

**Policy name: Complaints Policy**

**Approved: 25th November 2016**

**Revision 1 approved 10th March 2017**

**Revision 2 approved 6th December 2018**

## 1. Context

- 1.1 The Royal Irish Academy of Music, hereinafter referred to as RIAM or the Academy, provides services to a large number of visitors, customers, clients and other stakeholders, hereinafter referred to as 'service users'. The Academy complies with the Quality Assurance Act 2012, hence service users are entitled to expect a high level of quality in all areas of service it provides. It must ensure robust policies and procedures are in place to provide remedies for service users in cases where the Academy may not meet the standards set out in its policy documents.

## 2. Purpose

- 2.1 This policy seeks to ensure that the Academy provides a robust structure for dealing with complaints from service users, meaning that when it falls short of its quality assurance standards, any problems are resolved in a satisfactory manner that also ensures such failings are not repeated.

## 3. Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to all Academy-related activities in so far as they impact on the service experienced by service users. A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction concerning the provision of a service or services by the Academy, as laid out under the commitments in its Customer Charter, section 2.1 (*Customers of the RIAM have a clear path to make a complaint to the RIAM, where necessary*).
- 3.2 Students of the Academy wishing to make a complaint should do so through the Student Complaints Procedures; likewise, Academy staff should use the Staff Grievance and Mediation Procedures.

## 4. Benefits

- 4.1 Service users of the Academy have a clear pathway through which to make a complaint to the Academy, should it be necessary.
- 4.2 Academy staff will understand the correct procedures for dealing with complaints made to the Academy by service users.

## 5. Principles

- 5.1 The Academy makes every effort to ensure that the services provided to its service users fully meet their needs and expectations and are delivered in a friendly, courteous and efficient manner. However, it is accepted that on occasion, service users may feel dissatisfied with the levels of service provision and delivery they have received, in which case they have the right to complain directly to the individual or section they have been dealing with, where it is hoped that any problems may be resolved informally.

## 6. Policy

### 6.1 Complaints Policy

- 6.1.1 Should it prove not to be possible to resolve the matter informally and a service user feels that they should lodge an official complaint, the Academy has in place a robust Customer Complaints procedure to ensure that all complaints are investigated thoroughly, fairly and in confidence.
- 6.1.2 The Academy's Customer Service Officer will respond to any official complaint within 15 days of receipt or, if this is not possible, issue an interim reply advising of the reasons for the delay and when a substantive response will be forthcoming.
- 6.1.3 Any service user who is not satisfied with the response of the Customer Service Officer has the right of appeal to the Director of the Academy.
- 6.1.4 If the complainant then feels the matter has still not been resolved to their satisfaction, they still have the right of appeal to the Office of the Ombudsman.

### 6.2 Commitments when dealing with formal complaints

- 6.2.1 When dealing with formal complaints, the Academy commits to:
  - (i) acknowledging all complaints within three working days;
  - (ii) investigating all complaints and issuing a response within 15 working days, or where this is not possible, issuing an interim response explaining the position and advising when a substantive response will be forthcoming;
  - (iii) treating all complaints promptly, fairly, impartially and in confidence;
  - (iv) keeping records of complaints separate from other records;
  - (v) ensuring that no complaint made in good faith will be used to the detriment of the complainant in the future;
  - (vi) endeavouring to learn from mistakes so that any lapse in service quality is not repeated.

## 7. Procedures

### 7.1 Procedure for Customer Complaints

- 7.1.1 If a service user has a cause for complaint, it should initially be directed to the relevant section of the Academy, or if it is not clear to the complainant which is the relevant section, to the Customer Services Officer, who will advise accordingly.
- 7.1.2 The relevant staff member(s) will seek to deal with the matter without delay or, if the complaint does not relate to a service provided by the Academy, the complainant will be directed to the appropriate body.
- 7.1.3 If the staff of the section are unable to resolve the matter, or the complainant is not satisfied with their response, he/she may ask for the matter to be reviewed by a senior member of staff from that section.

- 7.1.4 If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the response, he/she should make a formal complaint to the Customer Service Officer, who will investigate the complaint on his/her behalf.
- 7.1.5 Complaints may be made in person, by telephone or fax, in writing or by email.
- 7.1.6 The investigation of complaints will be assisted by the provision of the following details:
- (i) the name, address, email and contact telephone number of the complainant;
  - (ii) full details of the nature of the complaint and the remedy being sought;
  - (iii) the name of the staff member or section who sort to resolve the matter informally.
- 7.1.7 Nothing in this complaints procedure affects a complainant's statutory rights under Freedom of Information, Data Protection, or other relevant legislation.

## 7.2 Procedure for Appeal of Complaint Outcome

- 7.2.1 If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, or the remedy offered by the Customer Service Officer, the matter may be appealed to the Director of the Academy.
- 7.2.2 The deadlines for responding to appeals will be the same as those for formal complaints (see 6.2.1 above).
- 7.2.3 If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of his/her appeal, he/she has the right to appeal to the Office of the Ombudsman or the Ombudsman for Children, as appropriate (see below).

## 8. Office of the Ombudsman

- 8.1 If service users feel that they have been unfairly treated or are not satisfied with the decision on a complaint, it is open to them to contact the Office of the Ombudsman. By law, the Ombudsman can investigate complaints about any administrative actions or procedures as well as delays or inaction in dealings with the institution. The Ombudsman provides an impartial, independent and free dispute resolution service.

## 9. Responsibility

- 9.1 The RIAM Secretary is responsible for overseeing this policy and its operational procedures.

## 10. Legislation and Regulation

- 10.1 Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.
- 10.2 Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2005).
- 10.3 Code of Practice for Provision of Education and Training to International Learners (2015).
- 10.4 National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).
- 10.5 [Ombudsman \(Amendment\) Act 2012](#).

## **11. Related Documents**

- 11.1 RIAM Customer Charter.
- 11.2 Student Complaints policy.
- 11.3 Staff Grievance and Mediation policy.

## **12. Document Control**

Approved by Board of Studies 25th November 2016.  
Revision 1 approved by Board of Studies 10th March 2017.  
Revision 2 approved by Board of Governors 6th December 2018.  
Next review: Academic year 2019/20.