

ACADEMY OF CONTEMPORARY MUSIC: COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1. Introduction

1.1 This policy and procedure is applicable to students and prospective students who are studying, or who are considering study, for a Falmouth University degree with The Academy of Contemporary Music (ACM).

2. Definition of a complaint

2.1 A complaint is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction in respect of academic standards or a professional service”. The point of complaint starts when the complainant has drawn their concern to the attention of a relevant employee/member of staff.

2.2 Students should be aware that:

- they will not be discriminated against or suffer recrimination for making a complaint;
- complaints cannot be made anonymously;
- the University and ACM’s relationship is with the student. Therefore, students should note that, under Data Protection legislation, ACM and/or the University cannot deal with third party complaints without the written permission of the student unless a third party has been formally authorised or instructed to act on a student’s behalf (this includes complaints made by a student’s parent(s) or spouse). Whilst correspondence will then be copied to the student (unless specifically directed to the contrary by the student), ACM and/or the University will only deal with the single individual authorised to act on the student’s behalf in respect of a complaint.
- Students must adhere to the timeframes outlined in the procedure. Failure to do so may result in the complaint being rejected or the investigation being delayed.

3. Responsibility for managing complaints

3.1 Students studying on a course delivered in partnership with ACM are enrolled and registered on degree course(s) that are owned and awarded by Falmouth University. The University is ultimately responsible for academic standards on the course(s), whereas ACM is ultimately responsible for all other professional services associated with the course(s). It is therefore important that students understand to whom they should address their complaint.

3.2 The table below is intended to help the student determine which procedure they should follow.

Nature of the complaint	Step 1 – Early Resolution	Step 2 – the Formal Stage	Step 3 – the Review Stage
Academic standards: e.g. teaching standards; quality of assessment feedback and/or course content.	Managed by ACM	If the matter remains unresolved following Step 1, refer to Step 2 Procedure A and Falmouth University Complaints Procedure	Refer to Falmouth University Complaints Procedure
Professional services: e.g. conduct/behaviour of a member of ACM staff.		If the matter remains unresolved following Step 1, refer to Step 2 (Procedure B)	If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the completion of Step 2 (Procedure B), refer to Step 3 (Procedure B)

3.3 ACM is responsible for managing all concerns informally at a local level (Step 1) in the first instance. Wherever possible early resolution will be sought and in most cases this will be provide the desired outcome.

4. Procedure

4.1 Step 1 – Early Resolution

i) In the first instance, ACM encourages students to resolve any issues informally, by addressing the person(s) concerned (e.g. academic tutor), or approaching the Senior Programme Officer. Wherever possible, early resolution should be sought, regardless of whether the issue concerns academic standards (e.g. teaching standards) or a professional service (e.g. pastoral support).

ii) Where it is agreed between all parties concerned that the matter has been satisfactorily resolved, the student will be asked for confirmation that this is the case. The confirmation should be sent in writing to the relevant member of ACM staff; the written response will be kept on file as evidence that early resolution had been sought.

iii) **Timeframe:** Step 1 must be invoked **within 8 weeks** of the incident that is the cause for complaint.

iv) If the student believes that the matter is still unresolved, or there are compelling reasons as to why early resolution is not possible or appropriate, the student may lodge a formal complaint as outlined below in Step 2 (Procedure A) or Step 2 (Procedure B), as appropriate.

4.2 Step 2 (Procedure A) – the Formal Stage: complaints concerning academic standards

i) ‘Academic standards’ include matters such as:

- teaching standards on the course;
- quality of feedback on assessment; and
- quality of course content.

iii) If the complaint concerns a professional service that is offered/delivered by ACM, or the behaviour/conduct of a member of ACM staff, the student should refer to **Section 4.3, Step 2 (Procedure B) of this document**.

iv) Where the complaint concerns academic standards then the student should submit their complaint in writing to Falmouth University using the postal or email address below:

Quality Assurance & Enhancement
Falmouth University
Woodlane
Falmouth
TR11 4RH

Email: gae@falmouth.ac.uk

v) **Timeframe:** Step 2 must be invoked within **10 working days** of the completion of Step 1.

vii) The student should provide as much detail as possible in their complaint, including:

- full details of the cause for the complaint, including its impact;
- the action the student has taken thus far and the date(s) of that action;
- the response they have received;
- the reason for their dissatisfaction or disagreement with that response;
- the remedy that they are seeking; and
- copies of supporting evidence.

viii) The University's Quality Assurance & Enhancement office will ensure that the complaint is referred to an appropriate member of staff; the case will be managed in accordance with the University's Complaints Procedures at Step 2 and, where required, at Step 3. Falmouth University's Complaints Policy and Procedure can be accessed via the following link:

www.falmouth.ac.uk/studentregulations

4.3 Step 2 (Procedure B)– The Formal Stage: Complaints concerning ACM professional services

i) 'Professional services' include matters such as:

