

GOLDSMITHS
University of London

Feedback, Appeals and Complaints (pre-enrolment) Policy
2019-20

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1. Introductory statement

Goldsmiths is committed to providing a fair and efficient admissions service, and encourages applicants to inform the institution of any difficulties encountered during the admissions process in order that procedures can be regularly reviewed and improved.

We recognise that sometimes an applicant may be disappointed or dissatisfied with the processing or outcome of their application and in this situation we will work with the applicant to resolve any issues raised.

Goldsmiths has processes to help resolve issues – firstly, Goldsmiths can provide feedback on how a decision was reached to help the applicant understand the admissions process. Secondly, if this is not sufficient enough to resolve the issue, Goldsmiths will consider an appeal or complaint under set criteria listed below. It is hoped, therefore, that most queries and complaints can be resolved informally.

This policy is intended for all those who have formally applied to Goldsmiths either via UCAS or directly to the institution and are going through, or have been through, the application process but have not become enrolled students. Once an applicant becomes an enrolled student, different regulations and policies will apply as detailed below.

2. Feedback

Goldsmiths recognises the need to respond to an applicant's request for information as to why an application was deemed unsuccessful. The Admissions Office will provide feedback on an individual basis in response to receiving a formal request from the applicant within 28 days of the request.

Feedback will only be provided in writing. Feedback requests should be emailed to applicant-feedback@gold.ac.uk and include the applicant's full name, and programme title. In line with Data Protection policies, feedback will not be provided to anyone other than the applicant or their nominated person. A nominated person can include an agent where one has been engaged to submit the application. Feedback will usually be sent via email to the email address the applicant has provided on their application form.

UCAS has an online electronic feedback system that enables Higher Education Institutions to provide feedback to all unsuccessful applicants via the standard UCAS transactions, and Goldsmiths routinely uses institution specific codes, relating to key entry criteria, within reject (and withdrawal) decisions. Unsuccessful undergraduate applicants should, therefore, receive preliminary feedback via UCAS Track.

3. Complaints and appeals

A complaint is defined as a statement of dissatisfaction with the manner in which an application has been handled in relation to the institution's admissions policies and procedures. The reasons for such a complaint will include administrative error, the behaviour of a member of Goldsmiths staff or the conduct of an interview (where applicable). If you are unhappy with the decision made by the College on your application, this is referred to as an appeal. We will routinely review a decision as part of a complaint. We will not consider an appeal based on dissatisfaction with the academic judgement underpinning a decision made on an application because this is not a valid ground (see section 4).

We will consider all complaints regarding the processing of an application via three clearly defined stages.

A complaint or appeal must be made by the applicant. Complaints or appeals made on behalf of the applicant such as by parents, representatives, or school will only be considered in exceptional cases where there are clear reasons for doing so. Complaints or appeals that are made anonymously will not be accepted.

Goldsmiths will ensure that all complaints and appeals are dealt with promptly, consistently and fairly. We will seek not to discriminate against any applicant who makes a complaint or appeal.

Stage 1

The first stage will attempt to resolve the issue locally within the Admissions team. A complaint should be lodged in writing as close as possible to the point at which it arises and always within 14 days of the relevant activity. In the first instance, the complaint should be referred to the Head of Admissions by email. Applicants can normally expect a response within 14 days. It is anticipated that it will be possible to resolve the majority of complaints or appeals in this way. If an appeal or complaint is successfully upheld by the Head of Admissions (or nominated individual), the original decision made on the application will be automatically reconsidered. Please note this does not mean that the decision will be taken to automatically offer a place, simply that the application will be considered again and a fresh decision to offer a place, offer an interview, or reject will be made.

A Stage 1 complaint must be submitted before an issue can be escalated to a formal Stage 2 complaint. Goldsmiths will consider a review of the decision made by the Head of Admissions where it is appropriate to do so (at Stage 2). Where appropriate the Head of Admissions may decide to escalate the complaint to Stage 2 immediately without going through the Stage 1 process.

See Appendix 1 for a template form to submit an initial complaint or appeal.

Stage 2

If the applicant remains dissatisfied following the conclusion of Stage 1, within 14 days the applicant can submit a Stage 2 form to refer the matter to the Associate Director (Student Recruitment), giving full details of the case, including the nature of the complaint, any relevant documentation, the dates and details of any previous unsuccessful attempts at resolution. Applicants will be given the opportunity to set-out reasonable steps which may be taken into consideration to resolve the complaint. Applicants can normally expect an acknowledgement of the complaint within seven days, and a communication of the outcome within 21 days.

