

Procedure 003: Complaints and Grievances Procedure

1. Purpose and scope

1.1 This procedure describes how the Academy of Contemporary Music (ACM) ensures the equitable, transparent and timely consideration of a student complaints and grievances in relation to any aspects of their student experience, student services, administration, financial matters, and information for their programme of study.

1.2 This Procedure aims to explain the reasonable due course which students are required to consider and follow when submitting a complaint or grievance.

2. Procedure Statement

2.1 ACM encourages all students to discuss any concerns that they may have at the earliest opportunity to avoid delays and unnecessary escalation of matters. Most issues can normally be resolved quickly at the lowest level, without going through the complaints and grievances procedures. Key points of contact if there is a concern are:

- Reception Staff
- Student Services (Hub), who will direct you to the department or information source
- Programme team (the Senior Programme Officer) who will direct you to the relevant academic staff or information source
- Registry team, who will direct you to the department or regulations, policies and documentation

2.2 ACM seeks to resolve all complaints and grievances in a timely manner through considered escalation of concerns as outlined in this procedure. Students that wish to lodge an appeal of an academic decision should refer to the Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure.

Internal Escalation of Complaints:

Nature of Complaint / Grievance	Thematic Areas	Stage 1: Early Resolution	Stage 2: Formal Stage	Stage 3: Formal Stage (appeal)
Academic	Programme delivery, learning facilities, resources and supervision	Programme Manager / Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manager	Group Head of Education	Registry / EMT
Administrative / Student Record	Enrolment records, student information, data, registration, admissions	Admissions / Senior Programme Officer / Registry Manager	Head of Student Services	Registry / SMT
Student Services	General student services, counselling, student support, and accommodation	Head of Student Services / Team Manager	Head of Student Services	Registry / SMT

	support			
IT and Facilities	System access and accounts, Canvas, MyACM, ACM email, Campus facilities	Facilities Officer / IT Officer	Facilities Manager / IT Manager	Registry / SMT
Financial	Fees, charges, student loans, bursaries and scholarships	Student Finance Officer(s)	Head of Finance	Registry / SMT
Quality Assurance	Student representatives, regulations, policies and procedures, surveys, quality assurance	Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manager	Head of Quality and Student Experience	SMT

Stage 1: Early resolution

2.3 In the first instance students who wish to make a complaint should discuss it with a member of ACM staff (Student Services team, Programme team - Senior Programme Officer, or Registry team) who will advise whether or not the complaint is best progressed through:

- An informal meeting or mediation;
- A Student Forum or Board of Studies (for concerns impacting a wider group/cohort);
- Consultation with specific persons who can resolve the problem (E.g. Tutor, Module Leader, Services Officer) ;
- Referral to an external agency, or
- Escalation to the Formal Stage 2

2.4 The member of staff consulted shall discuss the complaint with the student and, with the student's consent, engage anyone else involved, to see if the concern can be resolved through early resolution. Any resolutions and actions that are agreed with the student must be kept on record and communicated to the student and Registry in writing within 10 working days.

Stage 2: Formal Stage

2.5 If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1, they may opt to escalate the complaint to the second (formal) stage. All formal complaints must be submitted in writing to Registry within 10 working days of the informal stage having been completed. The student should attach all relevant supporting materials and evidence to support their complaint. Complaints that lack relevant supporting documentation may be dismissed or referred back to the student for further consideration.

2.6 Registry will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing, and notify the student of the next steps within 10 working days of receiving the appeal. Registry will direct the complaint to the relevant senior member of ACM staff (see table above), who will undertake a provisional investigation to see if a resolution to the concern can be reached prior to the proceeding to a formal hearing.

2.7 Any resolutions that are agreed at this point shall be put in writing and sent to the student and Registry within 5 working days. Registry will seek confirmation from the student(s) that they are satisfied with the agreed outcome.

2.8 The member of senior management shall consider the evidence, written or otherwise, and, if necessary, hold such discussions with the complainant and any other persons they deem appropriate in order to fully investigate the complaint.

2.9 The member of Senior Management, having fully investigated the complaint over a period not normally exceeding 20 working days from its receipt, shall decide whether:

- the complaint should be progressed through other procedures; or whether
- there is no reasonable justification for the complaint, in which case the complaint shall be terminated at this stage; or whether
- there is reasonable justification for the complaint.

2.10 The member of Senior Management shall:

- make their decision known in writing;
- recommend resolutions to any justifiable complaint which all parties involved in the complaint shall be invited to accept; and
- if the recommendations are agreed, shall take steps to ensure that they are implemented in full within the agreed time period.