- pastoral support (eg welfare advice)
- the behaviour/conduct of a member of ACM staff

ii) Where the complaint concerns a professional service that is provided by ACM, then they can ask the Module Leader to deal formally with the complaint:

iii) In their correspondence, the student should set out:

- what their complaint is

- what the supporting evidence is
- why informal resolution was unsuccessful
- what outcome they want.

iv) Upon completion, the form should be sent to the Programme Manager

v) **Timescale:** The formal complaint should be submitted within **10 working days** of notification of the outcome of Step 1.

vi) If the correspondence does not set out clearly and concisely the points listed above, the student will be asked for further details in a manner that enables proper consideration of the complaint to take place.

vii) The Programme Manager (or nominee) will review the complaint and will be accessible to complainants and staff at all stages of the process. The Programme Manager (or nominee) will acknowledge receipt of the formal complaint within 5 working days. The complaint will be logged and referred to an appropriate member of personnel for investigation; typically, this will be the Programme Manager but where the complaint concerns that member of staff, a different senior member of staff will be appointed to lead the investigation.

viii) The Programme Manager (or nominee) will ensure that an investigation is carried out before a written response is provided to the complainant. The investigation and its outcome must be fair and reasonable.

ix) If the Programme Manager (or nominee) upholds (agrees with) the student's complaint they may decide on whatever solution they think appropriate, bearing in mind the outcome sought by the student.

If the complaint is not upheld, the student will be notified about Step 3 of the complaints procedure.

x) The reply will normally be sent within 3 weeks of receipt of the formal complaint. If the investigation will take longer than 3 weeks, the student will be informed of the reason and an expected date of response. Complainants, and individuals named in complaints, will be kept informed of the progress of the complaint at all stages.

4.4 Step 3 (Procedure B) – the Review Stage: for complaints concerning ACM professional services

i) If the student is not satisfied with the response reached regarding their complaint about a professional service, then they may request a review of their complaint.

ii) The Step 3 request will be heard by either the Head of Education or, where the complaint concerns the Head of Education, the Partnerships Director. They will be appointed as the Reviewing Officer.

The Reviewing Officer may be asked to review the way the Programme Manager (or nominee) handled a complaint. The Reviewing Officer will review the complaint and exercise discretion and judgement as to whether further investigation is necessary.

- iii) In their correspondence, the student should set out;
 - why they believe the decision made at Step 2 was not fair or reasonable;
 - how the procedure for the Step 2 complaint was incorrectly followed and how this made a significant difference to the outcome of their complaint
- iv) The student must set out the grounds of the complaint by making reference to those standards, and must provide evidence to support their claim. If the student provides evidence to support one or both of the points above, the Reviewing Officer will arrange for further investigation to take place. In reaching a decision, the Reviewing Officer is expected to be fair and reasonable. A complaint without adequate grounds and evidence will be dismissed.
- v) The request for review of a complaint should be submitted within **1 month** of notification of the outcome of the Step 2 complaint.
- vi) The request should be sent to the following email address; Mike Sturgis, Head of Education, msturgis@acm.ac.uk
- vii) The Head of Education will acknowledge receipt of the request within 5 working days. The complaint will be logged and a Reviewing Officer will be appointed. Complainants, and individuals named in complaints, will be kept informed of the progress of the complaint at all stages.
- viii) Once a decision has been made, the Reviewing Officer will send the response to the complainant.
- ix) If the complaint is upheld, both the student will receive a written explanation of the Reviewing Officer's decision. If the Reviewing Officer does not uphold the complaint, the student will receive a written response giving reasons, and a "Completion of Procedures" letter (see (xi) below) will be issued. The Reviewing Officer may decide to uphold part, but not all, of the complaint and will respond to the student accordingly.
- x) The reply will normally be sent within 3 weeks of receipt of the initial request for review. If the investigation will take longer than 3 weeks, the student will be informed of the reason and an expected date of response.

Completion of Procedures

- xi) If ACM is unable to resolve a complaint to the student's satisfaction, and there are no further steps available to the student, ACM will issue a formal "Completion of Procedures" letter. This provides a formal confirmation that the student has exhausted the internal complaints procedure.

5 Office of the Independent Adjudicator

5.1 If, having exhausted Step 3 of either the University's Complaints Procedure or Step 3 of ACM's Complaints Procedure, the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they may forward their complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) at the address below. The complaint must reach the OIA **within 12 months** of the issue of the Completion of Procedures letter.

5.2 The OIA's contact details are: Office of the Independent Adjudicator, Second Floor, Abbey Gate, 57 – 75 Kings Road, Reading RG1 3AB.

Tel: 0118 959 9813

Email: enquiries@oiahe.org.uk

Further details can be found on the OIA website at: www.oiahe.org.uk

5.3 **Only students enrolled and registered for a Falmouth University award are eligible to refer their complaint to the OIA.** Prospective students and applicants do not have recourse to this service.