

## Student Debt Management Policy and Procedures

<b>Version</b>	<b>1.2</b>
<b>Effective date</b>	<b>April 2015</b>
<b>Date for review</b>	<b>May 2016</b>
<b>Policy owner</b>	<b>Finance Manager</b>
<b>Reference points</b>	<b>Student Finance England 'Change of Circumstance Policy Chapter 2014/15'; Middlesex University Regulations, Section H: Student Responsibilities: Fees</b>
<b>Audience / handling notes</b>	<b>Public</b>
<b>Dissemination and implementation plan</b>	<p>This Student Debt Management policy will be disseminated to all ACM staff and students through publication on the ACM website.</p> <p>Heads of School will receive training in how to apply this policy and procedures. They will also be directed to where it is published. Heads of School will be responsible for the dissemination of the policy and procedures to academic staff; the Registrar will be responsible for the dissemination of the policy and procedures to support staff.</p> <p>This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Finance Manager and the Executive Board and will be considered as part of the annual policy review of all ACM policies.</p>
<b>Approving Committee</b>	<b>Policy and Strategy Committee</b>
<b>Date approved</b>	

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>
1	30/04/14	Approved by Policy and Strategy Committee
1.1	01/06/14	Revised and approved by Executive Board

## Initial Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) Questions for ACM Policies:

Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) are a legal requirement of public bodies and form part of the specific duties on universities and colleges to help them meet their general equality duties. For more information on EIA, please refer to the ACM Equality and Diversity Policy.

An EIA involves gathering and using evidence to make a judgement about how a particular policy or practice affects, or is likely to affect, protected equality groups of people when it is implemented. Protected groups<sup>1</sup> are identified in the Equality Act 2010 as sharing a particular characteristic against which it is illegal to discriminate. The assessment should identify whether the policy and its related procedures affect people from different equality strands in different ways and if they do then it should establish whether the differential impact is positive, negative or neutral.

This form is intended to provide a quick assessment of whether a policy requires a Full EIA. It is also intended to be used to EIA all new policies.

- a) Is there any aspect of the policy, procedure or practice that is likely to have a differential impact (negative or positive) on any of the protected characteristics?

No  
 Yes

If yes, identify how the impact would affect the specific equality strand:

- b) Is there a possibility of unlawful discrimination, directly or indirectly, on any of the protected characteristics?

No  
 Yes

- c) Could there be an effect on relations between certain groups?

No  
 Yes

- d) Can the above differences be justified?

No  
 Yes  
 N/A

- e) What mechanisms are in place to monitor the application of the policy, procedure or practice across people from all protected equality groups? Please explain:

Finance will review the impact of the application of this policy on the protected characteristics on an annual basis. A review report of the previous year's data for ACM student debt management, including this data, will be considered at the first meeting of Finance & Resources Committee and Policy & Strategy Committee of the academic year.

<sup>1</sup> The nine protected groups are defined in the ACM Equality and Diversity Policy. In brief, they are: Age; Disability; Gender re-assignment; Marriage and civil partnership; Pregnancy and maternity; Race; Religion and belief; Sex; Sexual orientation.

## Student Debt Management (Higher Education Programmes)

### 1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. This policy describes how the Academy of Contemporary Music (ACM) looks upon the issue of student debt and aims to minimise levels of student debt in order to protect the overall financial health of ACM while still taking into consideration the circumstances of individual students.
- 1.2. This policy applies to **students or former students on a higher education programme** and is designed to ensure that students are treated in a fair and equitable manner.
- 1.3. The Finance Manager and Executive Board members are responsible for reviewing this policy and Finance staff are responsible for the effective operation of the student debt management procedures described below.
- 1.4. The content of this policy aligns with government legislation, the regulations of ACM's validating partner and other external stakeholders to whom ACM must make reference.
- 1.5. The Student Debt Management Policy has a direct link with the following policies and procedures:
  - Academic Appeals
  - Academic Misconduct
  - Admissions
  - Attendance
  - Equality and Diversity
  - Fee Appeal
  - Fee Refund
  - Withdrawal and Interruption

### 2. Objectives

- 2.1. To explain in an open, transparent and accessible way how ACM will treat students who have outstanding debts.
- 2.2. To demonstrate the actions ACM can take in recovering outstanding debt and to suggest how students can mitigate against such action.

### 3. Support for Students

- 3.1. In applying the policy ACM will at all times seek to be sympathetic to, and understanding of, individual students' financial circumstances. However, for ACM to do so, the student **must engage in dialogue with ACM** if they are experiencing difficulties.
- 3.2. Action to enforce settlement of **outstanding fees and charges will be taken against all current and former students** who have failed to engage with ACM to find a solution to settle any outstanding debt and who have failed to honour their contractual obligations to pay them.
- 3.3. Students experiencing difficulties in paying fees and charges should seek help at the earliest opportunity by making contact with the ACM Finance Department:

[Studentfinance@acm.ac.uk](mailto:Studentfinance@acm.ac.uk) or telephone 01483 500800 (option 3 for Student Finance)

#### 4. Student Fee Liability

- 4.1. Students (or their parents or legal guardians for those students under the age of 18) become liable for the payment of the Total Programme Fee **on the date of Registration**. These fees cover registration, tuition, and entrance to examinations. Note, the fees do not include those for graduation, which are payable to the validating university.
- 4.2. ACM offers students the facility to pay their full fee in instalments. Students must be aware of installment payment dates, which are detailed on the ACM Contract sent to each student following acceptance onto a programme of study.
- 4.3. Even where fees are payable by a third party, students remain personally liable to ACM for fees notified to them.