The Associate Director (or nominated individual) will then conduct a full investigation, with reference to academic and administrative colleagues, including the relevant Head of Department or appointed nominee where applicable. The Associate Director will make a record of the proceedings and, having ensured that the complaints procedure has been fully adhered to and the investigation has been carried out satisfactorily, will then decide whether the complaint will be upheld or dismissed. This decision will be final except where exceptional circumstances can be clearly evidenced to instigate a Stage 3 complaint review.

See Appendix 2 for a template form to submit a Stage 2 complaint.

Stage 3

Applicants dissatisfied with the outcome of a Stage 2 investigation may, in appropriate circumstances, submit a Stage 3 request for review. This must be done within 14 days of the date that they are notified of the Stage 2 outcome. A review request will only be considered if it is based on one or more of the following grounds and can be evidenced:

1. There were procedural irregularities in the investigation of the complaint; or
2. Fresh evidence can be presented which could not reasonably have been made available with submission of the Stage 2 form; or
3. The outcome of the investigation was not reasonable in all the circumstances.

A Stage 3 review will be referred to the Director of Student Experience (or nominated individual) to assess the case at an institutional level. A meeting will be arranged with the relevant members of staff and, following this, a decision will be reached regarding the complaint and the applicant notified of this in writing.

A Stage 3 review will not be considered where it falls outside of this criteria or cannot be evidenced.

This is the final stage of the complaint process and the outcome of this stage is final and further discussion will not be entered into. Exceptionally, in the case of a former Goldsmiths student who has a complaint regarding re-admission to the institution, then a complaint may be escalated to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) if the applicant remains dissatisfied with the decision.

4. Complaints made without grounds or anonymously

We will not consider complaints which are made anonymously or those which we consider to be without grounds. Examples of the type of complaint or appeal which will be considered groundless include:

- Appeals based on dissatisfaction with the academic judgement underpinning a decision made on an application.
- Complaints demanding unreasonable or unrealistic resolution where the merit of the complaint cannot be demonstrated
- Complaints which can be considered obsessive or repetitive and without merit

5. Related policies and further information

The Admissions Office has a number of related policies and procedure documents to aid in the fair and transparent handling of all applications and to provide the best experience to our applicants. These include:

- The Admissions Policy 2019-20
- The Applicant Journey: Roles and Responsibilities
- The Applicant Journey: How We Make Decisions

Contact details for all Admissions staff can be found on our website:
<http://www.gold.ac.uk/staffdirectory/>

6. Appendices

Appendix 1

Stage 1 complaint or appeal will be investigated by the Head of Admissions

Name	
Goldsmiths reference number	
Programme applied for	
Date	
Grounds for complaint	<i>e.g. incorrect application processing, conduct of an interview, conduct of a member of staff</i>
I wish to have my application reconsidered	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>tick if applicable</i>

Please use the space below to give full details of your complaint or reasons for your appeal

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Appendix 2

Stage 2 complaint will be investigated by the Associate Director of Student Recruitment

Name	
Goldsmiths reference number	
Programme applied for	
Date of conclusion of Stage 1	
Grounds for raising a Stage 2 complaint	<i>e.g. dissatisfied with outcome of Stage 1, pertinent information not taken into account</i>
Please set out here the main points of your complaint; it is helpful to number each separate problem or issue:	
Please list any supporting evidence you have submitted with this form	
Please explain the steps you have already taken to resolve your complaint within the Department concerned; why are you unhappy with the response so far?	
How would you like to see your complaint resolved?	
<i>e.g. I wish to have my application reconsidered OR I wish to have clearer information about why my application was unsuccessful</i>	

Appendix 3

A Stage 3 complaint will be reviewed by the Director of Student Experience if any of the below conditions apply. A review will be undertaken of the complaint, considering whether any procedural irregularities occurred during Stage 2, the impact of any further evidence on the complaint outcome, and whether the outcome was reasonable.

Name	
Goldsmiths reference number	
Programme applied for	
Date of conclusion of Stage 2	
Grounds for requesting a Stage 3 review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> There were procedural irregularities in the investigation of the complaint; or<input type="checkbox"/> Fresh evidence can be presented which could not reasonably have been made available with submission of the Stage 2 form; or<input type="checkbox"/> The outcome of the investigation was not reasonable in all the circumstances.
Please list each piece of supporting evidence you have submitted with this form	
How would you like to see your complaint resolved?	
<i>e.g I wish to have the decision at Stage 2 reconsidered</i>	