

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 aspect 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.

1.3 This policy relates to students studying at ACM Guildford and ACM Birmingham, on programmes validated by Middlesex University (HE) and University of the Arts London (FE). Students studying at ACM London, as part of a franchise partnership with Falmouth University, must refer to Falmouth University's Complaints Procedure.

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 formal 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 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.

Stage 1: Early resolution

2.3 Initially, a student should seek to deal with their complaint at the level at which the event leading to the complaint occurred. This could be at programme level, or within the relevant service department.

2.4 A student should, if at all possible, address their complaint to the member of staff most directly involved in the event leading to the complaint, in order to give that person the opportunity to address the concerns.

2.5 If for any reason the student does not feel that this is possible, they should seek advice from the Student Hub team in order to identify an appropriate alternative mechanism of early resolution.

2.6 Every effort will be made to resolve the complaint simply and quickly. The member of staff investigating the complaint may invite the student to a meeting to discuss the matter in an attempt to reach a resolution.

2.7 Stage 1 complaints will be dealt with in a timely fashion. Those involved in investigating the complaint will establish appropriate timescales based on its nature and complexity. These timescales should be communicated to the student and the student kept informed of any changes. Where possible, the investigation should be completed within 28 working days.

2.8 At the end of Stage 1, a student will be provided with a written response to their complaint, copied to the Student Engagement Manager, which will either:

- Detail the proposed resolution; OR
- If no resolution has been proposed, explain why the resolution has not been considered to be possible.

Stage 2: Formal Stage

2.9 If a student is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 1, they may choose to submit a Stage 2 complaint, by completing the Complaints Form. This should be done within 21 working days of the release of the written response to Stage 1. A Stage 2 complaint will normally only be considered following the completion of the early resolution stage.

2.10 A student wishing to submit a Stage 2 complaint should do so to the Student Engagement Manager (studentengagement@acm.ac.uk).

2.11 If the Student Engagement Manager was involved in the case at Stage 1, they will nominate an appropriate alternative individual to take a lead on the case. If no appropriate individual can be found, the Student Engagement Manager may refer it to the Registrar who will then assign the lead to an appropriate individual.

2.12 The receipt of the complaint form will normally be acknowledged within 7 working days.

2.13 The Student Engagement Manager or the nominee will convene a panel of relevant staff to consider the case appropriately. This will normally involve discussions with the student and/ or the subject of the complaint.

2.14 Complaints will be dealt with in a timely fashion. The complaints panel will determine appropriate timescales based on the nature and complexity of the case. These timescales should be communicated to the student and the student kept informed of any changes. Where possible, complaints should normally take no longer than 21 working days to investigate from the acknowledgement being sent.

2.15 The Student Engagement Manager, or nominee, will inform the complainant, the subject of the complaint, and the Complaints Panel, in writing, of the outcome of the investigation.

2.14 Following the outcome of Stage 2: Formal Stage students may request a review by the validating body/ partner institution.

Stage 3: Validating Body/ Partner Institution Review

Middlesex University Provision

2.15 This section applies to students studying on the BA(Hons) Music Industry Practice programme at ACM Guildford or ACM Birmingham.

2.16 If a student considers that:

- a) there has been a procedural irregularity in the investigation of a complaint regarding a matter related to their academic programme carried out by ACM;
- b) new information has come to light, which the student was unable to disclose previously and which would have had a material impact upon the investigation previously undertaken;
- c) the decision reached was unreasonable based on the information that had been available to ACM when the case was considered,

they can request a review of the outcome of the investigation carried out by ACM, by completing a CPULR form (Collaborative Partner University Level Review).

2.17 The student is expected to submit the CPULR form and all supporting documentation within 21 working days of receiving written confirmation from ACM of the final outcome of ACM's investigation. The CPULR form must be submitted to the Director of Affairs at Middlesex University.

2.18 The receipt of the CPULR form will normally be acknowledged within 7 working days, and ACM will be informed of the nature and substance of the complaint.

2.19 The CPULR form will be reviewed by the Director of Student Affairs or nominee. The University review will consider whether a) there has been a procedural irregularity in the investigation of the complaint by ACM, or b) any new evidence has come to light which would have had a material impact on the investigation. Discussion may be held with the student and/ or subject of the complaint and with members of staff involved in ACM's investigation process.

2.20 Where possible, reviews should normally take no more than 21 working days to investigate from the acknowledgement being sent. The Director of Student Affairs or nominee will establish appropriate timescales based on the nature and complexity of the case. These timescales should be communicated to the student and the student kept informed of any changes.

2.21 The Director of Student Affairs or nominee will inform all parties of the proposed outcome of their investigation and give all parties the opportunity to comment. Following consideration of any comments, the Director of Student Affairs or nominee will communicate the outcome of the review, with reasons and in writing, to all parties within 21 working days.

2.22 When the review has been concluded, the student will be issued with a Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter. Following this, any student who is dissatisfied with the final decision on their case may be able to apply to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for

Higher Education. Information and eligibility rules are available at: www.oiahe.org.uk.

University of the Arts London (UAL) Provision (FE)

2.23 This section applies to students on Level 2 and Level 3 provision at ACM Guildford and ACM Birmingham whose complaints relate to their course/ award.

2.24 UAL will only consider a complaint from a student at a partner institution in circumstances where a student feels that there was a material or procedural error in the operation of ACM's procedures, and the University Secretary and Registrar considers it fair and reasonable in all the circumstances to permit the complaint.

2.25 Students can find further information on UAL's complaints procedure on their website ([click here](#)).

East Surrey College (FE)

2.26 This section applies to students on Level 2 and Level 3 provision at ACM Guildford and ACM Birmingham whose complaints relate to funding.

2.27 Details on East Surrey College's Concerns and Feedback procedure can be found on their website ([click here](#)).

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. 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:

- Student Risk Committee

4. Reference Points

- Academic Appeals Policy
- Academic Integrity Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Middlesex University Regulations
- University of the Arts London Complaints Policy
- East Surrey College Concerns and Feedback Procedure
- OIA Good Practice Framework

5. Date of Approval and Next Review

Version: 2.1

Approved by: Education Executive