

STUDENT COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES POLICY

Version	4.0
Effective date	September 2024
Date for review	August 2025
Policy owner	Head of Quality
Reference points	UK Quality Code Guidance on complaints and appeals: https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/concerns-complaints-and-appeals Office for Students Complaints guidance: https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-students/ofs-and-students/complaints/complaints-about-a-university-or-college/
Audience/handling notes	Institutional, Students, Staff, Public
Dissemination and implementation plan	This Student Complaints and Grievances Policy is an institutional and public facing policy that will be published on the NHAM website, in the student handbook, on the student portal and staff portal for reference by students, staff, and all other relevant stakeholders. Lecturers will receive training in how to apply this policy and its procedures. They will also be directed to where it is published. The Academy Manager will be responsible for the dissemination of the policy and procedures to academic staff; the Academy Manager will be responsible for the dissemination of the policy and procedures to support staff. A register of complaints by type and impact will be reviewed by the Governance and Education committees as a standing agenda item.
Linked Policies, Procedures and Forms	Academic Appeals (policy), Academic Integrity (policy), Admissions Appeals (policy), Bullying & Harassment (Policy), Equity Diversity & Inclusion (policy), Safeguarding (policy), Student Handbook.
Date approved	September 2024

1 Introduction

This policy describes how the Notting Hill Academy of Music (NHAM) defines and handles Student Complaints and Grievances. It applies to all students and is designed to ensure that students are treated in a consistent, fair and equitable manner. The Head of Quality is responsible for managing and reviewing this policy and the Academy Manager is responsible for the effective operation of the Student Complaints and Grievances Policy and Procedures outlined below.

The content of this policy aligns with government legislation, the regulations of NHAM's collaborative partner, and other external stakeholders to whom NHAM must make reference, such as the Office for Students (OfS).

The Student Complaints and Grievances Policy has a link with the following policies and procedures:

- Academic Appeals
- Academic Integrity
- Admissions Appeals
- Bullying & Harassment
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- Safeguarding



2 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to explain in an open, transparent and accessible way how NHAM deals with student complaints and grievances, to describe the processes undertaken as part of the Student Complaints and Grievances Procedure and to ensure that all students feel as if there is a mechanism for their issues to be heard and escalated in a formal, fair and consistent manner.

3 Student Complaints and Grievances

Complaints against NHAM made by students are treated seriously and, if found to be valid, are acted upon to ensure that the students' interests are protected as far as it is possible for NHAM to do so.

Specific procedures exist already for dealing with the following matters:

- Academic Appeals against the decisions of Student Progression and Assessment Board or Final Exam Board decisions.
- Alleged bullying and/or harassment.
- Alleged inequality of opportunity.
- Matters which fall within the remit of the student disciplinary procedures (e.g. plagiarism/Academic Misconduct).
- Sexual misconduct.

The procedures detailed below are designed for all other forms of student complaints which do not fall within one of the above procedures.

It should be noted that these complaints procedures are not designed to deal with problems such as:

- missing lecture resources.
- reasons for not submitting assessments.
- unexplained absence of a lecturer.
- late return of work.
- issues with room booking/personal tutoring booking; or
- teaching room deficiencies etc.

except in so far that such concerns are not resolved through simpler procedures or are persistent.

These complaints procedures and any decisions made under them are not intended to give rise to legal rights, or obligations on NHAM or its collaborative partners (validating institutions) to pay compensation either in respect of a decision made pursuant to the procedures or for a breach of these procedures. These procedures are intended to facilitate NHAM to resolve grievances.

Anonymous complaints will not normally be considered under the scope of this policy.

4 Principles which underpin the general student complaints procedures

The guiding principles of these procedures are that complaints shall be:

- treated seriously and with fairness.
- dealt with quickly, simply and at the appropriate level of NHAM.
- treated consistently across NHAM subject to the principles of natural justice.
- progressed through two stages: an informal stage and, if necessary, a formal stage.
- dealt with and resolved wherever possible at the informal stage and shall be without prejudice to a student's group or a group of students' right to pursue legal remedies outside NHAM and the awarding body, having exhausted NHAM and/or the awarding body's complaints procedures.
- To be considered, any student complaint must be submitted no more than six calendar months after the event or problem relating to the complaint.



5 Procedures (Student complaints and grievances)

In all situations where students have a minor query or issue, they should talk to their Personal Tutor/Lecturer, or the Head of Student Services, who may be able to resolve the issue without needing to make use of these Student Complaints and Grievances procedure.

