

Higher Education Admissions Appeal Policy and Procedures

Review

Formal Review Cycle	3 Yearly (or sooner if legislative or regulatory changes require)		
Latest Formal Review (date)	03/2026	Next Formal Review Due (date)	03/2029
Policy Owner	Vice Principal Marketing, Strategy and Communications		
Policy Author	Head of CRM, Insight and Reporting		

Approvals

Board of Corp Y/N	Y	Committee	CQSE	Date Board approved	03 March 2026
ELT Y/N	Y	ELT date approved		Additional committee	

Publication

Website Y/N	Y	Unify Y/N	Y	Student VLE Y/N	Y	Other	
-------------	---	-----------	---	-----------------	---	-------	--

Change History

Version	Date Reviewed/ Revised	Description of Change	Reviewed by	Approved by
V3	03/2026	Amends following CQSE review	Emma Cottle	Board
V2	09/2025	Review and minor amends	Stephen Welsh & Emma Cottle	ELT
V1	03/2024	Policy	Gilly Gosling- Bell	ELT

Higher Education (HE) Admissions Appeal Policy and Procedures

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. This policy is of the City of Sunderland College, trading as Education Partnership North East (which includes Sunderland College, Hartlepool Sixth Form College and Northumberland College). These colleges will be referred to as “the College” throughout this document.
- 1.2. The College is committed to an admissions process that treats all applicants fairly, with equity and dignity following the principle of ‘Right Student, Right Course’.
- 1.3. Given our locality and mission, widening participation is at the forefront of everything we do to engage with groups who would not otherwise enter and benefit from higher education. Our engagement with students, families and local communities is deep-rooted and substantial and supports social and community cohesion in the area. The College has a key role to play in raising aspirations and awareness of the educational, progression and subsequent employment and study opportunities available to potential students. The nature of the student population is such that the provision of information about the different forms of student support available is an important component of the services we make available to them.
- 1.4. In recognition that there may be occasions when an applicant may consider that the College has not adhered to its HE Admissions Policy and procedure, information is provided in this policy so applicants know what to do if they feel they have grounds for an appeal.
- 1.5. In all circumstances the College is committed to expediting an applicant’s appeal in the most efficient way possible and in a manner that is appropriate to the level of investigation required. All appeals are treated with appropriate seriousness in a fair, transparent and understanding manner.
- 1.6. The College values diversity and inclusion and is committed to promoting equal opportunities and eliminating discrimination. Therefore, staff will apply and administer this policy fairly and consistently to ensure that there is no discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital and civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, young persons in care and care leavers, young carers and care givers, young parents, youth offenders and those receiving free school meals or any other protected characteristic.
- 1.7. No applicant will be disadvantaged or treated unfairly as a result of submitting an appeal against an admissions decision.

2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy applies to all HE applicants to the College and to current HE students who wish to transfer onto a different programme where it is necessary for an applicant or student to meet the stated entry requirements.

3. Aims of the Policy

- 3.1. Ensure the provision of a robust and transparent framework which enables any admissions appeal to be fully and rigorously investigated. This will be carried out in accordance with the appropriate regulatory framework and with all appropriate safeguards in place to ensure the applicant and the College interests are protected at all times and stages of the process.
- 3.2. Ensure course applicants are provided with information about the regulations that are in use for the admissions process
- 3.3. Ensure the College provides information to applicants about the grounds for an admissions appeal
- 3.4. Ensure an open and transparent process is in place which provides applicants with the opportunity to initiate an admissions appeal
- 3.5. Ensure any investigation held in relation to an admissions appeal will be conducted in full compliance with the regulations and associated procedure; throughout all stages of an investigation communication will be maintained between the College and the appellant.

GENERAL STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

- 3.6. This policy and procedure have been developed with regard to The UK Quality Code for Higher Education and the relevant principles and expectations on admissions and appeals.
- 3.4 The policy is based on the following principles:

- All HE applicants to College courses have the right to be treated with equity and fairness through processes that are clear, fair and consistently applied.
- The College is dedicated to operating consistent, fair and professional practice in admissions.
- A recognition that most disputes can be successfully resolved informally.
- Submission of an appeal will not prejudice any opinion of the appellant either at the point of appeal or in any future dealings with the College.

