

Royal Northern College of Music

Admissions Complaints

Policy and Procedure

**Department: Marketing and Student
Recruitment**

**Document owner: Director of Marketing
and Student Recruitment**

**Approval Committee: Executive
Committee**

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1. General Principles

The College aims to provide a fair and transparent admissions process for all applicants and offer holders, including, but not limited to, the provision and exchange of accurate and timely information, in a considerate and respectful manner, at every stage in the process. We recognise however, that interactions may occasionally fall short of the high standard of service and support we endeavour to provide, and applicants or offer holders may be dissatisfied.

We are committed to the continuous development of our processes and the provision of a positive applicant experience wherever possible, and we welcome all feedback on our work in this area.

Applicants or offer holders are encouraged to contact our Admissions Team in the first instance, should they encounter an issue relating to their application, become dissatisfied with their experience or wish to provide feedback on our processes. In most cases this will result in the quickest resolution.

Where this is not possible, or applicants remain dissatisfied, a formal complaint should be submitted. This procedure sets out the steps involved in raising a complaint in relation to any aspect of the admissions process.

Complaints should be submitted by the applicant or offer holder themselves, as soon as possible after the events or actions (or lack of actions) which have prompted them. The College is not able to investigate complaints that are made anonymously, by a third party for whom the applicant or offer holder has not given written consent to discuss their situation, or those that are submitted more than three months after the events have taken place, unless evidence of an exceptional reason for the delay is provided.

In some cases, further information may be required following the initial complaint submission. If this is requested, it should be provided within one month, as information submitted beyond this may not be considered reliable and may hinder or delay any investigation.

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

2. Usage

All members of the Marketing and Student Recruitment team and those involved in the admissions process are required to know, understand, and follow the College's Admissions Complaints Procedure.

Depending on the nature of the complaint, investigatory teams will include Admissions and Recruitment staff (where an informal complaint is raised), the Deputy Director of Marketing and Student Recruitment, an independent investigating officer and a member of the College's Executive team where escalation is deemed necessary. Those investigating or considering a complaint will do so impartially, and any member of staff with a material personal interest in the complaint will not be involved in this process.

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. In exceptional circumstances, it may not be possible to keep within the time

limits set out below, where this is the case, the College will keep all parties regularly informed of progress.

If a complaint is upheld, the College will seek to provide an appropriate response, 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 in relation to a complaint investigation will remain confidential to those involved in the process. However, it should be noted that parties to a complaint have the right to know the full details of any allegation made against them, in order to facilitate a fair and effective investigation. As such, 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.

Where an issue is encountered in relation to the delivery of a service by one of our partner providers (e.g. admission to a collaborative course), the complaints procedure for that institution should be followed.

3. Definition of a Complaint

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

- a failing in a College service
- delivery of misinformation relating to an application or admissions processes (including auditions)
- insufficient or inappropriate facilities
- the behaviour of a member or members of staff

Applicants have no right of appeal against:

- the outcome of their application, including the academic or practical/performance judgement not to offer them a place at the College.

Ordinarily, assessment panel decisions are final and appeals against these will not be considered without sufficient evidence of processes not being appropriately adhered to.

4. Submission, Investigation and Resolution of Complaints

The College employs a three stage complaints procedure, aimed at providing a transparent and agreeable resolution, within the shortest time frame possible. In most cases, this is best achieved with minimum formality, but where this is not possible or complainants remain dissatisfied, a formal escalation process is in place.

In all cases, complainants are expected to provide a concise and clear summary, along with any relevant additional information to support their complaint at the time it is submitted to the College to prevent undue delay in its consideration.

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

Stage One - Informal Submission – Initial Complaint

The College is committed to the continuing review and enhancement of its admissions processes and welcomes regular feedback from its applicants. To facilitate this, we aim to provide an environment within which applicants and offer holders 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 issues or concerns should be immediately reported to the Admissions Team, a member of staff and/or a Student Ambassador (if encountered during an in-person audition) in the first instance. This will enable a timely resolution or investigation where appropriate.

Where applicants or offer holders feel that their complaint has not been or cannot be dealt with in this way, wish to provide additional feedback or escalate concerns, informal complaints should be submitted to the Student Recruitment Marketing Manager, at the earliest possible opportunity.

Upon receipt, the Student Recruitment Marketing Manager will contact the complainant within 3 working days to advise on what steps (if any) will be taken to address the issue and the expected timescale for this. The complainant will then be notified of the outcome of any informal investigation within the timescale specified.

If a mutually agreeable resolution cannot be found via this process, or if a complaint is deemed appropriate for immediate escalation, the below procedure outlines the formal submission process.

Stage Two - Formal Complaints Procedure

Formal complaints must be submitted in writing, by email to the Director of Marketing and Student Recruitment. In most cases, the informal submission process outlined in Stage One should be followed prior to initiating the formal complaints procedure. At any stage after the formal process has commenced, the complainant may choose to return to informal actions to resolve the matter.

If an applicant or offer holder wishes to raise a formal complaint following failure to reach a mutually agreeable outcome through informal action, their written submission must be received by the Director of Marketing and Student Recruitment within 10 working days of receiving the initial outcome of their complaint.

The Director of Marketing and Student Recruitment will acknowledge receipt of any formal complaint within five working days and will provide updates on the progress of any investigation deemed necessary.

The complainant must make clear in their written submission the relevant facts and matters which they consider contributory to their complaint, together with any relevant documentation, and should state the ideal resolution they are seeking. The applicant or offer holder should keep a copy of their complaint and any other documents submitted for their records.

The Director of Marketing and Student Recruitment will use this information to investigate the complaint, and may request further evidence from, arrange a discussion with or seek additional detail relating to any of the parties involved, including the complainant themselves, as necessary to carry out a fair and thorough inquiry.

Following completion of any necessary investigation (usually within one month of the formal complaints procedure being initiated) the complainant will receive a full written response to

their submission, detailing the nature of the issue and any relevant findings. This will be followed by formal notification of the outcome of the process (the complaint is upheld or the complaint is dismissed), setting out what, if any, redress is offered.

If it is not possible to conclude investigatory procedures and reach an outcome within one month, the applicant will be informed in writing of the progress being made towards the consideration of their complaint and given a timescale for completion.

Stage 3 - Review by an independent member of the College's Executive Committee

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 team 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 Committee 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 Committee dismisses the complaint, there shall be no further opportunity for the complaint to be pursued within the College, and the applicant will be provided with a completion of procedures letter.

5. Monitoring

The College continually enhances and develops its processes and conducts regular reviews throughout and at the end of each admissions cycle; during which all feedback is considered. Where improvements can be feasibly implemented immediately following a complaint being raised, the College is committing to doing so.

All complaints are logged and reviewed by the Director of Marketing and Student Recruitment and the College's Executive Committee periodically, with a view to monitoring quality and parity of processes.