or your Customer Success Director.

If it relates to the UCAS International App, contact the [UCAS International Team](#)

If you are a journalist, all media enquiries can be raised with our [Communications Team](#)

If you have hearing difficulties, you can also call the [Text Relay service](#)

Document Housekeeping:

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Ver.	Date	Purpose	Author
V1.0	25/05/2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing policy moved to new template as version 1. Review and minor amends to add purpose and scope. UCAS internal team names updated. Policy owner changed from Complaints Executive to Chief Operations Officer. Main point of contact changed to Service Standards Manager. 	Service Standards Manager
V2.0	18/05/2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy moved to new template as version 2. Team names and email addresses updated where relevant. 	Service Standards Manager
	05/07/2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy reviewed by key stakeholders and named teams. 	Service Standards Manager
V3.0	15/11/2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy owner role updated to Customer Success Manager Policy reviewed by key stakeholders 	Customer Success Manager
	24/11/2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UCAS International and Media specific process removed to bring in line with general complaints process 	Customer Success Manager

Reviewers

Name	Title	Version Number	Date
Legal and Compliance	Head of Legal and Governance	1.0	04/02/2021
Information Governance	Information Governance Manager	1.0	04/02/2021
UCAS Sales & Marketing	Head of Education Sales	1.0	04/02/2021
	Senior Marketing Manager Digital and Commercial, Customer Success Team Manager	2.0	05/07/2022
	Head of Apprenticeships, Partnerships Manager	3.0	15/11/2023
UCAS International	Lead Business Development Manager, Business Operations Coordinator	1.0	04/02/2021
	Business Operations Coordinator	2.0	05/07/2022
	Customer Success Team Manager,	3.0	15/11/2023

Name	Title	Version Number	Date
	Development Manager, International Development Lead		
Customer Experience	Senior Customer Experience Manager, Adviser Experience Manager, Customer Experience Manager (Providers), Head of Operations Transition, Senior Strategic Relationship Development Manager	1.0	04/02/2021
	Customer Success Manager (B2B), Customer Success Team Manager, Team Coordinators	2.0	05/07/2022
Strategy, Policy & Public Affairs	Public Affairs Advisor	3.0	15/11/2023

Product Approval

Name/Title	Final version approved	Date	Evidence of Sign Off
Chief Operating Officer	V1.0	04/06/2021	Email
Chief Operating Officer	V2.0	05/09/2022	Email
Interim Director of Customer Experience	V3.0	28/11/2023	Email

Review Period: Annual