

The complaint

Mr A complains that TSB Bank plc declined his loan application.

What happened

On 25 March 2024 Mr A applied for a loan with TSB. Prior to submitting his application Mr A checked his credit score and credit file and found no issues. When trying to submit his application Mr A experienced issues uploading his documents and he had to visit the branch twice to complete it. The application was subsequently declined.

Mr A appealed the decision on 8 May 2024. TSB asked Mr A to provide information and documents to verify his income, including bank statements, tenancy agreements for his buy to let properties and a SA302 tax calculation.

TSB emailed Mr A on 4 June 2024 and gave him a deadline of close of business to provide his tax calculation. The application expired on 7 June 2024 and TSB told Mr A that it hadn't received the correct documents and couldn't proceed any further.

Mr A sent a copy of his SA302 tax calculation to TSB on 10 June 2024, but TSB said the application had expired.

Mr A complained to TSB. He said he'd sent the SA302 tax calculation to TSB on 14 May 2024 and again on 23 May 2024. He said his application should not have been declined on the basis that he didn't provide the requested information.

TSB didn't uphold the complaint. It said it had considered all available information when reaching its decision. TSB said it had no record that the correct information had been provided, and it didn't agree that it had done anything wrong. TSB acknowledged that Mr A had spent some time sending documents to them and offered £50 compensation as a gesture of goodwill.

Mr A remained unhappy and brought his complaint to this service. He says that TSB were wrong to conclude that he didn't provide the correct information. Mr A said he could prove that he sent the required documents to TSB by email in May before the application expired.

TSB told this service that it required the SA302 tax calculation to include Mr A's unique IRMark. It said that documents it received from Mr A and the SA302 contained different IRMark numbers, and it wasn't happy to accept them for this reason. TSB said it had asked Mr A several times for documents with the correct reference and had explained that the numbers didn't match.

Our investigator didn't uphold the complaint. He said he took Mr A's point that the IRMark numbers were different because of the way in which the document was generated by Mr A's accountant but said that he could only expect TSB to review the documents they received, and he could see that the documents received by TSB had different numbers on them. The investigator said he didn't think the issue was caused by TSB. He said that because TSB hadn't been able to review the document they needed before the deadline, the appeal was

correctly declined.

Mr A didn't agree. He said he'd provided all of his email communications with TSB, and he believed that these showed that he had provided the correct documents before the end of the appeal process. Mr A said that if TSB had been unable to open the documents, they should have advised him of this and suggested an alternative means by which he could provide the documents such as by taking a printed version to a TSB branch.

What I've decided – and why

I've considered all the available evidence and arguments to decide what's fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint.

I know it will disappoint Mr A, but I agree with the investigators opinion. I'll explain why.

I've read and considered the whole file, but I'll concentrate my comments on those points which are most relevant to my decision. If I don't mention a specific point, it's not because I've failed to take it on board and think about it, but because I don't think I need to comment on it in order to reach what I think is the right outcome.

I won't repeat the complaint in detail as the facts are well known to both parties. Instead, I'll focus on what I think is the key issue here, that being whether TSB received the documents and information it had requested from Mr A within the timescale specified.

Mr A has said that he is in no doubt that he provided the documents requested and that TSB was wrong to conclude that he didn't provide them in time, or that he only provided them on 10 June 2024. Mr A has said that he provided the documents by email in May 2024 before the appeal process was concluded.

I've reviewed the emails that Mr A sent to TSB in May 2024. The email dated 14 May 2024 has a SA302 tax document attached. The email dated 17 May 2024 has a SA100 tax year overview attached and the email dated 23 May 2024 has a HMRC submission receipt attached.

Mr A says that the documents attached to the May emails are the same documents that he attached to his email dated 10 June 2024, which TSB accepted as correct (although received outside of the specified timescale).

TSB has said that Mr A's loan application was declined for two reasons. It said the credit score didn't meet its criteria and it wasn't able to verify the level of income declared. The reason it couldn't verify the level of income declared is because (TSB says) it didn't receive the information requested from Mr A.

It's not in dispute that Mr A provided bank statements, tenancy agreements and an SA302 in response to TSB's request for verification.

I've reviewed the documents that TSB have told this service they received from Mr A. I've focussed on the SA302 document, as this was the document which TSB has said it wasn't able to accept. I can see that TSB emailed Mr A on 20 May 2024 and explained that there were discrepancies in the documents he had sent, specifically that the IRMark reference on the SA302 submitted by Mr A on 5 May 2024 was different to the reference shown on the screenshot including the IRMark reference starting E4K35 sent to TSB on 14 May 2024. Having reviewed that document I can see that the IRMark reference on the SA302 does appear to bear a different reference.

Mr A has said that the different reference is caused by the software that accountants use to file tax assessments. I'm not able to comment on that. However, I am satisfied that TSB received documents which appeared to have conflicting references, so I don't think it was unreasonable for TSB to ask Mr A to provide documents with the same reference. As a responsible lender, TSB is obliged to ensure that documents are genuine if they are using those documents as the basis for a lending decision. I don't think it was unreasonable for TSB to require all documents to have the same reference numbers. I appreciate that Mr A offered an explanation for this, but I don't think TSB acted unfairly or unreasonably by not accepting an email explaining why Mr A thought the documents had a different reference on them.

TSB has said that by 7 June 2024 (the date of expiration of the application) it still hadn't received a full version of Mr A's SA302 with the same IRMark reference. I've reviewed the emails and I can't see that Mr A provided the documents with the same reference on them. In the circumstances, I'm unable to say that TSB has made an error or treated Mr A unfairly here.

I understand Mr A's disappointment that his loan application was declined. However, lenders are allowed to decline loan applications if their lending criteria aren't met. In this case, I don't think it was unreasonable for TSB to request documents to support affordability. I'm satisfied that – based on the documents TSB has provided – there were issues with the documents not having the same reference number. These issues weren't resolved before the deadline expired.

For the reasons I've given I'm unable to uphold the complaint.

My final decision

My final decision is that I don't uphold the complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr A to accept or reject my decision before 3 June 2025.

Emma Davy
Ombudsman