



Student Complaints Procedure

1. Introduction

Within this procedure, by 'student', we also mean applicant who is not yet enrolled to the Collective Acting Studio.

1.1 For the purpose of this procedure, and in line with the revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education ([UK Quality Code](#)), a complaint is defined as the: 'a specific query about an aspect of experience of the provider.'

1.2 The Collective Acting Studio is committed to providing a high-quality educational experience, fully supported by a range of academic and administrative services and facilities. The [Student Charter](#) sets out the entitlements and responsibilities of students and is based upon a spirit of partnership between staff and students. If students believe they have a legitimate complaint, they should first refer to the Student Charter to clarify what is reasonable for them to expect in the relevant area, and whether they have discharged the corresponding expectations.

1.3 The Collective Acting Studio welcomes the opportunity to correct mistakes, clarify misunderstandings and to respond positively and constructively on any occasion when students feel the need to express dissatisfaction with a particular service or other aspect of provision.

2. Principles

2.1 The procedure is based on the principles of fairness and transparency and is in keeping with the Quality Code, and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education's [Good Practice Framework for Handling Complaints and Academic Appeals](#).

The procedure is set out to ensure:

- timely resolution of complaints, with an emphasis on local resolution at the earliest opportunity
- processes, decisions and the reasons behind them are clear and there is opportunity for independent review
- students are supported



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2.2 In this spirit, it is anticipated that the majority of student complaints will be resolved as early as possible through informal dialogue between staff and students at a local level and to the satisfaction of all parties.

2.3 If appropriate, Collective Acting Studio may explore with relevant parties whether it is possible to settle the complaint informally by mutual agreement at any stage of these procedures. If either party do not wish to settle, they have right to progress the complaint to the next stage. If a settlement is agreed then all consideration of the complaint will cease.

2.4 The Collective Acting Studio will make reasonable adjustments at any stage of the proceedings to accommodate the needs of students.

2.5 Students making complaints will not suffer any disadvantage or discrimination as a result of making a complaint in good faith. However, if a complaint is judged to have been made frivolously, vexatiously or with malice, disciplinary action may be taken against the student.

2.6 The Collective Acting Studio expects all parties in a dispute to act professionally, respectfully and within the spirit of its policies and codes of conduct throughout all stages of the Complaints Procedure.

2.7 It is expected that students, and those acting on their behalf, should act reasonably and fairly toward staff and treat the Collective Acting Studio processes and procedures with respect. Whilst it is recognised that people may act out of character in times of trouble or distress, behaviour which is deemed to be unacceptable, verbal or written, will not be tolerated and may result in a student's access to a procedure, service or member of staff being limited or withdrawn.

2.8 The Collective Acting Studio will monitor the operation of the Student Complaints Procedure in such a way as to assist in the maintenance and continuous improvement of service standards.

2.9 The student must be able to substantiate their loss to the Collective Acting Studio, and to provide reasonable supporting documentation at the CEO/Programme Leaders request to demonstrate their case.

2.10 The Collective Acting Studio does not pay any expenses incurred by a student as a result of a complaint. In exceptional circumstances, the CEO/Programme Leader has the discretion to offer a payment to meet reasonable and proportionate incidental expenses arising from the complaint. In such cases, complainants would be required to provide



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original receipts of expenses incurred and follow other aspects of the Collective Acting Studio's standard expenses policy.

2.11 The Collective Acting Studio follows guidance by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education's [Good Practice Framework for Handling Complaints and Academic Appeals](#). The outcome of a student complaint may include practical remedies or, in certain circumstances, financial redress.

3. Confidentiality

3.1 All information obtained within the process of the complaint will be held in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

3.2 Students must note that information about complainants, and individuals against whom complaints are made, will be dealt with sensitively and will be kept confidential, except where the disclosure is necessary to progress the complaint or implement a decision on the complaint, or where it is required by law or in the public interest. All parties (including complainants) are expected to maintain confidentiality of complaints.

3.3 In submitting a complaint the student understands that their complaint will be shared with the staff member responsible for conducting the investigation into the matters raised, and that the content of their complaint may need to be disclosed to relevant staff in order for the complaint to be investigated and/or resolution sought. Also, it must be understood that an individual against whom a complaint is made has the right to be made aware of any allegations and evidence against them.

