

Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama
Student Complaints Regulations 2025-6

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Status of this document: “Policy” The RWCMD defined term for a policy is a deliberate system of guidelines to guide decisions and achieve rational outcomes. A policy is a statement of intent and is implemented as a procedure or protocol. They are typically informed by how people would like to see the space defined. They are often aspirational in nature and do not typically have legal implications if they are not followed.							
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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama (hereafter RWCMD or 'The College') is committed to providing high quality education and support to its students. Where appropriate, it does so in close relationship with the University of South Wales, the degrees, and diplomas of which are taught at RWCMD. There are many routes through which students can raise any concerns or issues. Feedback regarding the College's provision is welcomed so that the College can develop and enhance the services it provides.
- 1.2 These regulations apply to:
- Students of the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama
 - Former students, for a period of 3 months after leaving the course to which the complaint relates
 - Students studying on work-placements or engaged in work-based learning
 - Students on an approved leave of absence
- 1.3 For the purposes of these regulations, a complaint is defined as “a concern that is formally raised by a student either verbally or in writing with a member of staff”. When a complaint is received, the College seeks to resolve it as quickly, fairly, and equitably as possible, whether the complaint is about services provided by the College, treatment by any staff member, student or visitor, or any other issue. Focus is on resolution of issues at the earliest point, so that students maintain confidence in their studies and their relationship with the College. It is the College's hope and expectation that most issues which arise will be resolved at the earliest opportunity.
- 1.4 The types of complaints covered by these regulations are detailed in section 3. Information on how raise other complaints are detailed in section 4.

2. ADVICE AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

- 2.1 Before making a complaint, you can seek support and guidance from a trusted source; this could be a member of academic staff, a member of college administrative staff including the Student Voice Officer, Student Services, the Students' Union, or the Chaplaincy.
- 2.2 The Student Casework Manager provides authoritative, formal guidance on the applicability and operation of the Student Complaints Regulations.
- 2.3 It is expected that you, your representatives (either members of the Students' Union Executive Committee or Course Board Representatives (known as 'reps'), and staff members act reasonably and fairly towards each other and treat this process with dignity and respect. As well as our duty of care to you as a student, we have a responsibility to protect our staff against unacceptable behaviour. Unacceptable behaviour by you or your representatives during this process will be dealt with in accordance with the policies and procedures governing student misconduct, and non-exhaustive list of unacceptable behaviours can be found in that policy.

- 2.4 The College may terminate consideration of a complaint if it considers it to be frivolous or vexatious and you will be informed in writing by the College if this is the case and will be provided with the right of appeal.
- 2.5 Section A of this document sets out the regulations and procedures. Section B provides information about general principles. Please read this advice carefully and contact the appropriate member of staff as necessary.

3. COMPLAINTS COVERED BY THESE REGULATIONS

3.1 Academic matters

Academic matters mean specific concerns a student may have about the provision, teaching or delivery of academic courses and related services, including complaints about the conduct and management of academic appeals. These could include:

- Failure by the College to meet obligations including those outlined in course / student handbook and student charter.
- Misleading or incorrect information in the College's prospectus, promotional material or other documentation published by the College.
- Poor quality of facilities, learning resources or services directly provided by the College or partner provider.

Students who have concerns regarding academic matters should raise them, through these regulations, at the time when the issue first arises. Complaints about the provision and conduct of academic courses cannot be retrospectively used as grounds for an appeal against the decision of an assessment board.

3.2 Students' Experience

Students may complain about any aspect of their experience at the College, including their learning and relationships with the administration or support services.

3.3 Discrimination

Students may complain about discrimination by the College, in contravention of the College's Strategic Equality Plan and Equality Statement.

3.4 Malpractice or Impropriety

Students may complain about concerns relating to malpractice or impropriety in the conduct or management of the College, the disclosure of which is deemed to be in the public interest.

3.5 Complaints against Members of Staff

A case conference will take place to decide whether the case will be considered through the Student Complaints Procedure or through the appropriate HR procedure for staff, or appropriate alternative process. Normally, if the complaint is about the alleged misconduct of a member of staff, this will be considered under the HR procedure, whereas service complaints directed at an individual member of staff will be handled under the Student

Complaints Procedure. Where a case is particularly complex, it may be considered jointly by HR/Student Casework Unit.