2.11 Registry will:

- Inform the student and to the members of staff or other students involved of the decision.
- Monitor the agreed resolutions to the complaint as necessary.

Where a student is not satisfied with the outcome of the second stage they may escalate their appeal to the formal stage 3.

Stage 3: Formal Stage Appeal

2.12 The student must submit their appeal of the complaint outcome (stage 2) in writing to Registry within 10 days of notification of the outcome of the second stage. This student should submit a statement to support the appeal and any further supporting documentation related to the complaint.

2.13 A Complaints Panel will be constituted by Registry and will consist of a minimum of three senior staff members that have not been directly involved in Stage 1 of the complaint. The panel will normally consist of a member from the Registry team and two members from the relevant departments (normally Education and Student Services). The panel will examine the evidence that has been submitted, and may opt to call meetings with the appellant, and staff involved in order to gather further evidence to make a reasonable determination of the outcome of appeal.

2.14 In compelling circumstances, the Chair of the Panel may take Chair's Action in the student's favour. The Chair shall formally communicate this decision to Registry, who will notify the appellant within 5 working days.

2.15 A record of all panel interviews and a record of the panel outcome(s) will be provided to Registry in writing.

2.16 Panel proceedings should be concluded within 30 days of the initial notification of the receipt of the academic appeal. The outcome reached by the Panel will be communicated to the appellant in writing through Registry. Registry will communicate the outcome of the Panel proceedings within 5 working days.

2.17 Where a student is not satisfied with the outcome of the second stage they may escalate their appeal to the formal stage 4.

Stage 4: (awarding body / collaborative partner)

2.18 If the student is not satisfied with the decision at the conclusion of ACM's Formal stages, or if the recommendations made at this appeal stage 3 are not implemented, they may appeal to ACM's awarding body for their programme, which will follow their own process, as outlined below.

2.19 Students should contact ACM Registry who will advise how to lodge the appeal with the awarding / collaborative partner.

2.20 For information on this process, the student should refer to:

- Degree students in programmes validated by Middlesex University: Student Complaints and Grievance Procedures, Middlesex University Regulations: [Middlesex University Regulations: Complaints procedure](#)
- Diploma Students: University of the Arts London's Student Complaints Procedures: [University of the Arts, London: Student Complaints Procedures](#)
- Diploma Students, where a grievance relates to funding: East Surrey College, Client Feedback Policy [East Surrey College Client Feedback Policy](#)

2.21 Students enrolled in Further Education studies will have exhausted options for further appeal once the matter has been considered by the awarding / collaborative (funding) body.

2.22 Students enrolled in Higher Education programmes that are not satisfied with the outcome of the awarding body may escalate their appeal to the OIA. While most complaints will be considered by the awarding body. Any complaint cannot be processed through the awarding body's regulations and/or agreed partnership provisions, may be referred directly to the OIA consideration.

Stage 5: (HE students only)

2.23 Where the student is not satisfied with the outcome of the University proceedings, they may escalate their complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for students in Higher Education. The University can provide further guidance to the appellant if they wish to escalate their appeal. Information about the OIA is available here: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>

Groups of Complainants

2.24 ACM recognises that students may wish to lodge complaints collectively. In such instances students are asked to nominate one spokesperson with whom ACM staff will liaise to address the complaint. This spokesperson should endeavour to gather the views of all of the students who wish to lodge the complaint. Stage 1 does not satisfactorily address the complaint, the spokesperson should complete a written explanation of the complaint (either a report or via the Student Complaints Form), which should be agreed by the entire group before submission. Students may opt to have their elected Student Representative act as spokesperson for the group.

Student Progression

2.25 Until the complaint is concluded, the student:

- Will be allowed to continue their studies, except under circumstances where there is a disciplinary matter involved where the student has been suspended for their own or others safety,
- Must continue to meet attendance, engagement, and assessment requirements for the programme.

3.Responsible Parties

3.1 The policy lead is responsible for the cyclical monitoring and review of the policy in liaison with the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manager. The Student Complaints and Grievances Procedure lead is:

- Head of Quality and Student Experience

3.2 Decisions and appropriate actions in support of the implementation of the Policy will be authorised by the following designated staff:

- Group Head of Education
- Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manager
- Head of Student Services
- Programme Managers
- Senior Programme Officers
- Registry Manager
- Senior Management, including Executive Senior Management.

4. Reference Points

- Academic Appeals Policy
- Academic Integrity Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy

5. Date of Approval and Next Review

Version: 2.1
Approved on: 21 May 2018
Approved by: Academic Board
Next Review: 01 Aug 2019