- 3.5 All applicants are entitled to:

- have access to the most up to date information about the admissions process related to HE courses that is detailed and accurate (at the time of publication) via the websites;
- have access to College policies and procedures related to the initiation of an admissions appeal;
- receive appropriate advice and support from the College in cases when considering whether to bring an admissions appeal
- expect that any admissions appeal will be dealt with in accordance with the published policy and procedures of the College.

4. Responsibilities

4.1. Governors are responsible for:

- Understanding and ensuring effective compliance to this policy

4.2. The Executive Leadership Team are responsible for:

- Overseeing the effective implementation of this policy

4.3. Line Managers are responsible for:

- Adhering to this policy

4.4. Teaching and admissions staff have responsibility to:

- provide accurate and detailed information to prospective applicants about the admissions procedure for their programme;
- follow the College Admissions Policy and procedures associated with their course;
- if requested, provide feedback to applicants on the reasons for an unsuccessful application and where appropriate advice on possible courses of action which may include alternative study options;
- ensure questions raised by applicants relating to the procedure and outcome for selection are responded to in a timely manner.

4.5. Applicants are responsible for ensuring:

- familiarity with the admissions process relevant to the course they are applying for;
- adherence to the HE Admissions Policy and procedures associated with the admissions process relevant to the course they are applying for;
- if required, they request feedback from the admissions tutor on reasons for an unsuccessful application;
- at the earliest reasonable opportunity, that they bring to the attention of the Admissions Team matters of concern in order that, where possible they can be resolved without recourse to the formal procedure.

5. Implementation

5.1. Appeals and Complaints

5.1.1. Appeal: a request for a formal review of the outcome of an admissions decision. The outcome of a successful appeal would be to reconsider the candidate's application with a view to either changing or upholding the original decision.

5.1.2. Complaint: relates to the services or facilities offered by the College or to the actions or behaviour of a member of staff during the admission's process. If upheld, the remedy for the complaint could, for example, include an apology or an undertaking to revise procedures.

5.2. Grounds for Appeal

5.2.1. This policy and procedure will be for use by prospective students/applicants who wish to appeal an HE admissions decision that has been made in respect of them. An appeal can be made where there is a specific concern related to:

- 5.2.1.1. a procedural irregularity, where the applicant believes the College has not complied with its relevant admission policy or procedure;
- 5.2.1.2. evidence of bias or prejudice; or
- 5.2.1.3. new material information becoming available which may have affected the decision. Applicants may support their appeal request by submitting letters of support from tutors or other persons who can provide relevant information on academic, experiential and personal attributes.

5.2.2. The appeals process is not applicable to issues over which the College has no control e.g. the length of time taken by the Student Loan Company to assess a student's financial eligibility.

5.3. Procedures

5.3.1. Stage 1: Feedback

- 5.3.1.1. Prior to initiating an appeal, applicants are recommended to request feedback on their application from the programme to which they applied. Feedback will normally be given in writing within 14 days.
- 5.3.1.2. Programme leaders and Admission Services will normally provide verbal feedback to applicants when an admissions application is declined. Whilst verbal feedback may be given over the phone, Admissions Staff must in every instance convey this decision formally via email to the applicants email address as stated on their application form within 7 days of receipt of an admissions decision.
- 5.3.1.3. If an applicant requires additional feedback (following written feedback), they should contact admissions@educationpartnershipne.ac.uk
- 5.3.1.4. Admissions staff must arrange for additional feedback to be received by the applicant as soon as possible and normally within a 5 working day turnaround from the date of request were practicable.

5.3.2. Stage 2: Appeal

- 5.3.2.1. If an applicant is not satisfied with the feedback at Stage 1, they may make an appeal. The applicant should contact Quality@educationpartnershipne.ac.uk within 14 working days from receiving a decision on an application. The Quality Team will provide the necessary forms and guidance on completion, please note it is important to include all required information as stated on the form.
- 5.3.2.2. The process of appeal may only be applied by the applicant themselves and not by someone acting on their behalf. However, a candidate may obtain advice and/or support in the preparation of their appeal or complaint.