4. COMPLAINTS FALLING UNDER SEPARATE REGULATIONS

4.1 Academic Appeals

Students wishing to submit an appeal may seek advice from the Students' Union, the Student Voice Officer, or the Director of Academic Administration and Student Experience. The submission is made to the University of South Wales.

4.2 Allegations of Misconduct Against Students

Allegations of misconduct by or against any student is subject to the Policy & Procedure Governing Student Conduct. Students wishing to raise such allegations may do so by bringing them to the attention of the Student Casework Manager.

4.3 Complaints against Members of Staff

A case conference will take place to decide whether the case will be considered through the Student Complaints Procedure or through the appropriate HR procedure for staff, or appropriate alternative process. Normally, if the complaint is about the alleged misconduct of a member of staff, this will be considered under the HR procedure, whereas service complaints directed at an individual member of staff will be handled under the Student Complaints Procedure. Where a case is particularly complex, it may be considered jointly by HR/Student Casework Unit.

SECTION A

5. STAGES IN THE HANDLING OF STUDENT COMPLAINTS

The College has three stages to its Complaints Procedure:

- **Early Resolution**

Any concerns that a student may have must be raised no more than three months after the issue leading to the complaint (In exceptional circumstances consideration will be given to extending this deadline, where there is good reason supported by evidence; for example, if the student has been ill, in which case any such request should be supported by a doctor's note).

- **Formal Investigation**

A formal complaint will be investigated by a senior member of staff with no prior involvement with the case. The investigation will normally be completed within 30 working days, with the final report provided to the complainant within an additional 10 working days.

- **Review**

Complainants can request a review of the outcome of a complaint, provided they meet the grounds set out in the Request for Review (see 5.3). The review stage will normally be completed within 15 working days.

5.1 Early Resolution

5.1.1 Students should raise concerns directly with the person responsible, speak to the Student Voice Officer, or submit report using the [RWCMD Report & Support Facility](#) (which is received by the Student Casework Manager). The Student Voice Officer and Student Casework Manager may invite students to attend a meeting to discuss their concerns and/or may refer to another, more appropriate, member of staff/group (e.g. Study or Course Board) depending on the nature of the concern raised. The Student Casework Manager may use discretion at this stage to determine whether early resolution is appropriate and may recommend that the complaint proceeds directly to formal investigation stage.

5.1.2 In seeking early resolution, the Student Voice Officer may assist in advocacy and in principles of restorative practice, that is, helping students and other parties in finding a solution which is acceptable to all.

5.1.3 The College has several staff members who are trained in restorative approaches, and where students present issues relating to their student experience, such staff can engage with students to find the appropriate forum for resolution. This can include:

- supportive conversations with the student raising the complaint to discuss the impact of their experience;

- mediated discussions between the complainant and staff member the complaint pertains to (subject to individual preparation meetings, a risk assessment in line with the college's approaches to restorative practice, and agreement from all parties);
- restorative letter (this may be through email).

- 5.1.4 Students are reminded that staff members who are accused of improper conduct who agree to engage in a restorative process will also receive preparative support from a trained restorative practitioner. The practitioner's position on the incident reported will remain neutral, in keeping with a key principle of restorative justice.
- 5.1.5 Concerns raised via the [RWCMD Report & Support Facility](#) will be maintained for the duration of the student life-cycle of the student and archived immediately thereafter.

5.2 Formal Investigation

- 5.2.1 College expects it will be possible to resolve most concerns at an early point. If concern has not been satisfactorily resolved by early resolution (or early resolution was not appropriate), a student has the right to submit a formal complaint requesting formal investigation.
- 5.2.2 A student must complete and submit the [Student Complaint Form](#) to request formal investigation and will be asked, as part of that submission, what steps were taken in 'Early Resolution'. The [Student Complaint Form](#) must be completed in full, and appropriate evidence must be presented, for formal investigation to be instigated.
- 5.2.3 The College does not expect complainants to submit spurious or vexatious complaints and reserves the right to refuse to consider such complaints. In addition, the College may take action in line with the Policy & Procedure Governing Student Conduct where complaints have been identified as such.
- 5.2.4 The Student Complaint Form will be logged by the Student Casework Manager and discussed with the Director of Student Experience and Academic Administration.
- 5.2.5 The Director of Student Experience and Academic Administration will consider the nature of the complaint, its perceived seriousness, and the range of potential outcomes. An Investigating Officer will be appointed, who shall have no previous knowledge of, or involvement in the case. Internal Investigating Officers shall be at Head of Department level or above. In cases of substantial and serious complaint, consideration will be given to appointing an Investigating Officer who is external to RWCMD, but who is nevertheless suitably qualified and trained. Examples (not exhaustive) of serious complaint are those which might include breaches of dignity policies, and those cases which may result in staff or student disciplinary action.