3.4 Students should avoid disclosing unnecessary personal information (e.g. medical conditions etc.) in their complaint unless they feel that it is relevant to the issues raised. Students must also avoid disclosing personal data of another person/s in their complaint unless they have been given permission by them to do so.

4. Who can make a Student Complaint?



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4.1 The Student Complaints Procedure may be used by anyone who is, or was, an applicant to the Collective Acting Studio, and anyone who is, or was, an enrolled student on any course with the Collective Acting Studio.

4.2 The Collective Acting Studio expects that students with concerns should be responsible for raising these concerns themselves. A complaint from a third party, for example, from a parent or spouse will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the CEO/Programme Leader where it is deemed reasonable for the student to not be able to submit the complaint themselves. The student must provide valid reasons for this request and their written consent for the named third party to act on their behalf.

4.3 Student complaints which are received anonymously are not normally accepted but may be accepted at the discretion of the CEO/Programme Leader. However, students who wish to raise a concern anonymously should be aware that this could impede the investigation and communication of the outcome. If a member of staff receives an anonymous complaint, they will be expected to seek advice from the CEO/Programme Leader as to how the complaint should be dealt with. In addition, the Collective Acting Studio will not normally take into account witness statements, where the witness requires that they remain anonymous.

4.4 Students may be accompanied by, supported or advised at any stage of the procedure by another member of the Collective Acting Studio community, (which is a person who is a currently enrolled student of the Collective Acting Studio, or a member of staff.)

5. Group Complaints

5.1 Where issues of complaint affect a number of students, those students may submit a complaint as a group. Any complaints affecting a module or course and its delivery as a whole should be raised with the relevant Module Tutor or Course Leader as soon as they arise.

5.2 In order to manage the progression of the complaint in such circumstances, all members of the group must agree in writing that they nominate one student to act as the spokesperson for those students complaining. A copy of this agreement must be submitted alongside the complaint. In agreeing to act as spokesperson, the student accepts responsibility for representing the views of the entire group and to act as key contact in relation to the complaint, including communication relating to the complaint outcome and



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decision of the group.

5.3 In agreeing to be part of a group complaint, each member of the group will be required to confirm that they understand and agree that it will be dealt with as a group complaint. Each member will also need to confirm (and be able to demonstrate) that they have been affected by the same issues outlined within the complaint, and that they understand and agree that they would be required to collectively agree whether or not they accept the complaint outcome including any proposed practical remedy or financial redress (if appropriate). Once all students have agreed to be members of a group complaint they cannot at any stage subsequently choose to withdraw from the group complaint and pursue an individual complaint in relation to the same issue.

5.4 If it is determined that any member of the group has not been affected by all of the issues raised in the complaint, the Collective Acting Studio reserves the right to exclude them from the group complaint. In the event of this, a senior member of staff, or the Student Welfare Officer, will inform the spokesperson of any members of the group that will be excluded, and advise them that they would be required to submit a separate, individual complaint if they wish to progress it.

6. Types of Complaints that can be submitted using this Procedure

6.1 Complaints can be academic or non-academic in nature. Academic-related complaints may include alleged inadequacies in the provision of a programme of study, tuition, supervision, learning support materials, etc. Non-academic complaints normally relate to alleged inadequacies in other services provided to students by the Collective Acting Studio such as a failure to provide appropriate reasonable adjustments related to a disability, or failure to meet contractual or other legal obligations.

6.2 If a student wants to complain about the service of another organisation suggested by the Collective Acting Studio (e.g. residential accommodation), they are advised to contact that organisation directly, as they will normally be best placed to investigate and resolve any problems that arise. Where the student engages the services of other organisations, the Collective Acting Studio cannot assume responsibility for the actions of that organisation.



