



Complaints Policy & Procedure

This policy applies to Colchester Operatic Society (COS) and its committees, including Colchester Operatic Society Second Edition (CO2), who are collectively referred to as “The Society” and “Colchester Operatic Society”.

Policy

Colchester Operatic Society believes that members and individuals volunteering or employed for any of our productions are entitled to feel safe and expect courtesy from one another, from members and officers of the Executive committee and members of any sub-committees. Members of the Executive committee, who manage the Society, make every effort that is reasonably possible to ensure that all of its members and appointed/employed personnel are treated with dignity and respect. Bullying, harassment and discrimination of any kind will not be tolerated. We encourage individuals to report any incidents of bullying, harassment and/or discrimination to the Executive committee as per our Inclusion, Equality and Diversity policy. Any evidence or reports of bullying, harassment and/or discrimination will be taken seriously by the Executive committee, discussed and appropriate action taken.

The Executive committee welcome suggestions on how to improve our Society and will give prompt and serious attention to any concerns or complaints about the running of our productions and/or our Society in general. We anticipate that most concerns or complaints will be resolved quickly by an informal approach to an appropriate appointed individual and/or member/s of the Executive committee. If this does not achieve the desired result, we have a set of procedures for dealing with concerns and complaints. We aim to bring all concerns and complaints about the running of our Society and its productions to a satisfactory conclusion for all parties involved.

Whistleblowing

Individuals should feel comfortable to make their concerns and complaints known to the necessary people without fear of recrimination. Any individual receiving a concern or complaint regarding the Society, its management and its productions must report the concern or complaint to any other relevant people including the Executive committee and any appropriate sub-committees both sensitively and appropriately. Where requested or if possible, necessary and/or appropriate this should be done anonymously.

Procedures

Any person who has a concern or complaint about any matter relating to the Society, its management and its productions should report their concern or complaint to the Society through an appropriate means or contact:



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- For general public this can be reported through the contact form on our website or via email to the COS Secretary or via post to the address listed on our website.
- At a performance this can be done in person to a member of the front of house team at the Theatre.
- For members this can be done in person or by contacting the appropriate member/s of the Executive committee (if known - see specific procedures and contacts detailed below), their cast representative, the Youth Liaison Officer, or the COS Secretary. Concerns can also be raised in the open forum of our AGM.
- For specific complaints or concerns please see the applicable/appropriate procedures detailed below.

Reports of a concern or complaint, either informally or formally, will be shared with relevant people, any appropriate sub-committees and the Executive committee. However, when shared this can be done so anonymously where requested, where possible, where necessary and/or appropriate.

All Society email contacts are listed at the end of this policy and on our website.

Membership and/or Membership Fees

- Any person who has a concern or complaint about their membership and/or fees due should report their concern or complaint to the Membership Secretary who will be able to address the issue and/or report it to the relevant people.
- If they are not present or it is not appropriate to approach them, then please approach the COS Secretary.
- If they are not present or it is not appropriate to approach them, then please approach the Chair or Business Manager.

Social or promotional events

- Any person who has a concern or complaint about a social or promotional event run by the Society should report their concern or complaint to the individual running the event, who will be able to address the issue and/or report it to the relevant people.
- If they are not present or it is not appropriate to approach them, then please approach the Marketing & Events Chair.
- If they are not present, it is not appropriate to approach them then please approach the Chair or any other member of the Executive committee.



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Discrimination

- Any person who has a concern or complaint relating to discrimination and inclusion, equality and/or diversity should report their concern or complaint to a known appointed Equality & Inclusion Champion who can support in reporting it to the Executive committee and any other relevant people, who can then take action, if and as necessary.
- If they are not present or it is not appropriate to approach them, then please approach the Inclusion, Equality & Diversity Lead who can support in reporting it to the Executive committee and any other relevant people, who can then take action, if and as necessary.
- If they are not present, it is not appropriate to approach them, or the concern or complaint is something that needs to be reported to the Executive committee then please approach any member of the committee who can then take action, if and as necessary.

Please note all incidents of discrimination should be reported in line with our Inclusion, Equality and Diversity policy. Reports of discrimination are often of a sensitive nature and those sharing the reports with other relevant parties will be aware of the need to keep reports anonymous when requested and if possible, necessary and/or appropriate.

CO2 & Youth Members in a COS show

- Any person who has a concern or complaint relating to our younger members in CO2 OR any cast member of any show who is aged 16 years and under should report their concern or complaint to the Youth Liaison Officer who will be able to address the issue and/or report to the relevant people.
- If they are not present, you are unsure who the Youth Liaison Officer is, or it is not appropriate to approach them, then please approach a chaperone, who will be able to address the issue and/or report it to the relevant people.
- If they are not present or it is not appropriate to approach them then please approach either the CO2 or COS Chair.
- **If the concern or complaint relates to a safeguarding issue or a disclosure and/or witness of abuse, please follow our Child Protection Policy that provides further details on these matters.**

During rehearsals

- Any cast member who has a concern or complaint during rehearsals for a show should report their concern to their appointed Cast Representative. They can then report the concern or complaint to the relevant people.



