



University of Essex



Agent Complaints Policy

2026-27 entry

Authors:	Marketing, Student Recruitment and Admissions
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Agents Complaints Policy

1. Purpose

The University of Essex is committed to ensuring that all contracted educational agent representatives operate in a manner that is ethical, transparent, and consistent with the University's values and regulatory obligations.

This policy establishes a clear and fair process for the submission, investigation, and resolution of complaints relating to the conduct or services provided by contracted educational agent representatives.

The University is committed to equality of opportunity for all applicants that apply directly, via UCAS or via a contracted agent. The University ensures contracted agents are held to the highest level of ethical and professional standards, in line with external sector guidance provided by the British Universities International Liaison Association (BUILA), through the Agent Quality Framework (AQF) and mandated by the Home Office. You can find out more here;

[BUILA](#)

[Agent Quality Framework](#)

Before engaging the services of an agent, we suggest you read the British Council's [Student guide to choosing an education agent](#)

We also recommend that you only use an agent that is a contracted partner of the University. This policy does not cover complaints regarding agents that are not contracted with us.

2. Who is covered by the policy?

2.1 This policy applies to:

- Any prospective student, applicant, or offer holder who has applied to the University of Essex via a contracted agent and is dissatisfied with any aspect of the service provided by the contracted agent
- Third parties (providing the written consent of the applicant has been provided as part of the submission)
- Complaints can be made at any point in the application process, and after registration has been completed (where the complaint relates to pre-arrival agent activity)
- Complaints received anonymously will not normally be considered, except where there are compelling reasons, supported by evidence, for the matter to be investigated.

2.2 This Policy applies to complaints concerning:

- Contracted recruitment agents. A full list of our contracted agents can be found at [International Educational Agents](#)
- Sub-agents operating under contracted agents

2.3 This policy does not apply to:

- Complaints related to a non-contracted agent (contact agentenquires@essex.ac.uk for further guidance on complaints)
- Complaints about admissions decisions (covered under the [Admissions Complaints Policy](#))
- Academic or student experience complaints (covered under [Student Complaints](#))
- Complaints related to a University Partner Institution (including Essex Online and University of Essex International College). Complaints should be submitted directly to the Partner Institution

Submitting a complaint will not affect the outcome of an admissions application.

3. Definitions

Agent / Recruitment Partner: Any third party contracted by the University to support student recruitment.

Complainant: The individual submitting the complaint.

Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction by an individual, whether justified or not, regarding an act, omission, or standard of service by a recruitment agent organisation or its staff that requires a response.

4. Grounds for Complaint

4.1 Complaints may include, but are not limited to a contracted agent:

- Applying on your behalf to a university you do not wish to attend
- Applying for a degree subject you are not interested in
- Providing an unauthorised offer of acceptance
- Logging into your myEssex portal or CAS Shield platform
- Advising you to pay your deposit or tuition fee through the agent

- Advising you incorrectly on your eligibility for an offer, scholarship or similar
- Receiving emails from the University on your behalf and not passing these on to you

5. Stage 1 – Complaint submission

- 5.1 Complaints regarding a contracted educational agent/representative should be made by emailing the 'Contracted Educational Agent Representative formal complaint form' to the Director of International Student Recruitment at agentenquiries@essex.ac.uk in the first instance.
- 5.2 Where possible, complaints should be submitted within 14 working days of the matter occurring.
- 5.3 Complaints relating to contracted agents will normally be valid only where there is evidence provided.
- 5.4 The University aims to resolve most complaints informally. If the applicant is not satisfied with the response at this stage, a decision review request can be submitted to the Director of Marketing, Student Recruitment and Admissions.

6. Complaints handling process

- 6.1 A preliminary assessment of the complaint by the Director of International Student Recruitment (or their representative) will determine whether:
 - The complaint falls within scope of the complaints policy
 - Immediate resolution is possible
 - Further investigation is required

The University may decide to take no further action where appropriate, providing reasons to the complainant

- 6.2 The Director of International Student Recruitment (or their nominee) will endeavour to respond in writing within 14 working days, but this may be extended to 28 working days of receiving the complaint during peak business periods.

7. Complaints investigation

- 7.1 Where further investigation is required both the complainant, and the agent may be invited to submit further information.
- 7.2 The investigation will consider the evidence provided by all parties alongside the agent contractual obligations and the National Code of Ethical Practice and AQF standards

8. Outcome

8.1 Following investigation the University will determine whether the complaint is:

- Upheld
- Partially upheld
- Not upheld

8.2 The outcome will be communicated in writing to:

- The complainant
- The agent

9. Stage 2 – Complaint review request

9.1 If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome an appeal request can be made.

9.2 The appeal request must be submitted in writing within 14 working days of the outcome of the informal resolution.

9.3 Applicants are asked to send the completed 'Contracted Educational Agent Representative formal complaint form' to applicantcomplaint@essex.ac.uk detailing why they are not satisfied with the outcome. The review request will be acknowledged within five working days after the University receives the email.

9.4 The Director of Marketing, Student Recruitment and Admissions (or their nominee) will review the original complaint and the outcome and will endeavour to respond to the complainant in writing within 14 working days from receipt of the form. This may be extended to 28 working days during peak business periods.

9.5 The decision of the Director of Marketing, Student Recruitment and Admissions at the review stage will be final.

10. Complaints made directly to the Vice-Chancellor, Chief Operating Officer or University Secretary

10.1 All complaints under this policy are dealt with by the Director of International Student Recruitment or by the Director of Marketing, Student Recruitment and Admissions. If a complaint relating to a contracted agent is made directly to the Vice-Chancellor, the Chief Operating Officer, the University Secretary or other senior officer of the University, it will be passed to the Director of International Student Recruitment, who will ensure that it is dealt with according to this policy.

11. Recording, Monitoring and Reporting

11.1 The University will:

- Maintain a central record of all agent complaints
- Monitor trends and recurring issues
- Use complaint data to inform agent performance review

11.2 Complaints outcomes may be used to:

- Inform agent contract renewal decisions
- Identify training or improvement needs

11.3 This supports ongoing compliance with AQF expectations for agent oversight and accountability.

12. Confidentiality and data protection

12.1 Complaints will be handled confidentially, and applicants' privacy will be respected. Staff dealing with applicant complaints will operate according to the University's policies on data protection, as explained in the University's Admissions Policies (section relating to 'Data protection and communication with third parties').

Field	Description
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