

APPLICANT COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURE

Aims of this procedure

1. The Royal College of Music is committed to providing a professional, fair and transparent admissions process, as stated in the [RCM's Admissions Policy](#). Our admissions practices are designed to ensure that applicants are considered wholly on the basis of their aptitude, skills and ability to succeed on our programmes.
2. However, there may be occasions where an applicant feels that the RCM has not met the high standards it sets itself and wishes to make a complaint. This procedure outlines the steps to be taken.
3. The RCM aims to resolve complaints by following the procedures below, although these may be adapted if necessary to enable the fair and efficient resolution of a particular complaint. In most instances complaints are resolved amicably without needing to use the formal process, however applicants have the right to submit a formal complaint or appeal.
4. A complaint will be considered to have been resolved when the student accepts any response and/or redress offered by the College in respect of the complaint or when the College feels it has offered suitable remedy.

Definition of a complaint or appeal

5. Each year the RCM receives significantly more applications for its programmes than it has places available and, regrettably, many talented applicants may be left feeling disappointed by the outcome of their application. However, this in itself does not constitute grounds for a complaint or appeal. For the avoidance of doubt, the following definitions apply for the purposes of this procedure:
6. A **complaint** is a means of registering a specific concern related to the policies and procedures which have been used to reach an admissions decision, or the actions, or lack of actions, of RCM staff. A complaint will not result in the amendment of an admissions decision.
7. An **appeal** is a request for a formal review of an admissions decision, normally where an application has been unsuccessful. Appeals will normally only be considered if there is evidence of a procedural irregularity in the conduct of the admissions process or unreasonableness in the arrangements for the audition.
8. The following do **not** constitute grounds for a complaint or appeal:
 - Disagreement with the academic or artistic judgement of the admissions/audition panel.
 - Where the applicant was suffering from a certified illness or other documented mitigating circumstance which may have affected their performance, but failed to notify the panel of this before or during their audition/interview.
 - Where the decision not to offer a place arises from the applicant's failure to fulfil any academic or other requirements for admission.

Who can submit a complaint or appeal

9. The definition of an “applicant” in this procedure includes those who have submitted a formal application to the RCM either through UCAS Conservatoires or through the RCM’s direct application process.
10. Complaints must be submitted by the applicant concerned. Complaints submitted anonymously or by a third party will not normally be considered.
11. This procedure applies to prospective students applying for courses taught at the Royal College of Music, London. It does not apply to applicants to the RCM’s Junior Department, or for courses offered in collaboration with the College’s partner institutions, including Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, Singapore or Shanghai Conservatory of Music, China.

Timeframe

12. Complaints may be submitted at any time within one month of the incident or situation leading to the complaint occurring. However, the sooner a complaint is submitted, the simpler it will be to investigate and resolve within the current application cycle.
13. Complaints will normally be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt. The RCM aims to resolve formal complaints within 15 working days of acknowledgement during term time. However, if a longer period is required to carry out necessary investigations, the investigating officer will keep the applicant informed of the likely timeframe for resolution.

Informal Procedure

14. As with any problem, it is usually best for complaints to be resolved quickly with those directly involved. If an applicant is unsatisfied with an admissions decision, they are advised in the first instance to seek feedback from the RCM’s Admissions Team on why their application did not meet the criteria for entry by e-mailing admissions@rcm.ac.uk. Please see the [RCM’s Admissions policy](#) for further information on requesting feedback.
15. If an applicant is dissatisfied with the outcome of this request, they should initiate the formal complaints procedure. The applicant should make any submission under this procedure within one month after determining that the informal procedure has been unsuccessful. At any stage after the formal process has commenced the applicant may choose to return to the informal procedure to resolve the matter.

Formal Complaints and Appeals Procedure

16. Where a complaint is not resolved through the informal process, or where the applicant feels that the seriousness of the matter warrants a formal complaint, the applicant should invoke this formal procedure.
17. To avoid any risk of bias, formal complaints will not be processed by staff members directly implicated in the reason for complaint. Submissions should be made in writing, addressed to the Academic Registrar, Mrs Eleanor Taylor, either by e-mail to elly.taylor@rcm.ac.uk or by post to Royal College of Music, Prince Consort Road, London SW7 2BS.

