

Complaints Policy



Purpose

The Coventry SCITT is committed to providing a high quality of training and experience. All partner schools are committed to this and engage with programme design, delivery and evaluation. Trainees are regularly asked for their evaluation and feedback on all aspects of the programme. However, we recognise that things can still go wrong and Trainees who are dissatisfied with an aspect of their training or experience on the programme have the right to complain. Trainee is a term used to refer to provider-led trainee, teacher apprentice and assessment only candidate. Nothing in this policy is intended to form part of a contract between the SCITT and the Trainee. The SCITT may amend this policy at any time.

Scope

The following concerns or complaints are excluded from being dealt with under this policy:

- Safeguarding and child protection – this is to be raised and handled under the relevant school's child protection policy
- Academic Assessment Board – Trainee's must follow the Appeals Policy to raise an issue regarding determinations
- Disciplinary matters – these are subject to appeals procedures set out under the relevant policy
- Fitness to practice – these are subject to appeals procedures set out under the relevant policy
- PGCE module delivery – these are subject to the applicable University process Any other complaints should follow the procedures below.

Introduction

The aim of the Complaint procedure is to assist the complainant in understanding the procedure to follow and the stages associated with the process. The Coventry SCITT is committed to ensuring all complainants are treated in a respectful manner and are granted the same opportunities. The aim of this procedure is to provide guidance to trainees about how they can initiate a complaint and the process that will be followed in investigating that complaint.

A complaint relates to a difficulty or dissatisfaction raised by one or more complainant about The Coventry SCITT, a member of the SCITT team, the placement school or staff at a placement school. It can also relate to the training provided by The Coventry SCITT.

The Coventry SCITT aims to:

- Resolve difficulties and dissatisfactions via informal means as soon as it becomes aware of them.
- Ensure all complainants are aware of SCITT team members with whom they can liaise over difficulties and dissatisfactions.
- Aim to resolve issues through positive interactions and communications.
- Provide a confidential environment in which issues can be discussed.

- Ensure that the process of investigation offers both the complainant and staff the opportunity to share information and be heard.

In addition, please be aware of the following:

- Mediation can be a useful means of resolving matters of complaint where the parties involved are willing to engage voluntarily in the process in an attempt to work things out. The Coventry SCITT may make an offer of mediation to students at any stage of the complaints procedure.
- Complaints must be substantiated with evidence, expressed in clear and succinct English and submitted within prescribed timescales.
- Complaints submitted outside of the timescales stipulated in the procedure will only be considered in the most exceptional circumstances and where there is good reason, supported by evidence, for the late submission.
- The Coventry SCITT is committed to ensuring that complaints are handled in accordance with its published procedure. Occasionally, it may be sensible for The Coventry SCITT to deviate from procedure if strict adherence to it could give rise to perceptions of prejudice or bias.

Confidentiality

All individuals involved in this process have a responsibility to act professionally at all times. Information shared or obtained during the handling of a complaint will be treated sensitively. Confidentiality will be preserved as far as is appropriate.

If anyone involved in the process does not respect the confidentiality of the process and is sharing information inappropriately then disciplinary action may be taken.

Maintenance of Records

All relevant documentation will be kept securely and will only be made available to individuals whose duties require access to this information.

In certain circumstances, all papers obtained and created whilst dealing with a complaint may have to be fully disclosed for example, at an employment tribunal.

Once the complaint has been completed the documentation should be kept in the trainee's personnel file for 12 months after the conclusion of the case. After this period of time the file must be removed from the individual's personnel folder but will be archived by The Coventry SCITT.

Procedures

On receipt of a complaint, the SCITT Director will undertake an investigation into the complaint. (See Appendix 2 for timescales.)

Stage 1 - Informal: the matter should be raised promptly and informally in the first instance, with the relevant programme personnel. This may be a Professional Mentor on placement or the SCITT Programme Leader depending upon the reason for concern or complaint, whether it is a placement issue or other programme issue. A mediation or conciliation meeting may be provided whereby a third party who is independent of the complaint can help to resolve the problem. This may be a School Lead/Professional Mentor from a different partner school or the Programme Leader. Every effort will be made to resolve the issue at this stage, but if it cannot be resolved, is very serious or the trainee remains dissatisfied after this stage then Stage 2 applies. It is for the SCITT to determine in its absolute discretion whether stage 1 has been exhausted.

Stage 2 - Formal: the complaint needs to be made in writing, within 15 school days of Stage 1 having been complete, to the SCITT Director using the Formal Complaint Proforma. The aim of the Complaint Investigation is to consider the complaint and outline findings to the trainee.

The Investigating Officer will be an independent senior manager to ensure fairness and consistency of approach. They are the decision maker in this process and will complete any investigations necessary.

