

Policy and Procedures for inappropriate applicant behaviour

1. Introduction

1.1 This policy applies to applicants¹ of the University of Reading (the University) in relation to their interactions with the University (including but not limited to its staff, students and alumni involved in the University's application process) and with other applicants. This policy will continue to apply up until the point that an applicant successfully enrolls on a University of Reading programme or ceases to be an applicant for whatever reason.

1.2 The University is committed to ensuring its interactions with applicants are conducted in a professional, courteous and respectful manner and it expects that any communication from an applicant is conducted in the same way, both when communicating with existing members of the University or with other applicants in contexts associated with their applications to study at the University. This includes interactions on social media and one-to-one or group communications with other applicants.

Applicants should be aware that the University may take action in response to behaviour that it considers inappropriate. Relevant "Inappropriate Behaviour" includes but is not limited to:

- Threatening, aggressive or abusive behaviour or language
- Behaviour or communication of a predatory or discriminatory nature or unwanted communication of a sexual nature
- Threats of violence or incitement of violence
- Aggressive reaction to the advice or information provided by members of staff
- Offering bribes or seeking to obtain an unfair advantage in the application process.
- Bullying and/or Harassment of University staff, students, members or other applicants
- In some cases, conduct that is likely to cause serious offence to members of the University or other applicants
- Acting outside of the law

Allegations of intentional deception or fraud by applicants is covered in our Admissions Policies for Taught and Research programmes²

¹ "applicant" in the context of this policy refers to both those who are currently in the process of applying to the University and those who hold offers. In terms of this policy, a person remains an "applicant" until the point of registration or until they withdraw their application or their application is rejected by the University.

² <https://www.reading.ac.uk/admissions/admissions-policies-and-procedures>

2. Procedure for dealing with Inappropriate Behaviour

2.1

- (a) If Inappropriate Behaviour is identified by a member of the University the applicant will be given a warning that the behaviour must cease by that member or their manager.
- (b) If the behaviour continues or is sufficiently serious not to warrant an initial warning, any further interaction will end immediately between the applicant and the University and will not be resumed. The Head of Admissions (or their nominee/representative) will then carry out an investigation into the incident.

2.2 If the University is informed or provided with evidence of Inappropriate Behaviour toward a member of the University community or applicant the Head of Admissions (or their nominee/representative) will carry out an investigation into the incident where appropriate.

2.3 The University will only consider complaints received about Inappropriate Behaviour anonymously in exceptional circumstances. The University encourages individuals to raise concerns openly without fear of suffering any disadvantage.

2.4 Where an investigation is carried out the Head of Admissions (or their nominee/representative) will use all available information to establish what happened, and make an appropriate decision about how to proceed. This decision can include one or more of the following five options:

- 1) Determine that no further action is required due to a lack of evidence or another reason
- 2) Provide the applicant with a formal written warning
- 3) Reject any/all applications made by the applicant
- 4) Withdraw any offer that has been made to the applicant
- 5) Advise that any future applications made by the applicant to the University will be not be considered

The Head of Admissions (or nominee/representative) may consult or take guidance from other staff during the course of their investigation, which may include representation from a department or school where the application is for a professional or accredited course.

The outcome of the investigation confirming the University's decision will be formally communicated to the applicant in writing.

2.5 The University will normally take steps to warn an applicant that their behaviour or language is inappropriate and that action is being considered, but where the behaviour or language is sufficiently serious, no warning need be given before action is taken. Conduct which may constitute a criminal offence may be referred to the relevant authorities.

3. Appeals

3.1 Appeals against the outcome of an investigation or complaints about the process will be dealt with in accordance with the University's Admissions Appeals and Complaints Policy³. A link to this policy will be provided to applicants in the formal outcome letter.

³ <https://www.reading.ac.uk/admissions/admissions-policies-and-procedures>

Version control

Version	Keeper	Reviewed	Approved by	Approval date
1.0	Head of Admissions and Enquiries Management	Every three years	SENATE	December 2024