Complaints

18. The applicant must make clear in their written submission the relevant facts and matters which it is considered give cause for complaint, together with any relevant documentation, and should state the remedy they are seeking (although the latter information will not restrict the remedy which may be granted under the procedure, it will be helpful to those dealing with the complaint). Applicants should also include their personal details and UCAS Conservatoires application number (if applicable).

19. The Academic Registrar will conduct an investigation of the complaint. This is likely to include seeking further information and/or comments from the applicant and from others involved in the complaint.
20. The Academic Registrar will write to the applicant to confirm the outcome of the investigation, set out any redress that is offered to the applicant in respect of the complaint and explain either why any redress offered is considered to be appropriate, or why no redress has been offered. Where applicable, feedback on the outcome of the complaint will also be provided to any person(s) who is the subject of the complaint.
21. In certain circumstances, issues arising in the context of a complaint under this procedure may also be relevant to disciplinary action against a member of staff. Where this is so, the College will continue to follow this complaints procedure, unless in the opinion of the Academic Registrar there is a risk that continuing with the procedure will prejudice the application of one or more other College procedures. Where it is considered that there is such a risk, the consideration of the complaint under this procedure will be adjourned until the other procedures have been completed or the Academic Registrar considers that there is no longer a risk of prejudice to those procedures, at which point the Academic Registrar shall consider, following consultation with the applicant, whether the complaint remains outstanding and whether the complaints procedure should be completed.

Appeals against an admissions decision

22. If an applicant requests a formal review of an admissions decision, they should include in their written submission details of the alleged procedural irregularity in the admissions process, together with any relevant documentation. Applicants should also include their personal details, UCAS Conservatoires application number (if applicable) and any prior related correspondence. Applicants are reminded that disagreement with the academic or artistic judgement of the admissions/audition panel will not be considered admissible grounds for appeal.
23. The Academic Registrar will review the available application and decision-making documentation with the relevant Head of Faculty and/or Head of Programme and any other relevant individuals.
24. The Academic Registrar will write to the applicant to confirm the outcome of the appeal. If the appeal is upheld, the RCM will take such reasonable action as is appropriate, which may include the opportunity to re-audition in the same admissions cycle, if this is still possible.

Further consideration

25. If, following the decision of the Academic Registrar, the applicant remains dissatisfied, they may request a review of the decision to the RCM's Deputy Director, Mr Kevin Porter (kevin.porter@rcm.ac.uk). The applicant must confirm the request in writing, stating the reasons why any redress offered was not acceptable and confirm what redress is sought from the review. An applicant who wishes to request a review must do so within 10 days of receipt of the decision under the first stage of the formal process.
26. The Deputy Director will examine the documentation relating to the complaint or appeal held by the Academic Registrar, including the applicant's original written submission. The Deputy Director will make a decision regarding the complaint or appeal, which may confirm any redress previously offered by the Academic Registrar or offer alternative redress.
27. The decision of the Deputy Director shall be final, and there is no further right of review. Should the applicant wish to take the complaint further, they may contact the Citizens Advice Bureau or the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) for advice on any legal avenues available. Applicants should note that the remit of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) does not cover Admissions.

Recording of complaints/appeals and confidentiality

- 28. The RCM will retain a secure record of the complaint/appeal, including the nature of the complaint and the decision making process. Records will be kept in accordance with the RCM's [Data retention policy](#).
- 29. The Academic Registrar will monitor on an annual basis complaints/appeals that have been referred to her, and will be responsible for recommending to the appropriate authority changes to procedures suggested by the nature of any complaints received.
- 30. The RCM is committed to ensuring that applicants do not suffer any disadvantage by reason of bringing a complaint/appeal under this procedure. Submission of a complaint or appeal will not prejudice the RCM's opinion of an applicant, or be used adversely in any later dealings, including subsequent applications in future years.

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Approved by	Senate
Approval date	February 2018
Effective from	2018-19 admissions cycle
Review date	April 2022