An Investigating Officer, who has had no prior involvement in the matter, will be appointed and they will:

- Write to the trainee and invite them to a hearing as soon as possible. The trainee may be accompanied by a representative to discuss the complaint. This meeting will be held within 10 working days of the complaint letter being received by the SCITT Director. The hearer may be accompanied by another senior member of staff, or a member of The Coventry SCITT team. The hearing should not involve the individual who is named in the complaint. If it is deemed appropriate the hearer may facilitate a session between trainees to resolve the issue, the trainees would be entitled to bring a representative to this session.
- Arrange to speak with the trainee to agree on the key points for consideration.
- Consider the information provided by the trainee and any other material pertinent to the concerns. There may be discussions with other staff members (at the absolute discretion of the Investigating Officer) and consideration of procedures where appropriate. This may include interviewing individuals involved in the complaint or as witnesses, as well as obtaining any relevant documentation. The timescale of this will vary depending on the complexity of the case but will usually be completed within 10 working days.
- Compile a Complaint Investigation Report (CIR) which will be returned to the SCITT Director (within 10 school days of receipt of the formal complaint proforma) and then sent to the trainee along with information regarding any further steps they may wish to take.

If the complainant is unhappy with the outcome from this stage, they can then ask the SCITT Director to forward the complaint to the Complaints Committee. The Director will agree a date within 20 working days of this request where the Committee will meet to undertake an investigation.

Stage 3 - Review: the aim of a Complaint Committee is to give further consideration to specific aspects of a complaint where there is evidence that a key point(s) has not been fully considered, not fully substantiated or appropriate remedy has not been offered. A member of the SCITT's Steering Group will review the complaint and may, as required:

- a) Contact the trainee to confirm and/or clarify the outstanding aspects of the complaint.
- b) Consider and review the actions and outcome of stage 2 and any relevant information/evidence.
- c) Discuss the complaint with the original Investigating Officer and SCITT Director, along with any staff who contributed to the initial investigations.
- d) Seek new information from the trainee, staff and/or documents if applicable.

The Stage 3 Reviewer will issue a letter to the trainee and SCITT Director to confirm the outcome of stage 3. This concludes the internal complaints process.

Representatives

At any stage of the formal procedure, the trainee concerned may be accompanied by:

- A workplace colleagues

- A Trade Union representative

The representative shall be allowed to address the hearing to put and sum up the trainee's case, respond on behalf of the trainee to any views expressed at the meeting and confer with the trainee during the hearing. The representative does not, however, have the right to answer questions on the trainee's behalf, address the hearing if the trainee does not wish it or prevent The Coventry SCITT/placement school representative from explaining their case.

There will be no reprisals for the representative because they have supported a trainee through this process. The representative must respect the confidentiality of the complaint and should not discuss this matter with anyone other than the trainee they are supporting

If the representative is unavailable at the time the meeting is scheduled and will not be available for more than 5 working days afterwards, the trainee may be required to seek alternative representation.

If the choice of workplace representative is unsuitable, for example, if the representative has a conflict of interest, a trainee may be asked to choose someone else.

Trainees do not have the right to be accompanied by relatives, friends or legal advisers unless they also meet the criteria above.

Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure the SCITT will consider ways to resolve a complaint. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- An apology
- An explanation
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- An assurance that the event complained of will not recur
- An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again
- An undertaking to review academy policies in light of the complaint.

Complaints Committee

At the point of a formal complaint, the SCITT Director will convene a Complaints Committee.

Currently there are 20 schools involved in The Coventry SCITT. The committee will be made up of three Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teachers representatives from across The SCITT.

The SCITT manager will act as a Secretary to the Committee and produce confidential minutes, which will be circulated to the committee and the SCITT Steering Group.

The committee will be responsible for adhering to the process as outlined in Stage 3 below and for feeding back its outcomes to the complainant and other complainants where appropriate. I.e. - partner school, SCITT Director and SCITT Steering Group.

Should the complainant still not be satisfied, the complainant can refer the matter to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