#### 5. Student Loans and Fee Repayments after a Change of Circumstance

- 5.1. In the matter of the recovery of the student loan element of the Total Programme Fee (for students in receipt of a student loan), ACM will charge the student 25% of the tuition fee if the student withdraws during the 1<sup>st</sup> term, 50% if they withdraw during the 2<sup>nd</sup> term and the full 100% if they withdraw during the 3<sup>rd</sup> term.

ACM follows the guidance of Student Finance England, which administers student loans on behalf of the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). Information on this can be found on the Student Finance England website under 'SFE Change of Circumstance Policy Chapter 2014/15':

<http://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/policy-information/guidance-chapters.aspx>

- 5.2. In the matter of the recovery of the outstanding programme fees over and above those covered by the student loan (for students in receipt of a student loan), ACM will consider each student on a case-by-case basis. The options which may be applied in each case are:
  - 5.2.1. Fee remission, where students are permitted a part or full tuition fee waiver;
  - 5.2.2. Charge for the outstanding fee amount for year one of the programme;
  - 5.2.3. Charge for both academic years of the degree.
- 5.3. In the matter of the recovery of the outstanding programme fees for the Total Programme Fee (for students who are self-financing their programme), ACM will consider each student on a case-by-case basis. The options which may be applied in each case are:
  - 5.3.1. Fee remission, where students are permitted a part or full tuition fee waiver;
  - 5.3.2. Charge for the Total Programme Fee for year one of the programme;
  - 5.3.3. Charge for the Total Programme Fee both academic years of the degree.

#### 6. Library Charges, Materials and Other Equipment

- 6.1. Students using the Library and/or borrowing equipment have an obligation to respect the rights of others by returning library and other equipment on time. To encourage this, fines are charged on items that are returned late.

## Procedures (Student Debt Management)

### Current Students

1. Under Middlesex University Regulations, and in accordance with this policy, no certificates will be conferred unless all outstanding fees and other sums due to ACM have been paid.
2. Persistent failure by enrolled students to meet financial or material obligations to ACM may lead to suspension of programme enrichment benefits or suspension or exclusion from the programme as follows:
  - 2.1. **Day 7 (before due date)**

Finance Department will send a text message and email reminder to students of their due payment date.
  - 2.2. **Day 0 (Due date)**

Tuition fees due. Reminder text message and email sent at the beginning of the day if fees have not been paid.
  - 2.3. **Day 5 (after due date)**

Finance Department will issue a text message and email and may phone students asking for the student to pay any arrears immediately and/or to contact Finance Department to discuss their arrears position.
  - 2.4 **Day 14 (after due date)**

Finance Department will attempt to engage the student in the issue in a human manner, for example, by finding them in one of their timetabled classes and inviting them to discuss their financial situation (Reminder 1). Finance will advise the student that they are at risk of suspension of programme enrichment benefits including tutorials, Masterclasses, access to Industry Link and Library etc. Finance will ensure that student contact details are accurate on the MIS to enable an easier dialogue. This contact will be followed up with a letter confirming the substance of the discussion. Students are required to bring their account up to date within 14 days of this contact.
  - 2.5 **Day 30 (after due date)**

Finance Department send a letter (Reminder 2) requesting immediate payment and advising student of suspension of programme enrichment benefits including tutorials, Masterclasses, access to Industry Link and Library etc. Students are required to bring their account up to date within 14 days of the date of the letter.
  - 2.6 **Day 45 (after due date)**

Finance Department send a Notice of Impending Suspension on Financial Grounds. Students are required to contact Student Finance within 5 days of the date of the letter to agree a meeting to discuss their outstanding debt. Failure to agree the meeting will result in immediate suspension from the programme of study.
  - 2.7 **Day 50 (after due date)**

Formal Notice of Temporary Suspension is issued. Students are unable to participate in their programme of study or enrichment activities. Students in this situation will be requested to meet with the Executive Board regarding their outstanding debts.

In extenuating circumstances and in agreement with the Executive Board an exceptional payment plan may be agreed. Failure to meet the payment plan will result in immediate suspension from the programme of study.

### **2.8 Day 60 (after due date)**

If after this point the student has not engaged with the ACM Finance Department directly (i.e. not other members of staff or via social media) about their student debt, the student will be automatically terminated from the programme. Upon termination from the programme, the balance of the outstanding debt will become immediately payable.

### **Former Students**

1. If a student leaves their programme of study with debt still owing to ACM, the Finance Department will continue to pursue recovery of the debt. If the former student fails to make arrangements to settle the outstanding amounts, they will be referred to ACM's debt collection agency.
2. Former students who later decide to re-apply to ACM will not be allowed to do so unless any former debt has been paid in full prior to registration. ACM has the right to refuse application to pay by installments from a returning student if they are deemed to have a poor payment record.