

Admissions Appeals and Complaints Policy

Introduction

The Admissions Appeals and Complaints policy provides information to applicants about how they can appeal an admissions decision made by Queen Mary University of London (QMUL). The aim is to provide a clear procedure that encompasses both appeals and complaints about admissions services. QMUL seeks to resolve appeals and complaints at an early stage where possible; many problems can be solved informally, without the need for formal procedures. The emphasis of this policy is on handling appeals and complaints in a timely and effective manner as QMUL strives to provide an excellent applicant service in every stage of admissions.

Scope

Applicants who have applied to study an undergraduate or postgraduate programme that is awarded by Queen Mary, and not by a partner institution, are eligible to use this procedure, inclusive of Associate and short-term study students. Programmes administered by Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications, Nanchang University, Northwestern Polytechnical University and the Centre for Academic and Professional Development are not included in the scope of this policy. Undergraduate Medicine and Dentistry applicants should refer to the separate Policy for Admissions to Undergraduate Programmes in Medicine and Dentistry for the relevant appeals and complaints policy: <http://www.smd.qmul.ac.uk/media/smd/documents/admissions-policy.pdf>

Applicants with appeals or complaints about university fee status assessment should refer to the university fee regulations for the academic year of entry of the course for further information on the appeals process: <http://www.qmul.ac.uk/tuition-fee-regulations/index.html>.

The admissions appeals and complaints policy is only applicable to applicants to a programme of study; once a student has enrolled at QMUL, the admissions policy is no longer applicable. Current students should refer to the student appeals, complaints and conduct office for further information: <http://www.arcs.qmul.ac.uk/students/student-appeals/index.html>

All appeals and complaints made to QMUL will be handled confidentially and only shared with relevant staff where necessary for the purpose of these procedures.

Definitions

Admissions appeal: An appeal is referring to the admissions decision on an application to study a programme at QMUL, either at the offer stage or confirmation of results.

Admissions complaint: A complaint is regarding a specific concern about the admissions service provided in the course of making an application to study, which could be unrelated to the decision on the application.

Grounds for Appeals

Applicants should note that the most common reason for unsuccessful application for admission to a programme is that the applicant does not meet the entry requirements either in terms of the subject(s) required or achievement of the required grades. Applications may also be declined where the programme is full for the period for which the application is made.

An applicant may appeal on one or more of the following grounds:

- i. Procedural error where the process leading to the decision being appealed against was not conducted in accordance with QMUL's procedure, such that there is reasonable doubt as to whether the outcome might have been different had the error not occurred.
- ii. Exceptional circumstances, illness, or other relevant factors that had, for good reason, not been made known at the time of application or had not been taken into account properly.

'Good reason' requires an applicant to demonstrate circumstances outside his/her control that prevented the relevant factors being disclosed at the time of application. Personal embarrassment or an unwillingness to disclose personal circumstances do not count as 'good reason' for the purposes of this policy.

If claiming the grounds for appeal under paragraph ii above, additional information not known at the time of application must be submitted in a timely manner and in advance of any admissions deadlines for QMUL or UCAS for the academic year of entry of the course, ideally by no later than four weeks prior to the relevant deadline. Where the receipt of additional information relating to an appeal is close to stated deadlines the stages in the appeals process may be compressed and QMUL exercises judgement in this matter. Any such changes to the appeals process due to late receipt of additional information will be communicated to applicants.

Appeals will be considered when made by the individual applicant but not third party representatives, such as parents, school representatives, or other third parties, unless the applicant's situation is such that they require third party representation.

All appeals will be considered on their merit, however appeals that are based exclusively on one or more of the grounds below will be rejected automatically by the Head of Admissions or designated nominee who has not dealt with the case or been involved in any way:

- i. Appeals against the academic judgement of selectors.
- ii. Appeals where the application was received after the published deadline.
- iii. The retrospective reporting of extenuating circumstances that might have been reasonably made known at the time of application.

- iv. Failure by the applicant to attain the entry qualifications specified as conditions of the offer.

In such cases, the decision of the Head of Admissions or designated nominee who has not dealt with the case or been involved in any way is final.

Appeals Process

The appeals process has three stages:

Informal

- i. QMUL is committed to resolving appeals informally where possible and encourages applicants to engage with this approach as many issues can be resolved without recourse to formal measures.
- ii. Applicants are encouraged to get in touch with QMUL for clarification and feedback regarding an admissions decision, and for further guidance about what actions the applicant can take to resolve the issue.
- iii. The first stage of the appeals process may happen with either the Admissions Office or academic School of study, both of which comprise the informal stage.
- iv. If after feedback and discussion with the relevant Admissions Officer or in liaison with the academic School a satisfactory outcome is not reached, the applicant is welcome to make a formal appeal.