- 5.3.2.3. Upon receipt of the form, the Quality team will log the appeal or complaint and forward it to the Admissions Investigations Officer nominated by the Quality Office who will investigate the concerns raised by the applicant and presented to the HE Board for consideration and decision (by chair's action if necessary).
- 5.3.2.4. Applicants may be invited to an interview with the Admissions Investigation Officer if required. This is not normally required for an appeal to be processed.
- 5.3.2.5. Appeals must be submitted within 14 days of receiving the original admissions or appeals decision. Thereafter, the College may reserve the right not to consider the appeal or complaint unless there are justifiable circumstances.
- 5.3.2.6. At all the stages of any feedback meeting, an applicant has a right to be accompanied by a friend or supporter, who must not be a lawyer acting in a professional capacity. The friend or supporter may not speak on behalf of, or otherwise represent the interests of the individual concerned, unless invited to do so by the Institution.
- 5.3.2.7. Applicants may be asked to provide any further information that the College deems appropriate to the nature of the appeal or complaint and to assist in the investigation. Failure to provide such information requested may result in the investigation not being completed.
- 5.3.2.8. The Quality Office must formally reply to the applicant to acknowledge receipt of the Admissions Appeal form as soon as possible and normally within 7 days.
- 5.3.2.9. Applicants, where practicable, must be informed of the full outcome of their admissions appeal or complaint within 28 days of the form being submitted. Notification will be in the form of letter to the address provided on the form.
- 5.3.2.10. At the point where college procedures have been completed, the person appealing should expect to be provided with a clear written statement by the College, confirming that its internal procedures have reached completion and the outcome that has been reached.
- 5.3.2.11. If, in the view of the applicant, the appeal has not been dealt with in a reasonable manner or appropriately resolved, the applicant may be able to refer to the College's complaints procedures. This information is available from the Quality Office.

5.3.3. Special Circumstances.

In instances where the Associate Principal (Teaching, Learning and Assessment) or Admissions Investigating Officer is known to the complainant through personal circumstance or through association with matters relating to those outside of the College, the complaint will be referred to another member of staff or equivalent standing within the Institute who has no prior involvement. This is to ensure that fairness to all parties involved in the appeal and that those investigating or deciding on appeal outcomes act impartially.

5.3.4. Data Protection.

By signing an Appeal or Complaint form an applicant agrees that the College can process the disclosed information for all purposes relating to the appeal or complaint, and to their application to the College. The information will be stored and processed in accordance with The City of Sunderland College's registration under the Data Protection Act (1998) and the General Data Protection Regulations (2018). It may be disclosed to those members of the College who have a need to see it, and your completed form and supporting documentation as well as the investigative documentation and outcome will be stored as part of the College's record of your application.

6. Associated Documents

UK Quality Code
HE Admissions Policy and Procedures
Data Protection Policy
Student Privacy Statement
Safeguarding Policy
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Statement
Tuition Fees Policy

7. Policy Monitoring and Review

7.1. This policy will be reviewed every three years unless changes to legislation requires earlier review.

7.2. The effectiveness of this policy is reviewed through:

- 7.2.1. Feedback from applicants on the effectiveness of the policy and procedure
- 7.2.2. Feedback from staff on the effectiveness of the policy and procedure
- 7.2.3. Feedback received from awarding bodies and from external review activities
- 7.2.4. Review of applications denied, report via ELT as required

8. Equality Impact Assessment

Have you sought consultation on this policy?	Yes			
Details:	A focus group of HE students were consulted. Consultation has also taken place with via the college HE Board, Executive Leadership team and the relevant board committee.			
Could a particular group Impact be affected (negatively or Y/N positively)?		Description of Impact	Evidence	Mitigation/ Justification

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010				
Age	Y	Students who meet entry requirements must be accepted onto a programme. Consideration on potential impact should be given when a student does not meet the entry formal criteria and could secure a place via the non-standard entry process.		Staff training to include E&D compulsory training and refresher training. Other training programmes such as unconscious bias training should be delivered.
Disability	Y			
Gender Reassignment	Y			
Marriage and Civil Partnership	Y			
Pregnancy and maternity	Y			
Race	Y			
Religion or belief	Y			
Sex	Y			
Sexual Orientation	Y			
				Reports will monitor the 'rejection' of applications to ensure they are assessed and consistency applied.
Additional characteristics to consider				
Young Persons in Care & Care Leavers	Y	As above		As above
Young Carers & Care Givers	Y	As above		As above
Young Parents	Y	As above		As above
Youth Offenders	Y	As above		As above
Those Receiving Free School Meals	Y	As above		As above
If there is no impact, please explain:				