Hierarchy of Escalation of Complaints

Nature of complaint/ grievance	Informal (Stage 1) Responsibility	Informal (Stage 2) Responsibility	Formal Stage Escalation to
Academic	Academic Lecturer	Programme Leader	Chief Executive
Administration	Academy Manager	Head of Quality	Chief Executive
Conduct	Academy Manager	Head of Quality	Chief Executive
Facilities	Programme Leader	Academy Manager	Chief Executive
Financial	Academy Manager	Head of Quality	Chief Executive
Personnel	Programme Leader/Academy Manager	Head of Quality	Chief Executive
Student Experience, Services and Support	Academy Manager	Head of Quality	Chief Executive

Informal Stage

Informal Stage 1

In the first instance students who wish to make a complaint should discuss it with a member of NHAM staff who will advise whether or not the complaint is best progressed through:

- The Education, Governance or Student Experience Committee(s);
- Reference to specific persons who can resolve the problem, e.g. Lecturer, Programme Leader, Head of Student Services;
- One of the alternative procedures set out above;
- These general complaints procedures; or
- Exceptionally, the student complaints and grievances procedures of NHAM's collaborative partner (validating institution).

The member of staff consulted shall discuss the complaint fully with the student and, with the student's consent, anyone else involved, to see if it can be resolved informally. Where appropriate, a member of Student Services.

The outcome of complaints dealt with informally at Stage 1 should be documented and passed to Student Services for recording against the student's record and in NHAM's complaints to send a copy of the outcome to the student and to ensure that complaints can be monitored by the NHAM's committees. Students are permitted to complain without risk of disadvantage. Normally, complaints handled through Informal Stage 1 shall be dealt with within 10-15 working days.

Informal Stage 2

If the student is dissatisfied with the result of Informal Stage 1, the complaint shall be sent in writing (either email or the Student Complaints Form) to Student Services within 10 working days of the completion of Informal Stage 1.

Student Services will direct the complaint to the relevant member of NHAM staff (see hierarchy grid above), who will investigate the complaint fully and shall seek to achieve an informal resolution of the problem(s), either by correspondence or through discussion with the complainant as soon as possible.

Progression to the Formal Stage should only be necessary in exceptional circumstances, since most complaints, other than ones related to persistent problems, should be resolved at the informal stage. If the complaint directly involves a manager of a service, it shall proceed directly to the formal stage.



Groups of Complainants

NHAM recognises that students may wish to lodge complaints collectively. In such instances, students are asked to nominate one spokesperson with whom NHAM staff will liaise to address the complaint. This spokesperson should try to gather the views of all of the students who wish to lodge the complaint. If Informal Stage 1 does not satisfactorily address the complaint, the spokesperson should complete a written explanation of the complaint (either an emailed account/report or via the Student Complaints Form), which should be agreed by the entire group before submission.

Formal Stage

If a student is dissatisfied with the result of the two informal stages, they may proceed to the formal stage. They shall put the complaint and the reason why they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the two informal stages in writing to Student Services within 10 working days of the completion of Informal Stage 2.

Student Services shall:

- acknowledge receipt of the written complaint within three working days;
- advise, in writing and within three working days, any member(s) of staff or students involved that a formal complaint has been received; and
- escalate the complaint to the Chief Executive.

The Chief Executive shall consider the evidence, written or otherwise, and, if necessary, hold such discussions with the complainant and any other persons they deem appropriate to fully investigate the complaint.

The Chief Executive, having fully investigated the complaint over a period not normally exceeding 10 working days from its receipt, shall decide whether:

- the complaint should be progressed through other procedures (indicated above) in which case the complaint shall be terminated at this stage and progressed through those procedures; or whether
- there is no reasonable justification for the complaint, in which case the complaint shall be terminated at this stage; or whether
- there is reasonable justification for the complaint;
- the complaint requires escalating/referring to NHAM's collaborative partner (validating institution) or other external authorities.

The Chief Executive shall:

- make their decision known in writing;
- recommend resolutions to any justifiable complaint which all parties involved in the complaint shall be invited to accept; and
- if the recommendations are agreed, shall take steps to ensure that they are implemented in full within the agreed time period.

Student Services will then:

- Inform the student and to the members of staff or other students involved of the decision.
- Monitor the agreed resolutions to the complaint.
- Record the number and type of complaints received in an academic year to identify trends, evaluate the effectiveness of and make enhancements to the Student Complaints and Grievances Policy and Procedures.

Appeals

If the student is not satisfied with the decision at the conclusion of NHAM's Formal stage or if the recommendations made at this stage are not implemented, they may appeal to NHAM's validating partner, which will follow their own process and can be found on their institution website.

If the student is enrolled on any of NHAM's own Internal Qualifications, NHAM's decision is final.



6 Enforcement, Monitoring and Review

The complainant will be contacted via email after 1 month to ask them to comment on the success of the formal stage of the complaints process. If the formal stage has not resolved the issue, the complainant may be asked whether they wish to repeat the formal stage process or they will be advised on how to progress their complaint to NHAM's validating partner.

The nature, volume, impact and resolution of complaints will be considered as a standing agenda item at NHAM's Governance Committee to ensure oversight of all complaints at the institution. It will provide an annual statement on complaints as part of its annual monitoring and programme review processes.

Every two years, the Academy must review this policy to ensure that:

- it remains up to date and continues to meet the expectations of the UK Quality Code and Office for Students, applicable legislation or guidance;
- areas of improvement, or any concerns, raised by students, relevant external colleagues, or professional bodies have been addressed; and
- opportunities to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy have been taken.