Record of interview between Aengus Ward (Deputy Head of School of Languages, Cultures, Art History and Music) and Christopher Hill (Phd student, Department of Music).

Monday 6th February 2023, Ashley Room 115

Following the submission of a formal complaint form by Chris Hill, I arranged as part of the standard complaint process, to interview Mr. Hill in person in order to explore all of the elements of the complaint. We had previously spoken informally, and we had established that Chris wished to pursue the formal complaint and did not wish to arrange any informal mediation. Chris did not wish to be accompanied by a friend. Before going through the substance of the complaint (which I do not repeat here, as it is detailed in full elsewhere), I explained the process involved and apologised for any possible delays. I also pointed out that this complaint was governed by the regulations affecting complaints by students against staff members:

*When dealing with student concerns/complaints made against a member of staff the IO’s role is to investigate the matter objectively and to identify if (and if necessary, how) the student’s interactions with the member of staff affected the student and their expectations of their student experience. Evidence should be collated and the IO must provide the Head of School with a recommendation on whether, based on the evidence, the matter should be referred to HR for them to determine whether or not it should be investigated in accordance with staff disciplinary procedures.*

As such, the outcome might be a question of disciplinary proceedings, in which case the student would no longer be involved as a complainant, since this would be a matter between employer and employee. Given the redress asked for, it was important to clarify this at the outset. I also informed you (with Mr. Rosina’s permission) that some actions had already taken place in respect of some of the issues you raised. Some of these will be detailed in the final report.

We initially discussed the nature of supporting evidence. Chris pointed out that others would wish to make supporting statements, but not if their names would be disclosed to Mr. Rosina. My view was that anonymous statements could not be permitted and I confirmed this in a subsequent email exchange when I had consulted with HR. Although Chris did not accept the rationale, we proceeded in any case.

The background information provided included reference to your RAP and the extent to which your dyspraxia and dyslexia were taken into account in the operation of the Orchestra. I undertook to find out about these procedures and to make appropriate recommendations where possible.

In respect of the four incidents, we talked through each in turn. The elements which we highlighted are detailed here, generally as a result of questions I posed on the matter to Chris.

Incident 1: this matter concerned the absence of a response to emails, and the use of a personal email address. Chris’s contention is that this represented the deliberate withholding of information, and that as a result there was a breach of the University Harassment and Bullying policy.

Incident 2: Chris’s contention is that a necessary absence in a subsequent rehearsal was not unusual. The response from Mr. Rosina, however, was a public accusation of lack of commitment to the role. As a result, Chris alleges that he was then picked on in a manner that constitutes unfair persecution. A further bike accident that evening exacerbated his absence, and this gave rise, he contends, to further harassment.

Incident 3: the use of mobile phones is not permitted by Mr Rosina. Chris’s contention is that when he made a quick consultation of the time on his phone, he was unfairly singled out and that Mr Rosina repeatedly returned to the matter. Additionally, derogatory comments by other members of the orchestra were not controlled by Mr Rosina. The incident got further out of hand as Mr Rosina responded to Chris’s (condoned) attempt to leave by making threats and shouting at Chris. Various members of the orchestra and staff, including Gavin Allsop and Rachel Gibson can attest to the effect these incidents had on you.

Incident 4: the week of 20-25 June. Chris had arranged absence from rehearsals this week, which was the week leading up to the performance on the Friday. No acknowledgement of these requests had been made by Mr Rosina after these had been organised via Gavin Allsop (which is the usual procedure). The Friday rehearsal saw a further confrontation with Dan Rosina when Chris attempted to leave. This was even more public a humiliation as there were Open Day parents present. No apology for this, or other incidents was ever provided.

Chris’s contention is that each of these incidents constitute bullying and that together they constitute harassment. He again stated the effect that this had had on him. He explained that his aim now was not to gain an apology but to ensure that UMS would be a safe and welcoming space for all in future.