

Royal Northern College of Music

ADMISSIONS COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Policy & Procedure

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Committee

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RNCM



ROYAL NORTHERN
COLLEGE *of* MUSIC

1. General Principles

The College aims to provide a high standard and quality of service for applicants and to deliver an admissions process that is consistent, fair and professional, but recognises that occasionally things may go wrong. As part of its commitment to enhancing the applicant experience, this procedure has been established to deal with complaints from applicants in a fair and transparent manner. Complaints can provide useful feedback from applicants and, where appropriate, will be used to enhance the admissions process.

This procedure explains how applicants to undergraduate and postgraduate programmes may make a complaint, both informal and formal. Applicants who have a complaint to make should raise it as soon as possible, as matters that are dealt with informally at an early stage have the best chance of being resolved effectively. Only when the informal procedures have been exhausted and the applicant remains dissatisfied should a formal complaint be made.

Complaints should be made by applicants as soon as possible after the events or actions (or lack of actions) which have prompted the complaint. The College will not consider complaints that are made more than three months after the events complained about unless the applicant provides evidence of an exceptional reason for the delay. If the College requests further information from the applicant it should be provided within one month of the request. The College will not consider such information if it is provided more than one month after the request from the College unless the applicant provides evidence of an exceptional reason for the delay. The decision on whether to consider a complaint made more than three months after the events or to consider further information submitted more than one month after the College's request will be made by the Head of Registry.

Applicants are expected to provide a concise and clear summary of their complaint and any relevant additional information to support their complaint at the time it is submitted to the College to prevent undue delay in the consideration of the complaint. The College expects applicants (as the person best able to communicate any issues of dissatisfaction or adverse effects) to raise matters of complaint with the College and will only accept complaints raised by third parties on an applicant's behalf in exceptional cases and only then with the written permission of the applicant to deal with a named third party. The College will not investigate anonymous complaints.

The College reserves the right to refuse to investigate or suspend any investigation underway where it becomes aware that legal, court or tribunal proceedings have been initiated in relation to the issues raised in the complaint.

Staff at the College who have a role in undergraduate or postgraduate admissions are required to know, understand and follow the College's Admissions Complaints Procedure.

Every reasonable effort will be made to deal promptly and efficiently with all complaints, to investigate them thoroughly, objectively and independently and to seek to resolve them satisfactorily. If a complaint is upheld, the College will seek to provide an appropriate response and correct any mistakes or misunderstandings and take any other action as deemed appropriate by the investigating officer. If a complaint is not upheld then reasons for that decision will be given.

All information received as a result of a complaint investigation will remain confidential to those involved in the process. However, it should be noted that, in the interests of natural justice, parties to a complaint have the right to know the full

details of the complaint. An individual (or individuals) against whom a complaint is made has the right to be supplied with a copy of the complaint and to comment on it. A complaint cannot be investigated if the applicant does not wish the substance of the allegation to be made known to the individual(s) concerned.

Those investigating or considering a complaint will do so impartially. Anyone with a material personal interest in the complaint will not be involved in the consideration of the complaint.

Where a complaint is shown to be frivolous, vexatious or motivated by malice, it will not be investigated.

The time limits set out in this procedure will be followed to conclude matters of complaint as quickly as possible. However, where, for good reason, the College is unable to keep to the normal time limits, all parties will be kept regularly informed of progress.

Applicants who have applied or are considering applying for a programme delivered by a partner organisation (e.g. a collaborative programme) should follow the complaints procedure of the partner organisation.

This Procedure is not available for applicants to Erasmus and Exchange programmes. Complaints concerning admission to these programmes should be addressed to the International Office.

2. Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is defined as a specific concern related to a procedural error, irregularity or maladministration in the admissions procedures or policies. Examples of the types of complaint covered by this procedure include the following:

- a failing in a College service
- misinformation about the application process (including auditions)
- insufficient or inappropriate facilities
- the behaviour of a member or members of staff

Applicants have no right of appeal against a decision based on academic or practical/performance judgement not to offer them a place at the College and therefore appeals against the decision of an application based on the academic assessment or the applicant's audition performance will not be considered.