Stage 1 formal

- i. A formal appeal should normally only be submitted after the informal appeal measures have been pursued.
- ii. An applicant must submit a written, formal appeal within 14 working days of the decision on the application in order to be considered. The appeal should outline the grounds under which the decision is being appealed, any evidence to back up this claim, the informal appeal measures already taken, and the reason why the informal appeal discussions were not satisfactory. All formal appeals should be sent to adm-mgrs@qmul.ac.uk
- iii. Any appeal that is submitted outside of the 14 working days since a decision was made on the application will only be considered at the discretion of the Head of Admissions or delegated authority.
- iv. If the Head of Admissions or delegated authority have had prior involvement with an applicant or case which may influence the appeal outcome, they will refer the appeal to a senior colleague within the Academic Registry & Council Secretariat.
- v. The Head of Admissions or delegated authority will consider all Stage 1 formal appeals and will inform the applicant of the appeal outcome in writing within 14 working days of receipt of appeal.

Stage 2 formal

- i. Stage 2 formal appeals are available where the applicant is not satisfied with the reasons given for the Stage 1 formal appeal outcome, where grounds for appeal remain unaddressed, or where further grounds for appeal have occurred in the process of the Stage 1 appeal.

- ii. All Stage 2 formal appeals should be submitted in writing within 7 working days of the Stage 1 appeal outcome. The appeal should include the reason why a Stage 2 formal appeal is necessary and the grounds for the appeal on the application decision. All appeals should be sent to adm-mgrs@qmul.ac.uk
- iii. Once received, all Stage 2 appeals with relevant documents and previous correspondence will be sent to the nominated contact within the School of study of the application for which an appeal is lodged. The nominated contact will ordinarily be the Head of School, or delegated authority, and should be someone who has not had prior involvement with admissions work in the current academic cycle.
- iv. The nominated contact within the School of study will consider the Stage 2 appeal and will provide a written response to the applicant with the appeal outcome within 14 working days.
- v. The decision of School nominated contact is final and there is no recourse to further action within QMUL.

An applicant who submits an appeal will not be discriminated against in any stage of the admissions process, no matter the outcome of the appeal.

Confirmation and late appeals

During the Undergraduate Confirmation and Clearing period, defined as when the UK A levels are released in mid-August through to the end of August, and late postgraduate application or confirmation decisions, defined as applications or results received 2-6 weeks before the start date of the course, there is a modified appeals process in effect.

- i. Applicants are still encouraged to contact QMUL for feedback and clarification on the application decision in the first instance and where time permits, to resolve an appeal informally.
- vi. If the informal stage does not resolve the appeal, the applicant can submit a formal, written appeal within four working days of the decision on the application in order to be considered. The appeal should outline the grounds under which the decision is being appealed, any evidence of the grounds for appeal, such as medical certificates, the informal appeal measures already taken (if any), and the reason why the informal appeal discussions were not satisfactory. All formal appeals should be sent to adm-mgrs@qmul.ac.uk
- ii. The Head of Admissions or delegated authority will liaise with the academic School as necessary as part of the appeal consideration.
- iii. The Head of Admissions or delegated authority will inform the applicant of the appeal outcome or next steps in the appeal process in writing within 48 hours of receipt of appeal.

Due to the period in the admissions cycle and the short timeframe before the start of the course, confirmation and late appeal decisions made by the Head of Admissions or delegated authority are final.

Complaints

Complaints will be considered when made by the individual applicant but not third party representatives, such as parents, school representatives, or other third parties, unless the applicant's situation is such that they require third party representation. Anonymous complaints will be acknowledged but will not be considered under the complaints process.

Complaints must be made in writing and within 14 days of the action or lack of action that was the basis of the complaint to the following email address: adm-mgrs@qmul.ac.uk

Once submitted, QMUL will acknowledge receipt and provide a response within 14 days.

If any complaints take the shape of an admissions appeal, it will be at the discretion of the Head of Admissions to address these complaints under the formal appeals procedure above.

Any complaints logged will be monitored by the Head of Admissions, who is responsible for recommending changes or taking other action in light of the nature of complaints received. A report on the number of complaints received and the outcomes will be considered by the Marketing, Recruitment, and Admissions Group as the delegated authority on behalf of the Senate on an annual basis.

An applicant who submits a complaint will not be discriminated against in any stage of the admissions process, no matter the outcome or nature of the complaint.

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