

Universities NZ Scholarships

Policy on Appealing Matters Regarding Scholarships Administered by Universities NZ

Key Principles

Universities NZ is involved in the awarding of nearly 200 scholarships each year across 40 scholarship programmes. Over the decades Universities NZ has been managing and administering scholarships, it has adopted several key rules based on the following principles:

- The Regulations in place for each Scholarship are confirmed by the committee for that award programme and are managed and applied by Universities NZ; this includes Universities NZ applying checks on eligibility, on application completeness, on timely submission, and managing any post award reporting by the scholar.
- Scholarship applicants are expected to read and understand the Regulations and scholarship application requirements and follow the online instructions for lodging an application and complete all requirements by the due date. Where they have questions or problems, they are expected to have sought assistance from Universities NZ before the deadline date. It is always the applicant's responsibility to ensure that applications are complete and submitted by the due date.
- Scholarship applicants are responsible for ensuring their referees satisfy requirements and meet the deadline for references (usually 3 calendar days after the deadline for application submission).
- Universities NZ aims to assess scholarship applications quickly following the due date for applications. The dates for Selection Committees will have been set months in advance and UNZ cannot delay these while it follows up issues with applications.
- Because the awarding of a scholarship involves a mixture of objective and subjective judgement, Universities NZ scholarships are always awarded based on the collective decision of a panel – typically involving three or more people. Successful recipients of scholarships are typically advised immediately following meetings of the relevant Scholarship Committee and this is often accompanied by a media release. For most scholarships, the Scholarships Committee has awarded most or all of the funds available. Due to these factors, Universities NZ will only reconsider a decision of the relevant panel in exceptional circumstances.

With regard to the principles above, there are three areas where Universities New Zealand may find that there are grounds for an appeal. They are as follows;

1. Applicant Eligibility

After the closing date for applications and the due date for references Universities NZ will advise applicants if their application has been ruled as ineligible.

An applicant may appeal this ruling where they believe it is incorrect and where they can demonstrate they meet all the eligibility requirements of the particular scholarship and/or Universities New Zealand provided incorrect or misleading information in writing.

A ruling of ineligibility will only be overturned where it is shown that an error has been made in applying the eligibility criteria of the Regulations for that scholarship. Universities NZ will assess this by checking an applicant's eligibility to apply for a scholarship according to the Regulations for that scholarship as prescribed by the committee for that award programme.

2. Late or Incomplete Applications

After the closing date for applications and the due date for references Universities NZ will advise applicants if their application has been ruled as incomplete.

An applicant may appeal this ruling where one of the following conditions are met:

- (a) Incorrect or misleading information was provided by Universities NZ in writing, and/or
- (b) A technical problem with Universities NZ's online scholarship application system prevented a required task being completed by the due date by an applicant or a referee.

Universities NZ may consider a late or incomplete application where the applicant or a referee emailed Universities NZ at least an hour before the deadline to signal a problem entering or uploading information to the online scholarships system; the information or attachment must be included in the email.

Universities NZ may consider a late or incomplete application where the applicant or a referee has emailed or phoned Universities NZ at least five full working days before the deadline to seek clarification on instructions or requirements and has not received a response within three working days.

UNZ may agree that it provided incorrect or misleading information when more than one scholarship applicant is affected.

3. Flawed or incorrect decision by the Committee administering the particular scholarship.

An applicant may appeal against a decision by the Scholarships Committee, but only on the following grounds;

- (a) Presentation of evidence that the Committee's procedures for the assessment of the application were significantly and materially breached

in their final decision – for example applying review criteria other than those published in the regulations for the particular scholarship. Inadvertent minor breaches of process will not be sufficient for upholding an appeal so long as the panel was properly constituted and decisions were taken collectively.

- (b) One or more Committee members wilfully failed to disclose a conflict of interest that may have biased them against the applicant.

The following will not be considered as grounds for appealing a decision of a Scholarship committee;

- (a) Changes in circumstance of the applicant since the date of the submission of the application,
- (b) The panel lacked certain pertinent information on other shortlisted or successful scholarship applicants.

Universities New Zealand will necessarily set a very high bar for considering appeals against a decision by a properly constituted Scholarships Committee.

Appeals

Where an applicant believes an application has been declined unfairly on the grounds of lateness or incompleteness, or has been wrongly judged ineligible, they should email Universities NZ's Scholarships Manager in the first instance at scholarships@univesitiesnz.ac.nz and also copy in the following email address; complaints@universitiesnz.ac.nz

The Scholarships Manager will investigate and advise the applicant of his/her decision and reason. Where the Scholarships Manager has a potential or actual conflict of interest (where, for example, the appeal is against a decision they took, or is about a process they oversaw), the Executive Director (or nominee) of Universities New Zealand will investigate and advise the applicant of their decision and reason.

If the applicant wishes to appeal this, they may ask that the Scholarships Manager's decision be reviewed by the Convenor of the Universities NZ Scholarships Committee whose decision will be final.

Policy date: May 2018