

Feedback and Complaints Policy

June 2024

Feedback and Complaints

The RVC is committed to providing a high quality, fair and transparent admissions service for all applicants. We recognise, however, that there will be occasions when applicants may wish to establish why their application has been rejected or believe that they have cause for complaint. Applicants have no right of appeal against a decision not to offer them a place at the RVC.

In this context, **feedback** is defined as the communication from the RVC to an applicant, on request from the applicant, who has been unsuccessful in gaining an offer of a place. A **complaint** is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction either about the way in which an application (including an interview) has been handled or the outcome of the selection or fees classification process. In either case, it may concern actions or inaction by the RVC or its staff. An **appeal** is defined as a request for a formal review of the outcome of an admissions decision.

Feedback

The RVC is committed to providing all applicants who are unsuccessful at gaining an offer of a place with a reason for this decision.

Due to the large number of applications received, it is not possible to provide each unsuccessful applicant with detailed, personal feedback for an unsuccessful application. The RVC makes great efforts to provide clear minimum entry requirements for all its courses. For undergraduate courses, these can be found in our Prospectus (paper and online), on our website, on our UCAS Entry Profiles. The RVC expects applicants to have read the available information on entry requirements and assessment criteria before requesting further feedback, as in many cases this will explain why their application has been unsuccessful.

Applicants who are unsuccessful at gaining an offer of a place on our undergraduate programmes following an interview will be provided with feedback within six weeks of the decision being made. The feedback will provide information on their performance in each interview task to enable them to determine where they might strengthen a future application. It is not normally possible to provide any further feedback to applicants on their interview performance. Applicants who are unsuccessful at gaining an offer of a place on all other programmes following interview will only be provided with feedback on request.

Requests for further, individual, feedback for non-interviewing courses and for interviewing courses where the applicant has been rejected prior to interview must be made by the applicant and should be sent to the Admissions Office within eight weeks of the notification of an unsuccessful application. Where applicable, further information will be sought from the Academic Department before providing feedback.

In some cases, an offer may not have been made due to the level of competition for places rather than any specific weakness in an application, and consequently, we will not be able to advise applicants on how to strengthen any subsequent application. In all cases, it will be made clear to the applicant that, even if another application will be considered, there is no guarantee that an offer will be made, even if the points raised in the feedback are addressed by the applicant. There will be no discrimination against any applicant who has applied previously (except where a limit is placed on the number of permitted applications)

or where the applicant has requested feedback.

Requests for feedback from a third party will not be accepted and no information relating to an individual applicant will be released, even if those requesting this information have been named as an appropriate contact by the applicant.

Further correspondence will not be entered into, and the decision will not be reviewed. If the applicant feels the admissions process has not been followed correctly, they must use the complaints procedure.

Complaints

Applicants have no right of appeal against a decision not to offer them a place at the RVC. Provided that the decision can be shown to have been reached fairly and in accordance with the RVC's published selection criteria, the original decision will not be overturned.

However, should an applicant believe that the RVC's Admissions Principles and Procedures have been inconsistently or incorrectly applied, this complaints procedure provides a mechanism for objective review for both undergraduate and postgraduate taught applicants.

Complaints may only be made by individual applicants. They may not be made by a representative, a parent, a school or any other third party.

This procedure sets out how applicants may seek to have a complaint addressed. It should be recognised that the vast majority of applicant complaints can be handled fairly, amicably, and to the satisfaction of all concerned without recourse to the formal complaints procedure. The complaints procedure provides for both informal and formal stages in the handling of a complaint. At each stage of the process, the person to whom the complaint has been referred shall, if it is upheld, wholly or in part, apply such remedies as are within her/his powers. If they consider that the remedy is outside their powers, they shall refer the matter to the appropriate authority. If they feel unable to fulfil the requirements of the complaints procedure objectively because of prior involvement in the case, they will refer the matter to a more senior colleague.

In the first instance, applicants with a complaint should raise it informally with the Admissions Office, using the Admissions email address (admissions@rvc.ac.uk). If this course of action proves unsatisfactory, then the formal complaints procedure should be followed (see below).

The RVC will seek to ensure that all complaints are treated seriously and constructively. It will also seek to ensure that complaints are dealt with promptly, with fairness and consistency and with due regard to the RVC's Equal Opportunities Policy. If a complaint is upheld, the RVC will take such action or provide such remedy as may be appropriate and will do so promptly. If a complaint is not upheld, the reasons for the decision will be communicated to the applicant.

There will be no discrimination against any applicant who makes a complaint. Applicants lodging a complaint and those against whom complaints are made may expect complaints to be dealt with confidentially and with respect for their privacy. However, it may be necessary to disclose information to others in order to deal with the complaint.

Anonymous complaints will not be dealt with under this procedure. Staff who receive anonymous complaints will be expected to use their discretion and judgement as to how to handle such complaints.

Formal complaints procedure

Applicants are expected to have sought to resolve their complaint informally before following the formal complaints procedure. Where an applicant submits a formal complaint but has not sought to resolve the complaint informally, the complaint will normally be referred to the Admissions Team in the first instance for informal resolution.

If a complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily on an informal basis, the applicant should write to the Applicant Services Manager, outlining the nature, details of their complaint and the steps taken to resolve the complaint informally. Formal complaints will only be accepted in writing and not via the telephone.

The complaint must normally be made within 14 days of the actions (or lack of actions) that prompted the complaint. The Applicant Services Manager will investigate the complaint in consultation with the relevant members of staff and will respond to the complaint normally within 10 working days of a complaint being made. The Applicant Services Manager will retain a record of the correspondence and any action taken. If it proves impossible to respond fully within 10 working days, the complainant will be informed of the timescale for the receipt of a full response.

If the complaint is about non-selection, the Applicant Services Manager must be satisfied that the application was considered fairly, and that the decision did comply with the selection policy. Provided that they are satisfied that this is the case, a response explaining the context of the decision (e.g., demand for places) and the selection policy that has been applied is acceptable at this stage.

Appealing the outcome of a complaint

Undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses

If the applicant is dissatisfied with the response they receive from the Applicant Services Manager, they should submit a written appeal to the Head of Admissions, within 10 working days of receiving the response. This should briefly detail: the nature of the complaint; the informal steps already taken (if any); details of the response received; and a statement as to why the applicant remains dissatisfied and, without prejudice to any formal remedy which might be determined, the remedy which they are seeking. The Head of Admissions will investigate the complaint and submit a written response to the complainant, normally within 15 working days of the receipt of the complaint. If it should prove impossible to respond fully within 15 working days, the applicant shall be informed in writing of the timescale for the receipt of a full response.

The Head of Admissions' decision following completion of this process will be considered as final.