

Royal Northern College of Music
Complaints procedure for members of the public

1. General Principles

RNCM welcomes comments and suggestions from those members of the public with whom it comes into contact. If you have a complaint about the RNCM, this should be addressed to the relevant Head of Department (e.g., Conferencing and Catering, Human Resources, Estates and Venues, Marketing, etc. Contact details are available on the College website). If your complaint relates directly to a performance or event you attended rather than a service received or a problem with the building/theatre/concert hall, please address your complaint to the Head of Marketing and Communications.

All complaints will be carefully considered and a response provided as soon as possible and normally within 20 working days. If the complaint involves a more detailed investigation requiring more time (or there are circumstances beyond the College's control which delays a response), you will be advised of the date by which a response will be provided. If your complaint relates to an area for which the Head of Department is directly responsible, or to a matter in which he or she has previously been involved, then your complaint should be addressed to the Vice-Principal (Operations).

2. Who can complain through this procedure?

This formal complaints procedure applies to prospective students (individuals interested in applying to the College but who are not yet accepted for study), current Young Projects/Junior RNCM students (and/or their parents/guardians) or members of the public unconnected with the RNCM. It does not apply to complainants who fall under the following categories (for whom there are separate procedures):

- Current student (individuals who have been accepted for study at the College or who are a registered student of the College)
- Member of staff.

RNCM recognises that there will be occasions when members of the public wish to receive an explanation for an RNCM decision or policy without wishing formally to complain about the matter. RNCM is willing to deal with such enquiries outwith this formal complaints procedure.

3. What are the first steps in making my complaint?

The purpose of these procedures is to resolve any complaint as speedily and appropriately as possible. Try to resolve the complaint at the local level first (i.e. with the manager of that particular area) within the RNCM. If you are unsure of the identity of the person to approach, the Vice-Principal (Operations) office can provide guidance. If you are dissatisfied with the response received or the action taken by the RNCM as a result of an informal approach to resolve things, you are entitled to raise a formal complaint.

The following procedure outlines how to make a formal complaint.

3.1 What are the time limits for making a formal complaint?

You should normally make a formal complaint within one month of the event(s) concerned or within one month of becoming aware that you have something to complain about. RNCM has discretion to waive this limit if there are valid reasons why you did not complain earlier.

3.2 To whom do I complain and how?

All formal complaints should be submitted to the relevant Head of Department in writing or by email setting out an account of the complaint as advised below.

3.3 What format should my formal complaint take?

The following are guidelines for making a formal complaint:

- A complaint should be in writing and in the form of a letter or email marked for the attention of the Head of [the relevant] Department.
- Clearly head your complaint “Formal Complaint”.
- Provide a record of events, with as much information as possible and provide copies of any relevant documents.
- If you have informally discussed matters with any members of staff at the RNCM, please give their full name and provide details of the conversation.
- Write clearly and concisely as to exactly why you are dissatisfied: in particular set out what hardship or injustice you believe you have suffered.
- State clearly what you feel the RNCM should have done differently.
- State clearly from your perspective, how the matter can be put right.

3.4 What will happen after I submit my formal complaint?

The Head of Department will review and consider your formal complaint and make an independent judgement as to its merits. This review will involve looking at all the relevant factors and assessing the decision(s) made by the Department/student/member of staff in light of all the circumstances. The Head of Department will assess whether the department/student/member of staff has acted reasonably and within the terms of their obligations and will make an independent judgement as to the merits of your complaint in the light of that review. The Head of Department’s decision will be independently reviewed by another member of senior management.

3.5 What if my complaint concerns the Head of Department?

If your complaint relates to an issue involving the Head of Department, or to a matter in which he or she has previously been involved, then your complaint will be handled by an alternative senior member of staff nominated by the Vice-Principal (Operations).

3.6 When will I receive a response?

The RNCM will post or email an acknowledgment of your formal complaint within 5 working days (excluding public holidays) of your formal complaint being received by the Head of Department.

The Head of Department will normally send you a written response to your formal complaint within 20 working days (excluding public holidays) of your formal complaint being received by the Head of Department. If, in exceptional circumstances, it is not possible to resolve your complaint within that timescale, you will be informed of that situation and the likely timescale for resolution.

4. What do I do if I remain dissatisfied with the response I receive?

If you remain dissatisfied after receiving RNCM's response, you can complain to the Principal.

Please be aware that higher education institutions are subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and information about the complaint you submit and/or the response you receive may be disclosed under Act unless it contains information about individuals which is protected under the Data Protection Act 1998 (in which case identification and contact details will be removed). Formal complaints are monitored by the College through departmental performance review processes.