The College is committed to the continuing review and enhancement of its admissions processes and welcomes regular feedback from its applicants. The College also is committed to providing an environment within which applicants are encouraged and feel able to raise any matters of concern in an informal manner as soon as they arise at any stage in the application process. Any feedback should be directed to the Head of Registry.

3. Dealing with Complaints

The College aims to resolve complaints by following the procedures outlined below, although these may be adapted if necessary to enable the fair and efficient resolution of a particular complaint. Overall, the College aims to resolve complaints with a minimum of formality but in a way which is reasonable and transparent in all

circumstances. A complaint will be considered to have been resolved when the applicant accepts the response and/or redress offered by the College in respect of the complaint and decides not to pursue the complaint further.

The College has a three stage complaints process for applicants as follows.

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution of a Complaint

The College is committed to resolving matters of applicant dissatisfaction informally as this enables a prompt investigation and resolution to the mutual agreement of all parties. The College believes that most matters of applicant dissatisfaction can be resolved informally and applicants should raise these matters at the earliest opportunity; either through reporting the matter at the time to staff / a student ambassador or with the Assistant Head of Registry (Admissions).

The Assistant Head of Registry (Admissions) will normally let the applicant know within five working days of receiving the initial complaint what steps (if any) will be taken to address the complaint and the expected timescale, and advise them to whom they should submit a formal complaint if they are not satisfied with this outcome.

Only when an attempt at informal resolution has failed should the Stage 2 procedure outlined below be followed. A formal complaint will not normally be considered until the informal procedure has been used, unless the matter is particularly serious.

Stage 2 - Formal Complaints Procedure

Where a complaint is not resolved to an applicant's satisfaction through the informal process, the applicant should invoke the formal complaints procedure by submitting a written complaint in the form of a completed Admissions Complaints Form to the Head of Registry within 10 working days of receiving the outcome of their informal complaint. At any stage after the formal process has commenced the student may choose to return to the informal procedure to resolve the matter.

The Head of Registry should acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five working days.

The student must make clear in their written submission the relevant facts and matters which it is considered give cause for complaint, together with any relevant documentation, and should state the resolution they are seeking (although the latter information will not restrict the resolution which may be granted under the procedure, it will be helpful to those dealing with the complaint). The applicant should keep a copy of their complaint and any other documents submitted for their records.

If it appears to the Head of Registry that a complaint is vexatious and/or frivolous, he/she will discuss it with a member of the College's Executive Team and together they will determine whether it should be rejected on the basis that it is vexatious and/or frivolous. Should a complaint be rejected on this basis no further action will be taken in respect of the complaint, and the Head of Registry will write to the applicant to explain why the complaint has been rejected.

The complaint will be investigated by the Head of Registry who will arrange to discuss with the applicant their complaint in detail. Prior to this discussion, the Head of Registry will seek further information as required from those involved in the

complaint as noted in the Admissions Complaints Form.

The applicant will receive a full written response to their complaint, which should detail the nature of the complaint and the findings of any investigation. The Head of Registry will write to the student within 20 working days of initiation of the formal complaints procedure with the outcome of the process (the complaint is upheld or the complaint is dismissed), setting out what, if any, redress is offered to the applicant in respect of the complaint. If this timescale is not possible, the applicant will be informed in writing of the progress being made towards the consideration of their complaint and given a timescale for completion.

The College shall not normally reimburse expenses incurred by applicants in the event of a complaint being upheld.

Stage 3 - Review by a member of the College's Executive

If the applicant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the Stage 2 complaint and believes that the complaint has not been handled properly or fairly according to these procedures, the applicant may request for a review by writing to the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement within 14 days of receipt of the Stage 2 outcome. The request must state the grounds for requesting a review and include details of the resolution they are seeking.

Taking account of the substance of the review request and the outcome of Stage 2, a member of the College's Executive will then decide on an appropriate outcome. The applicant will be notified of the decision within one month of receipt of the request for a review and provided with a response that clearly sets out the reasons for each decision.

If the member of the College's Executive upholds one or more aspects of the review request the applicant will be provided with information about implementation of any remedy.

If the member of the College's Executive dismisses the complaint there shall be no further opportunity for the complaint to be pursued within the College. The applicant will be provided with a completion of procedures letter.

5. Monitoring

The Head of Registry will keep a record of all formal applicant complaints received.

An annual report on admissions complaints will be made to the College's Executive Committee