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- If you are not sure who the Cast Representative is, one hasn't yet been appointed, they are not present and/or it is not appropriate to approach them then please approach a member of the Executive committee. For CO2 or youth members of a COS show, you should approach the Youth Liaison Officer.
- If you are not sure of which members of the Executive committee to approach, who they are, there are no committee members present at a rehearsal and/or it is not appropriate to approach those that are available, then please contact the COS Secretary. For CO2, you can make email contact (see email addresses at the end of this policy).

During productions

Any person who has a concern or complaint during the run of a production should report their concern or complaint to the relevant member of the production team/crew:

- If our appointed production co-ordinator is present during the run of a production they should be the first point of contact. They will be able to address the issue and/or report it to the relevant people.
- If they are not present or it is not appropriate to approach them and the concern relates to backstage, then the stage manager is the next point of contact.
- If the concern or complaint relates to a specific department such as costume/sound/props then the person leading these departments can be approached.
- If you are aged 16 years old or under you can talk to your chaperone, who can help you report the complaint and/or concern to the relevant individuals.

If the concern or complaint is something that the Executive committee needs to be aware of or address, then please approach our Business Manager or for CO2, the CO2 chairperson.

- If they are not present or it is not appropriate to approach them, then please approach any member of the Executive committee. For CO2 or youth members of a COS production, please approach the Youth Liaison Officer.
- If you are not sure of which members of the Executive committee to approach, who they are, there are no committee members present and/or it is not appropriate to approach those that are available, then please contact the COS Secretary or for CO2, or youth members of a COS production, email the Membership Secretary.



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Online content

Any person who has a concern or complaint about any online content posted by or on behalf of the Society or within the Society social media networking groups should report their concern or complaint to the Society through an appropriate means or contact:

- For the website concerns and/or complaints can be reported through the contact form on our website or via email to the COS Secretary
- For Facebook concerns and/or complaints can be reported through the Facebook Messenger function to the Society's Facebook page or via email to our Secretary and for members by speaking to any member of the committee or one of the Society's Facebook moderators or administrators (if known)
- For Instagram and Twitter concerns and/or complaints can be reported via our website contact form, via email to the COS Secretary and for members by speaking to any member of the Marketing & Events committee or the Executive committee
- For social media networking groups concerns and/or complaints can be reported through the Facebook Messenger function to the Society's Facebook page or via email to the COS Secretary and for members by speaking to any member of the committee or one of the Society's Facebook moderators or administrators (if known). Members can refer to our Social Media Policy and agreement for more details.

We ask members to refrain from publicly complaining using posts on our Facebook group/s and/or other social networking sites, as this can be detrimental to individuals, personal relationships and/or the reputation of the Society.

Written complaints

If following any of the above procedures does not end in a satisfactory outcome, or if the problem reoccurs, an individual can put their concerns or complaint in writing to the Executive committee. Contact emails are listed at the end of this document, although the first point of contact should be the COS Secretary.

We investigate all written complaints made to the Society and address them as a committee at the next relevant committee meeting. If a complaint relates to a member of the Executive committee, then that member may be asked to leave the meeting whilst the complaint is discussed by the rest of the committee. Any response, decisions and/or actions taken will then be reported back to the complainant, following this meeting.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, they can request to attend a meeting with the committee or at least 2 selected members of the committee that they feel comfortable meeting. They can also bring an independent witness/mediator or advocate with them to this meeting. An agreed written account of the discussion will be made including any decision or action to take as a result.



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Actions

As a result of any complaints/concerns we may need to refer to rule 18 of the COS rulebook (see below) in particular when the complaint relates to bullying, harassment, discrimination or general conduct of any individual.

Rule 18. Expulsion Of Members

The Executive Committee may, by a two thirds majority of its members, vote to remove from the list of Members the name of any Member (a) who has persistently neglected the work undertaken by the Society, or (b) whose conduct it considers likely to endanger the welfare of the Society.

Other actions that may be taken include; removing individuals from our Facebook group/s (in accordance with our social networking agreement) and/or members area of the website, removing an individual's role, position or status from any of our productions, committees and/or Society and if necessary reporting an individual to the police for criminal prosecution. These actions will not be taken lightly and only in a situation in which other solutions have failed to work.

Executive committee and CO2 committee contact emails:

- COS Secretary: secretary@colchesteroperaticsociety.co.uk
- Chair: chair@colchesteroperaticsociety.co.uk
- CO2 Chair: co2membership@colchesteroperaticsociety.co.uk
- Business Manager: bm@colchesteroperaticsociety.co.uk
- Membership secretary: membership@colchesteroperaticsociety.co.uk
- CO2 Membership secretary:
co2membership@colchesteroperaticsociety.co.uk
- Marketing & Events Team: marketing@colchesteroperaticsociety.co.uk
- Youth Liaison Officer: safeguarding@colchesteroperaticsociety.co.uk

Colchester Operatic Society fully complies with information legislation. For the full details on how we use your personal information please visit our website <https://www.colchesteroperaticsociety.co.uk/about/privacy-policy/> or speak to our Membership secretary if you are unable to access the internet.