

Enquiry Complaints Policy

The Open College of the Arts undertakes to provide all enquirers and applicants with a high quality, efficient service. However, it is recognised that errors can happen and where necessary enquirers and applicants require a formal route for raising their concerns. Legitimate concerns raised by enquirers and applicants provide an opportunity for OCA to reflect on its approach and find ways of improving what it offers.

OCA's approach to complaints management is underpinned by these principles:

- to provide a formal process for enquirers and applicants to make complaints and to resolve them wherever possible to listen to and resolve informal complaints as practicable.
- to treat all complaints raised seriously and to deal with them fairly and consistently.
- to investigate each complaint with objectivity, listening to the views of all relevant parties involved, including enquirers, applicants, tutors, programme leaders, and members of the head office team.
- to deal with all complaints without recrimination as a result of making the complaint.
- to respect the rights of all involved in the complaints process, including enquirers, applicants, staff, and tutors.
- for all complaints to be dealt with in strict confidence.
- to learn from each complaint made and implement change as appropriate to improve the services offered.

What this policy covers

This process applies in cases where there is no alternative process to manage the issue raised or where a process exists but is not able to provide a framework for reaching an outcome.

A complaint under the terms of this policy is such defined as dissatisfaction with an advertised or promised service and/or where appropriate standards have not been met. Equally a complaint will be deemed as raised against administrative error on the part of OCA, or where applicable regulations have not been applied correctly.

Examples of grounds for complaint include but are not necessarily limited to: failure to meet obligations as outlined in college-written material, misleading advertising or promotional material, or misconduct of a member of staff or tutors.

For a complaint to be dealt with it must be raised at the point where the material issue occurred, up to one month from the date on which the material instant arised. Complaints raised after the event will not be considered except where evidence can be provided to demonstrate an inability to submit within the timeframe defined above.

Exemptions to this policy

Applicants have no right of appeal against an academic decision not to offer them a place at the University. Providing that the decision can be shown to have been reached fairly and in accordance with the University's published entry requirements and selection criteria, the original decision will not be overturned. However, should an applicant believe that the University's admissions procedures have been inconsistently or incorrectly applied, these complaints procedures will provide the mechanism for review.

Complaints Procedure

The complaints process is triggered by an enquirer or applicant making a formal complaint through OCA communications channels in writing.

Stage One:

Issues can often be dealt with as and when they occur through discussion and facilitation with all affected parties; applicants, enquirers, tutors, and staff. It is expected that complaints will always be attempted to be resolved at a local level before escalation through the policy.

The member of the College, be they staff or tutor, in receipt of a complaint raised should in all circumstances take note of the date the complaint has been raised, the issue raised, any pertinent discussions therein, and actions taken to resolve the matter. These should then be reported on a quarterly basis to the Head of Student Services.

Stage Two:

Wherein an issue cannot be resolved locally, the affected party has reserve to raise the issue as a Stage Two complaint with the Complaints Management Team. The Complaints Management Team is led by the Head of Student Services, with support from the Senior Learner Support Advisor, and Finance Manager.

Complainants should download and complete the Formal Complaints Form from the OCA website and send to studentadvice@oca.ac.uk.

The team will confirm that local options for resolution have been explored before continuing. Upon receipt of completed complaint form and appropriate evidence (where applicable) an acknowledgement will be sent and the team will conduct an investigation into the situation, liaising with all parties as appropriate and requesting documentation pertinent to the case as may be applicable.

The team will respond directly to the concerned party with the details of the investigation and outcome of the case within 10 working days of the receipt of the complaint. Where the case is complex and further time may be required, the complainant will be informed of any likely delay at the earliest opportunity with an anticipated timescale for completion.

In determining the outcome of the case, the team will consider if there is substance in all or part of the complaint, or if there is no substance to the complaint. In making this determination the team will consider appropriate action to redress the error (where applicable) and resolve the situation (where applicable).

The outcome of the investigation and proposed action (where applicable) will be communicated to the complainant within the timescale outlined.

Stage Three:

Where the issue is not resolved through the previous two stages, complainants can escalate the issue with the OCA Principal.

Complainants should download and complete the Formal Complaints Form from the OCA website and send to enquiries@oca.ac.uk.

The Principal will confirm in the first instance that stages one through three have been explored before committing to an investigation. Where this has not happened, complainants will be advised to follow the complaints procedure as detailed above.

The Principal will confirm acknowledgement of the complaint and conduct an investigation and respond to the complaint raised within 10 working days of receipt. Where the case is complex and further time may be required, the complainant will be informed of any likely delay at the earliest opportunity with an anticipated timescale for completion.

In determining the outcome of the case, the Principal will consider if there is substance in all or part of the complaint, or if there is no substance to the complaint. In making this determination the Principal will consider appropriate action to redress the error (where applicable) and resolve the situation (where applicable).

The outcome of the investigation and proposed action (where applicable) will be communicated to the complainant within the timescale outlined.

Document Control

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