

# Norfolk Institute of Performing Arts

## Complaints Policy

### **Contents**

Aims	p.1
Making A Complaint	p.2
Complaints Procedure	
Stage One	p.3
Stage Two	p. 4
Stage Three	p.5
Findings And Recommendations	p.7
Contact	p.8

### **Aims**

Norfolk Institute of Performing Arts College recognises that not everything goes well for everybody all of the time. There are times when misunderstandings, confusion or genuine concerns give rise to complaints.

This document is intended to describe the procedures the college has in place for dealing with these complaints and tries to make the process both transparent and fair. The college would like to reassure you that it will take seriously your concerns.

## **Making A Complaint**

Complaints may be made in person, on the telephone or in writing, either by letter or email. The college will respond with an acknowledgment of the complaint within 24 hours during term time.

The complaint will be responded to appropriately and you should expect an explanation of the circumstances surrounding the event, information about the steps we have taken and details of the actions we have taken. This will include an apology if we have made a mistake.

The college will keep a confidential record of your complaint which will include details of the date, the person(s) concerned, who dealt with the complaint, when and how it was resolved, and any action taken by the college as a result of those complaints.

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Students may be concerned that making a complaint could have negative outcomes for the student. Please be assured that the college will continue to treat all students with the respect and dignity due to any student, regardless of any complaints procedure. No student will ever face negative consequences or be treated differently due to raising a complaint or concern. Furthermore, please do not be concerned that the college might see your issue as unimportant.

If it is important to you, then it is important to us.

## **Complaints Procedure**

The college operates a three stage process for complaints.

### **Stage One:**

Informal complaints will vary in nature and severity and it is the college's aim to try to resolve any complaint informally in the first instance. It is intended that there is a hierarchy of responses to a specific complaint. In the first instance, it may be the individual teacher or faculty member who is able to deal with the problem. If the complaint is of a more serious nature, it may be made to a Course Director.

If you wish to make a complaint following an incident or issue, we would ask that you do so as soon as possible and ideally within seven days. Your complaint will be acknowledged within two working days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable in the holidays, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely time scale.

When a complaint is made, the member of staff whom you have contacted will make a written record of the problem, and any actions taken including any evidence gathered. This record will also record whether the complaint is resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeds to the next stage or stages. If you feel that your problem has not been resolved at this level, we will move to stage 2.

## **Stage Two:**

Stage two is a Formal procedure by which you should put your complaint in writing to the Course Directors, ideally within seven days of the end of the stage one process.

Again, the college will acknowledge this within two working days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable in the holidays, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely time scale.

As stage one included the member of staff whom you contacted making a written record of the problem, and any actions taken including any evidence gathered, the Course Directors will review all of this information and gather more detail/evidence if needed. The Course Directors will respond to your complaint within ten working days during term time.

When a complaint reaches the formal level of Stage Two, its resolution will include a formal, recorded in-person meeting between the complainant, at least one Course Director and any other relevant parties. The purpose of this meeting is to resolve all raised issues in a manner which is amenable to all involved parties; at the end of the meeting, each party present will have the opportunity to state whether they feel the matter satisfactorily resolved and to raise any further or outstanding concerns they may have.

The meeting log will record whether the complaint is resolved at this stage or proceeds to a panel hearing.

### **Stage Three:**

If you are not satisfied with the Course Directors' response to your complaint at stage two and you indicate a wish to continue to stage three, you may take the concern to a faculty panel hearing.

Ideally this should be done within seven days of the end of the stage two process. This contact will be acknowledged within two working days during term time.

The Course Directors will arrange for a panel of five, consisting of at least two faculty members and both course directors, and one person independent of the management and running of the college, to consider the complaint.

At the panel hearing, the complainant may be accompanied by one other person: a relative or friend. If the complainant is a student under 18 years of age, they must also be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Legal representation requires permission and can only be permitted if the Course Directors think it appropriate. If legal representation is granted, then the complainant must inform the Course Directors at least seven days before the hearing. The Course Directors will notify other parties of this legal representation, to allow all parties involved to be legally represented.

The panel decision will be final.

Where repeated attempts are made to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this can be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of the policy.

If you decide not to attend the panel hearing, it will proceed in your absence to consider your complaint and issue findings on the substance of the complaint. Where possible, the panel will resolve the problem at the hearing. Where further investigation is required, the panel will reach a decision and make its recommendations known in writing within 14 working days of the hearing, or as soon as is practicable.

The written decision will be sent to the complainant and the person complained about or other involved parties where relevant. The written decision will be held with the Complaints Log by the Course Directors.

In line with the Independent College Standards Regulations, Part 7 J (ii), we will keep a record of action taken by the college in relation to complaints, regardless of whether they are upheld. In line with DfE guidance, the College will retain records which do not have safeguarding implications for a minimum of seven years. Any records concerning allegations of abuse or safeguarding implications will be retained at least until the accused has reached normal pension age or for 10 years from the date of the allegation, if that is longer.

## **Findings and Recommendations**

Following the outcome of a panel hearing, the findings and recommendations will be made available to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about or other involved parties. If the complaint reached Stage Three, the formal meeting log will also be made available to all involved parties.

Outside of term time, it will not usually be possible to acknowledge and follow-up on a complaint in the same timescales as during term time because of staff holiday absence from college. We would still normally aim to acknowledge the complaint within a week. The period of investigation and response would depend on staff availability and the college would advise complainants of the likely timescale of response. In any event, the college would aim to resolve the complaint within four weeks.

## Contact

It is perfectly suitable to communicate informally with the college about complaints in the first instance. By ensuring open, honest and consistent communication between students, tutors and course directors, we aim to minimize misunderstandings and complaints, and foster a cohesive and positive learning environment.

Students are encouraged to speak to any member of faculty, with whomever they feel most comfortable discussing any issue they wish to raise. Any faculty member, on hearing a complaint, will forward it to the course directors and/or ensure it is suitably resolved.

If you wish to raise a complaint more formally, the following methods of contact are most suitable:

Text/Call: 07770 581 404

Email: [office@nipa.org.uk](mailto:office@nipa.org.uk)

Post:

NIPA Course Directors  
Norfolk Institute of Performing Arts  
Shipdham Road  
Dereham  
NR19 1PU