- 5.2.6 The Investigating Officer will meet with the student to discuss the issue raised. The student may be accompanied at this meeting by what is called a “support person”.
- 5.2.7 The Investigating Officer will subsequently meet with any relevant members of staff and witnesses to discuss the detail of the complaint from their perspective. Any member of staff who is the subject of a complaint has the right to be supported by a colleague or a trade union representative throughout the process.
- 5.2.8 The Investigating Officer will normally report to College within 30 calendar days. Where the complexities of the case and the need to contact a range of individuals during the investigation make this difficult, students will be kept informed of progress and the reason for any delays.
- 5.2.9 Following completion of the investigation, the Investigating Officer will prepare a report and present it to the Director of Student Experience and Academic Administration (or nominee), who will include a response to the report on behalf of the College. This final report will normally be provided to the complainant within an additional 10 working days.
- 5.2.10 Where the outcome includes an offer of financial reimbursement/compensation this will be incorporated within the College response to the complaint.
- 5.2.11 If complaint involves an allegation against a member of staff, the student will be told of the outcome of complaint, but it may not be appropriate to share specific details affecting staff members, particularly where disciplinary action is being taken. To protect the integrity of the college’s internal disciplinary procedures and in line with employment law, if such HR processes are initiated against a staff member students will not be informed of the details.
- 5.2.12 On receipt of the outcome of a complaint, a student will be asked to respond within 28 calendar days to confirm in writing whether or not they accept the outcome. If no communication is received within the specified timescales, the College will close the case and issue a Completion of Procedures letter.

5.3 Review

- 5.3.1 If, upon receipt of the outcome from the formal investigation, a student believes they have reasonable grounds to consider the complaint has not been adequately addressed, they can request a review. To ensure impartial consideration at the review stage, the review will be undertaken under the administrative jurisdiction of the University of South Wales.
- 5.3.2 A review can only be invoked when the formal investigation has been completed. It is recommended that students seek advice from the Students’ Union or from the Student Voice Officer before seeking to progress a complaint to the review stage.
- 5.3.3 To invoke a review the complainant must submit a ‘Request for Review Form’ (found on the College website) to the Student Casework Unit of the University of

South Wales. This form must be submitted within 20 working days of receipt of the response to the formal investigation. Relevant evidence must also be provided when submitting the request for review.

- 5.3.4 The criteria under which a complaint may be considered at the review stage are:
- Evidence demonstrates that the procedures at the formal investigation stage were not conducted in line with the regulations.
 - Evidence demonstrates that specific issues of the complaint which were raised during the formal investigation were not considered.
 - New material evidence is available that could not, for valid reasons, be provided earlier in the process.
 - Evidence demonstrates that the outcome was not reasonable in the circumstances.
- 5.3.5 Prior to referring the case to a complaint review officer, the Head of Student Casework at the University of South Wales (or nominee) will review the Request for Review Form to determine whether there are grounds for review. One of the following actions may be taken:
- conclude that the complaint meets the criteria for further consideration set out in 5.3.4 above,
- or
- dismiss the case.
- 5.3.6 The student will be informed in writing of the decision of the Head of Student Casework at the University of South Wales (or nominee) within 5 calendar days.
- 5.3.7 If a complaint is deemed eligible for review, a complaint review officer will be allocated by the Student Casework Unit. The complaint review officer will have had no prior involvement with the case and will be independent of the College.
- 5.3.8 In considering the case, the complaint review officer may wish to re-interview the student/staff/witnesses *but this is not a requirement*.
- 5.3.9 The complaint review officer will review the case and provide an outcome to the Student Casework Unit within 15 calendar days. The complaint review officer may:
- propose an alternative outcome
 - uphold the findings of the original investigation.
 - propose that the matter needs to be referred back to the formal stage for reconsideration.
- 5.3.10 The University of South Wales Student Casework Unit will present the report to the Principal of the College who will provide a response to the student within 28 calendar days of its receipt. Where there is a recommendation that the case is referred back to the formal stage for reconsideration, this reconsideration will be undertaken as soon as possible and within 30 calendar days.
- 5.3.11 When the case has been closed, the student will receive a completion of procedures letter.

6. OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT ADJUDICATOR

Following the issue of a Completion of Procedures letter, a student may lodge a complaint with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). The time limit to bring a claim is 12 months from the date of the Completion of Procedures letter. Details of the OIA and the relevant information in relation to the Scheme can be accessed at www.oiahe.org.uk. Further information and advice can also be obtained from the Student Casework Manager.

7. MONITORING

- 7.1 The Student Casework Manager will monitor the actions taken by the College in relation to recommendations arising from investigations into student complaints. A report will be submitted to RWCMD Academic Board by means of the annual Student Casework Review.
- 7.2 The Student Casework Review may incorporate recommendations for consideration by the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee, Quality Assurance Committee and Academic Board, as appropriate, on any matters arising from the consideration of complaints that require amendments to regulations.

SECTION B

8. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 8.1 Timely and transparent procedures.** In the interests of students and the College, all complaints are dealt with in a timely manner and through processes which are open and straightforward.
- 8.2 Anonymous complaints.** Complaints made anonymously will not be considered under this procedure, but students should be aware that there are other means by which they may bring things to the attention of the College anonymously, including under the provisions of the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Procedure. Students should seek the advice of the Student Voice Officer or an Officer of the Students' Union, but such complaints would only be considered because of the seriousness of the issues raised, the credibility of the concern and the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.
- 8.3 Third party complaints** – The College expects that students with concerns should be responsible for making these concerns known themselves. Only in exceptional circumstances will a complaint about a student's experience from a third party be investigated.
- 8.4 Submission in good faith** – The College presumes all complaints are submitted in good faith and will not disadvantage any student for bringing forward a complaint. However, the College would not expect students to submit spurious or vexatious complaints and may take action in line with the Policy & Procedure Governing Student Conduct where complaints have been identified as such. Examples of such complaints include but are not limited to:
- 8.4.1** Complaints which are obsessive, harassing or repetitive;
 - 8.4.2** Insistence on pursuing non-meritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes;
 - 8.4.3** Insistence on pursuing what may be meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner;
 - 8.4.4** Complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance;
 - 8.4.5** Demands for redress which lack any serious purpose or value.
- 8.5 Submission of evidence.** Complaints should be supported by corroborating evidence upon submission. Complaints which do not submit such evidence will not be considered, unless a good reason for the lack of evidence has been provided.
- 8.6 Timeliness of submission.** All concerns should be raised no more than 3 months after the last occurrence of the issue from which the concern arises. In exceptional circumstances the Student Casework Manager (or nominee) will consider extending this deadline where there is good reason supported by evidence.
- 8.7 Students' engagement with the process.** It is expected that the student raising the concern will engage with the process in a timely manner. If a student fails to respond to a request for further information or a meeting within timescales specified by the member of staff dealing with the case, without good reason (for example an incapacitating illness, in

which case a doctor's note should be provided), the Student Casework Manager (or nominee) may suspend or close the case.