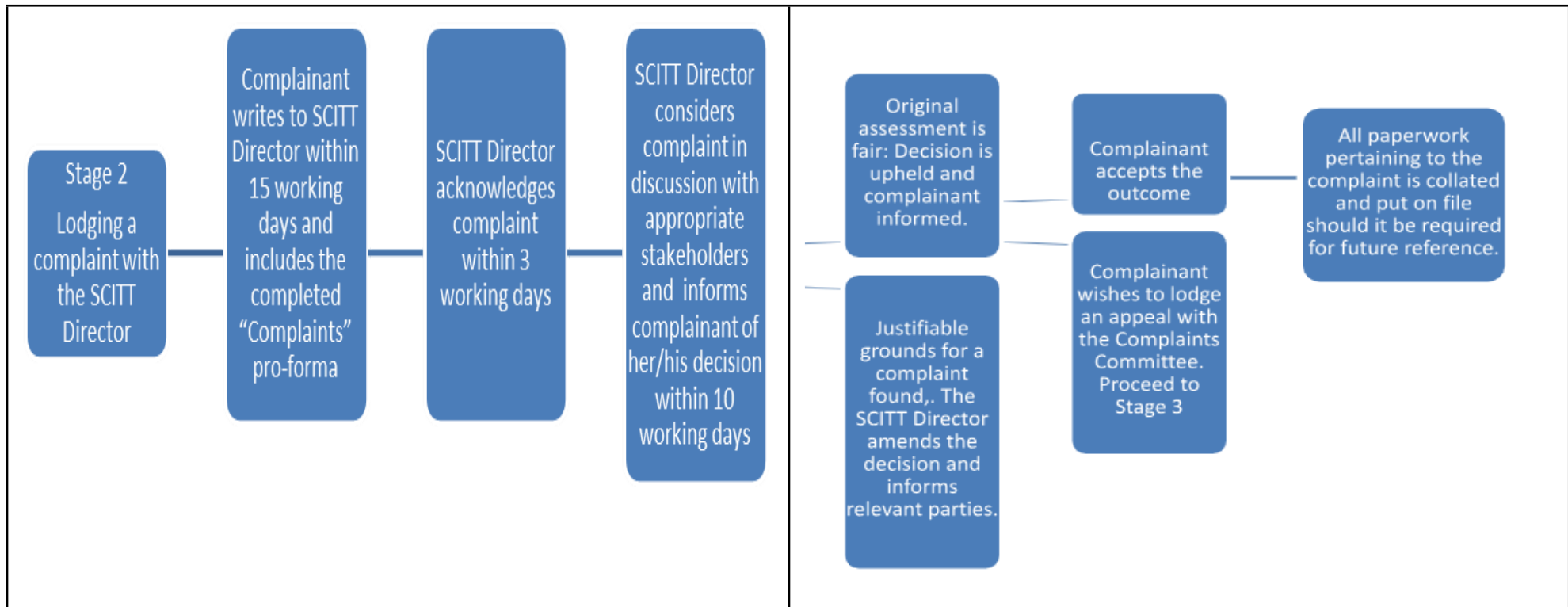
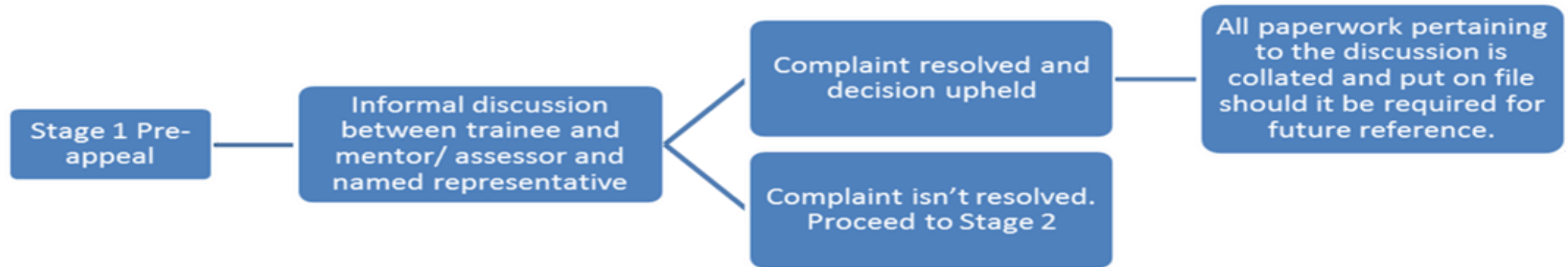
Office of Independent Adjudicators

As an accredited provider of ITT The Coventry SCITT is a member of OIA. The OIA looks at complaints about the acts and omissions of its members. This includes complaints about service quality, course provision, academic appeals, disciplinary and fitness to practise procedures.

In reviewing a complaint, the OIA will consider whether the provider has followed its own regulations and procedures, and whether it has acted reasonably in all the circumstances. The OIA cannot review

complaints about academic judgment, admissions or student employment matters. As a classic ombudsman scheme, the OIA is a complaints handler of last resort. Normally, students must exhaust a provider's own internal processes before complaining to the OIA. At the end of a procedure The Coventry SCITT must issue a Completion of Procedures Letter informing the trainee of their right to bring a complaint to the OIA.

Appendix 1



Reviewed by Claire Turpin

CEO of the Sidney Stringer Multi Academy Trust

March 2025

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CTurpin.', located in the lower-left area of the signature box.