

Founder: Daphne M. Bell MBE HON. FTCL LRAM LTCL

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The Ulster College of Music is committed to providing a quality service for its members and working in an open and accountable way that builds the trust and respect. One of the ways in which we can continue to improve our service is by listening and responding to the views of our students, parents/guardians, staff and tutors and in particular by responding positively to complaints, and by putting mistakes right.

We aim to ensure that:

- making a complaint is as easy as possible;
- we treat a complaint as a clear expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for an immediate response;
- we deal with it promptly, politely and, when appropriate, confidentially;
- we respond in the right way - for example, with an explanation, or an apology where we have got things wrong, or information on any action taken etc.;
- we learn from complaints, use them to improve our service, and review annually our complaints policy and procedures.

We recognise that many concerns will be raised informally, and dealt with quickly. Our aims are to:

- resolve informal concerns quickly;
- keep matters low-key;
- enable mediation between the complainant and the individual to whom the complaint has been referred if required.

An informal approach is appropriate when it can be achieved. But if concerns cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, then the formal complaints procedure should be followed. The formal complaints procedure is intended to ensure that all complaints are handled fairly, consistently and wherever possible resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.

A Complainant's responsibility is to:

- bring their complaint, in writing, to the attention normally within 8 weeks of the issue arising;
- raise concerns promptly and directly with the Administrator or a member of the Management Committee
- explain the problem as clearly and as fully as possible, including any action taken to date;
- allow the College a reasonable time to deal with the matter;
- recognise that some circumstances may be beyond the control of the College
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Tel: 028 90381314

email: info@ulstercollegeofmusic.co.uk

www.ulstercollegeofmusic.com

The College's responsibility is to:

- acknowledge the formal complaint in writing
- respond within a stated period of time
- deal reasonably and sensitively with the complaint
- take action where appropriate.

Confidentiality: Every attempt will be made to ensure that both the complainant and the Ulster College of Music maintain confidentiality. However the circumstances giving rise to the complaint may be such that it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality (with each complaint judged on its own merit). Should this be the case, the situation will be explained to the complainant.

Monitoring and Reporting: Members of the Management Committee will receive annually an anonymised report of complaints made and their resolution.

Contact: Our contact details can be found on the College website.

Formal Complaints Procedure

Stage 1

In the first instance, if you are unable to resolve the issue informally, you should write to the member of staff, tutor or committee member who dealt with you, so that he or she has a chance to put things right. In your letter you should set out the details of your complaint, the consequences for you as a result, and the remedy you are seeking.

You can expect your complaint to be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt. You should get a response and an explanation within 15 working days. If you are unsure who to write to, your complaint should be sent to the Chairman of the Management Committee.

Stage 2

If you are not satisfied with the initial response to the complaint then you can write to the Chairman of the Management Committee and ask for your complaint and the response to be reviewed. You can expect the Chairman to acknowledge your request within 5 working days of receipt and a response within 15 working days.

The aim is to resolve all matters as quickly as possible. However, inevitably some issues will be more complex and therefore may require longer to be fully investigated. Consequently timescales given for handling and responding to complaints are indicative. If a matter requires more detailed investigation, you will receive an interim response describing what is being done to deal with the matter, and when a full reply can be expected and from whom.

Final Stage

If you are not satisfied with the subsequent reply, then you must write to the College stating the reason why you are dissatisfied with the outcome. You must do this within 10 days of receiving the response at Stage 2. The College will then attempt to find a neutral, independent, individual from the membership (someone who has not held any position within the college as a tutor or volunteer) who will review the complaint and the responses and will suggest a way forward. This will normally be within 10 working days but if a response is delayed you will be informed of the action which will be taken to investigate your complaint, and when you can expect to hear the outcome of the investigation