- 8.8 **Impartiality in investigation.** Complaints are normally investigated by College staff who have no knowledge of or interest in the complaint. Serious complaints may be investigated by an External Investigating Officer.
- 8.9 **Privacy** – Investigation of complaints is made with due regard to the privacy of all parties. The complaint is only disclosed to those immediately involved and/or those whose participation is necessary for a resolution. All parties respect the confidentiality of the process.
- 8.10 **Confidentiality.** Confidentiality should be respected in conducting all aspects of the complaints regulations. However, any member of staff about whom a complaint is made will have the right to be informed of the complaint and its nature and have access to any relevant evidence. If the student raising the concern requests that their identity be kept confidential, this is respected up to the point when disclosure is necessary to progress or resolve the issue, in which case they will be informed in advance of the disclosure. The College will not disclose any information to third parties regarding investigations and outcomes from student complaint cases unless legal exceptions under the Data Protection Act apply.
- 8.11 **Complainant representation.** The complainant is allowed to be accompanied to any discussions, meetings, or hearings by a support person. The support person could be the Student Voice Officer, a representative from the Students' Union, a friend, or a relative. The Support Person provides support during the meeting, but they are not normally expected to represent or to advocate on the student's behalf unless this has been agreed in advance as a reasonable adjustment. The name of the support person, their relationship to the student, and their email address must be provided to the Student Casework Manager before the meeting. The Student Casework Manager (or nominee) reserves the right to refuse the attendance of a support person if it is determined that there is a conflict of interest relating to the nominated person, in which case, the student will be given the opportunity to nominate a different support person.
- 8.12 **Complaints including elements of appeal.** Where a complaint also contains within it an element of an academic appeal it is possible for the complaint, or aspects of the complaint, to be reclassified and processed using the Academic Appeals Regulations, if appropriate. The complainant will be notified as soon as possible.
- 8.13 **Group complaints.** Complaints may be submitted by individuals or groups. Where a complaint is submitted by a group of students, one of the group should be nominated as the main contact and to act as a spokesperson. Each member of the group must confirm in writing that they wish the nominated individual to act in this capacity and that the complaint reflects their concerns. The nominated spokesperson will receive updates on the complaint on behalf of the group. All members of the group will be invited by the spokesperson to any meetings arranged to discuss the complaint and receive a copy of the outcome letter. The spokesperson for the complaint should inform the investigating officer 24 hours in advance of their support person, where appropriate.

8.14 **Complaints by students on placement.** Students who wish to make a complaint about an aspect of their experience whilst on placement should, in the first instance, contact their Head of Department who will advise on the process in liaison with the Student Casework Manager. Whether the complaint will be dealt with by the College, or the placement provider will depend on the circumstances of the complaint. If the complaint is more appropriately dealt with through the placement provider's own complaints procedure, complainants will be assisted by an appropriate member of staff in the College in taking this forward.

8.15 **Fairness.** Students will not be disadvantaged in any way as a result of bringing a complaint in good faith.

8.16 **Enhancement.** The College will ensure that information gathered is used to enhance services for students and the student experience

9. PRINCIPLES RELATING TO THE HANDLING OF STUDENT COMPLAINTS

9.1 Students making the complaint must be made aware that, in the interest of fairness, those who are either themselves the subject of the complaint, or responsible for the provision or service complained about, will be invited to comment on the complaint at the earliest opportunity.

9.2 Students making the complaint will be allowed reasonable time to seek advice for any meeting which forms part of the process, whether at the early resolution or formal stages of the regulations.

9.3 At the formal investigation and review stages, every effort should be made to come to a resolution acceptable to all parties, including through informal discussion and agreement, should that be the complainant's wish.

10. COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE STUDENTS' UNION

10.1 Students are encouraged to bring to the attention of Students' Union Officers any issues that they may have. Complaints regarding the Students' Union should be directed to the Trustees of the Union. The College's Student Voice Officer currently acts as secretary to the Students' Union Trustee board and can be signposted to in the event of a complaint against the Students' Union or one of its staff.

10.2 Commercial operations' staff (bar and shop) are line managed by the Director of Student Experience and Academic Administration (as outlined in the Students' Union constitution) and issues relating to their conduct should be signposted to them.

APPENDIX

Advice and Support for Students

It is recognised that bringing a complaint can cause pressure and support is available to students through Student Services, Student's Union and Chaplaincy services.

Advice and Support for Staff

1. It is recognised that dealing with student complaints or being the subject of a complaint can cause pressure for staff. Staff are encouraged to make use of line management support, trade union support or RWCMD's Support Services (including Counselling) as appropriate.
2. A member of staff who is the subject of a complaint has:
 - the right to be supported by a colleague or a trade union representative throughout the process
 - the right of reply to any such complaint
 - access to relevant documentation presented as part of the complaint.
3. The Human Resources (HR) department may, dependent on the outcome, be notified of complaints against members of staff. If a complaint made against a member of staff is of a serious disciplinary nature, advice will be sought from the Director of Finance and Resources in relation to suspending the student complaints procedure pending the outcome of an investigation by HR.