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6.3 The Collective Acting Studio recognises that students may raise multiple issues which do not fall neatly into the category of either a complaint or academic appeal. In these circumstances, the student will be informed which issues will be considered under which procedure and they will be directed to the alternative procedure as appropriate to allow all issues to be considered. This may require one procedure to be suspended pending the completion of the other or alternatively, the Collective Acting Studio may, with the agreement of the student, decide to consider the matters together. Students will be advised of the effects, if any, of following two procedures at once, particularly where one procedure may be suspended until the other is completed.

6.4 Where there is significant overlap, the Collective Acting Studio may decide to consider matters together, if the student agrees to this. For example, if an appeal includes matters that could also be dealt with under other procedures, such as the Student Complaints Procedure, a joint investigation may be carried out. In such cases, the student will be informed where responsibility for the overall investigation lies and who will issue the final decision.

7. Types of Complaints that cannot be submitted using this Procedure

7.1 The Student Complaints Procedure cannot be used for any of the following matters, for which separate policies and procedures exist:

- Complaints about other students;
- Complaints by applicants about admissions decisions,
- Matters relating to assessment performance and issues of academic judgement, except where there is a complaint about a service provided which needs to be resolved before an academic appeal decision can be made.
- Matters relating to Fitness To Study
- Complaints which relate to whistleblowing, or of personal harassment or bullying where separate procedures exist;
- Complaints about the service of another organisation or contractor who provide a service on behalf of the Collective Acting Studio, where students should contact the appropriate organisation directly.

8. Timescales



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8.1 To enable the Collective Acting Studio to investigate and resolve complaints in a timely manner, students should raise issues of complaint as soon as they occur and make reasonable attempts to resolve the matter informally at a local level. If the matter is not resolved and the student wishes to pursue a formal complaint, this should be raised no later than 3 months after a student has completed the year of study in which the complaint arose or within three months of the date of withdrawal, or beginning of an approved leave of absence from their programme of study, whichever is earlier. Student complaints received after this period will only be accepted at the discretion of the Collective Acting Studio and where there is good reason supported by evidence for late submission.

8.2 The Collective Acting Studio is committed to dealing with complaints as quickly as possible, and to complete the processing of a formal complaint and any associated review within 90 calendar days. Within that 90-calendar day timeframe, students must meet any Collective Acting Studio deadlines for the submission of documentation and attending meetings.

8.3 The Collective Acting Studio defines a 'working day' as Monday to Friday excluding bank holidays and other days when the Collective Acting Studio is closed.

Procedures for Submitting a Complaint

9. Stage 1 – Immediate Local Resolution

9.1 The Collective Acting Studio believes that a complaint should be addressed quickly. In order for this to happen, students are expected to attempt to resolve issues or concerns directly by raising them with the appropriate member of staff best able to deal with it as soon as possible.

9.2 Informal resolution enables the Collective Acting Studio to resolve as quickly as possible concerns which are straightforward and require little or no investigation. Concerns raised at this stage can be handled by a discussion with the complainant or by asking an appropriate member of staff, or trained mediator, to help them deal with the matter. If the responsibility for the matter raised lies within the staff member's area of work, every attempt should be made to resolve the concern in consultation with the student where appropriate. If responsibility lies elsewhere, the staff member should liaise with the relevant area to facilitate swift resolution.



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9.3 Staff should make every effort to resolve complaints informally but, in the interests of the student, may suggest use of the formal (Stage 2) complaints procedures if they regard the matter to be highly complex, believe that a solution cannot be reached within the required timeframe for informal resolution (10 working days), or that only part of the complaint can be resolved at this stage.

9.4 Where it is evident to the student or staff that a concern will need to be considered at the formal stage of the procedures, the student should be directed promptly to Stage 2 of the Student Complaints Procedure.

9.5 Students must have tried to resolve the issue informally at a local level first wherever possible before moving to the formal stage of the procedure.

10. Stage 2 – Formal Complaint Resolution

10.1 If the complaint is not resolved informally to the satisfaction of the student at Stage 1, the student has the right to pursue a formal complaint by submitting a Students Complaints Form to the CEO. The form can be found [here](#).

10.2 It is a requirement that the Student Complaints Form is completed so that the matter can be carefully managed; so that students may be precise about their concern(s), how they have attempted to resolve the matter informally at a local level, and what resolution they are seeking. Wherever possible, the form should be accompanied by evidence to support the issues of complaint. This may be for example, copies of relevant correspondence.

