

The complaint

Mr H complains HSBC UK Bank Plc has refused to accept a foreign cheque he attempted to pay into his account without giving any clear reason. He also complains that his account was suspended.

What happened

Mr H opened an account with HSBC in August 2025 and subsequently attempted to pay in a foreign cheque. He says HSBC accepted the cheque but then returned it two weeks later having stamped it to say it wasn't going to accept the cheque without giving any clear reason. He complained about this and about the fact that HSBC suspended his account. He said HSBC's actions had caused him considerable distress and inconvenience and that he'd incurred costs as a result.

HSBC looked into Mr H's complaint but didn't uphold it. Mr H was unhappy with HSBC's response, so complained to our service.

One of our investigators looked into Mr H's complaint and said that HSBC had given the reason why it hadn't been able to accept the cheque when it returned it to Mr H. They also said that they didn't think HSBC had acted unfairly when it suspended his account. Mr H asked for his complaint to be referred to an ombudsman for a decision. His complaint was, as a result, passed to me.

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 can understand why Mr H was upset when his cheque was returned – as far as he was concerned, he'd paid it in, and HSBC had accepted it. This was, however, a foreign cheque meaning it had to be processed differently, and it's only during processing that HSBC identified why it couldn't accept Mr H's cheque. HSBC, therefore, sent it back to Mr H explaining why it couldn't, on reflection, accept this cheque. I've seen a copy of that letter, and it does explain why. I agree, therefore, with our investigator that HSBC did nothing wrong here. I can see that Mr H has been able to pay the cheque in elsewhere, and whilst he's had to pay a fee in order to do so, I don't agree that this is reason enough to say that HSBC acted unfairly.

I can see too that HSBC did indeed review Mr H's account – as it's entitled to do – and followed its processes when doing so. I don't, therefore, agree that HSBC did anything wrong here either.

Because of everything I've said, I agree that this isn't a complaint we can uphold. That means this isn't a complaint in relation to which I should be awarding compensation, let alone £5,000 in compensation.

My final decision

My final decision is that I'm not upholding this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr H to accept or reject my decision before 17 March 2026.

Nicolas Atkinson
Ombudsman