10.3 It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that they raise all relevant issues and that they provide all the necessary information and supporting documentation at the point of submission.

10.4 Students should expect to receive an email acknowledgement to their formal complaint within 3 working days of receipt.

10.5 Upon receipt of the Student Complaints Form, the CEO/Programme Leader will normally contact the relevant staff members to see if there is an opportunity to settle / resolve the complaint informally by mutual agreement (if appropriate), before the formal investigation is conducted.

10.6 Stage 2 of the procedures allows for the complaint to be independently investigated by the Student Welfare Officer on behalf of the CEO/Programme Leader. Upon concluding their investigation, the Student Welfare Officer will make a recommendation to be taken,



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normally within 1 calendar month of receiving the Student Complaint Form. They may recommend that, in the interests of the student, partially unresolved matters be considered at a Stage 3 Review.

10.7 The student will be provided with a written outcome of the conclusion of Stage 2. If the complaint is upheld, the student will be informed what action is to be taken, or any recommendations that have been made. If the complaint is partially upheld or not upheld, the student will be informed of reason(s) for the decision.

10.8 Students will also be advised on how they may proceed if they remain dissatisfied following Stage 2.

11. Stage 3 – Formal Complaint Review

11.1 If the complaint is not resolved to the satisfaction of the student at Stage 2, the student has the right to have the complaint considered by a Student Complaints Review Panel. The request for a review will be on limited grounds that the student does not think the outcome of Stage 2 is reasonable because:

- there were unresolved matters at the end of Stage 2 and which may need to be dealt with at a higher level within The Collective Acting Studio;
- new material evidence has now become available and which the student was unable, for valid reasons, to provide earlier in the process;
- there was procedural irregularity in how The Collective Acting Studio followed the process in Stage 2.

11.2 If the student wishes this to happen they must present notice of this in writing to the CEO/Programme Leader of the Collective Acting Studio, and a hearing will be arranged

11.3 It is not normally possible to introduce new grounds for complaint at this stage, unless it relates to evidence that could not have been provided sooner.

11.4 The student will be invited to attend a hearing, as will any individual against whom the complaint is made. The student may be accompanied by a member of The Collective Acting Studio community, if they wish. The student must make their own arrangements for this, and confirm the name and status of the person accompanying them in writing to the CEO/Programme Leader.



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12. Stage 3: Consideration by a Student Complaints Review Panel

12.1 *Student Complaints Review Panel will be comprised of two members, and will be staffed from members of the Senior Management Team and/or the Student Welfare Officer.*

12.2 *In the interest of natural justice, both the student requesting review and those responding to the complaint will normally be invited to be present at the hearing at the same time so that both parties will hear all of the evidence presented to the Panel and have the opportunity to comment on it.*

12.3 *The Student Complaints Review Panel may take place via Microsoft Teams or held in person at the discretion of the student, where it is possible for the Collective Acting Studio to accommodate such request.*

12.4 *The Chair will provide the Panel with an initial briefing before the student and those responding to the complaint join the meeting.*

12.5 *The Panel will review the evidence and reach a decision. The possible decisions arising from the hearing are that:*

- *That the complaint is upheld*
- *That the complaint is partially upheld*
- *That the complaint is dismissed*

13. Office of the Independent Adjudicator

13.1 *If a student has completed the Collective Acting Studio's internal Student Complaints Procedure and they remain dissatisfied with the outcome, they may be able to submit their complaint for review to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA), providing that it is eligible under the OIA's Rules.*

13.2 *Where a student has exhausted the Collective Acting Studio's internal complaints procedure, they will be issued a Completion of Procedures letter by the Collective Acting Studio.*



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14. Recording, Reporting and Organisational Learning

14.1 *The Collective Acting Studio will record student complaints in sufficient, proportionate detail for analysis and management reporting to allow the causes of complaints to be identified, addressed and, where appropriate, for training opportunities and improvements to be introduced.*

14.2 *The Collective Acting Studio will keep and dispose of records relating to student complaints in accordance with its Data Protection Policy.*