



Trainee Complaint Policy

Introduction

CTSN SCITT is committed to running a programme that has the maximum positive impact for all staff and trainees. We understand that there may be times where things do not work as they should and the SCITT believes that it is in everyone's best interest to resolve concerns and complaints at the earliest possible stage.

Although the Leadership of CTSN SCITT is committed to ensuring that the highest standards are maintained at schools within the partnership things can go wrong and a complaints procedure is an important part of the management of all well-run SCITTs allowing trainees the opportunity to voice any concerns through appropriate channels. This policy explains the procedure which has been adopted by the SCITT to ensure a systematic and fair approach to the resolution of such concerns.

We recognise the need to be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage reduces the numbers that develop into formal complaints. The majority of issues raised by trainees are concerns rather than complaints. We aim to ensure these concerns are handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. Our formal complaints procedure is only necessary if efforts to resolve the concern informally are unsuccessful. In most cases, our formal procedures are invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further. These individuals may wish or be asked to follow the SCITT's formal complaints procedure. CTSN SCITT reserves the right to reject a formal complaint that it considers to be unsubstantiated or frivolous.

All complaints will be followed up either informally or formally.

For the CTSN SCITT to be able to investigate a grievance, it needs to be made within three months minus one day of the incident occurring. If a complaint is older than three months minus one day it will not be investigated. The prime aim of the policy is to resolve the complaint as fairly and speedily as possible. Formal complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial and confidential manner.

As CTSN SCITT is part of CAM Academies Trust (CAM) and as such must follow the CAM Academies Trust complaints procedure. The policy and procedure is outlined below. Copies are available on request for all trainees.

Scope

The scope of this policy covers complaints that the Partnership may receive.

This includes, for example:

- Complaints about ITE personnel
- Complaints about placement schools
- Issues with the ITE programme
- Health and safety issues
- The working environment

- Harassment and discrimination
- Interpersonal relationships or bullying

It is usual to disregard anonymous complaints unless somebody is prepared to substantiate them. However anonymous complaints may be investigated, at the discretion of the SCITT Director, if it is felt the complaint is of sufficient seriousness to warrant this.

General Principles

CTSN SCITT Complaints Procedure will:

- encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible;
- be easily accessible and publicised
- be simple to understand and use;
- be impartial;
- be non-adversarial;
- allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress;
- ensure a full and fair investigation;
- respect people's desire for confidentiality;
- address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary;
- provide information to the SCITT operational teams so that services can be improved

CTSN SCITT Complaints Procedure has four main stages, as follows:

Stage 1: A concern is raised informally with a mentor, professional tutor, senior tutor or supporting teacher;

Stage 2: A concern is heard by a member of the CTSN SCITT Lead / Senior Leadership Team;

Stage 3: The concern is escalated to the Chair of the Strategic Board;

Stage 4: A formal complaint is heard and responded to an Appeals Hearing.

At each stage, the person investigating the complaint will ensure that they:

- Clarify the nature of the complaint and unresolved issues
- Clarify what the complainant(s) feels would put things right
- Interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied (by a friend) if they wish
- Keep notes of the interview(s)
- At each stage, the person investigating the complaint will seek ways to resolve the complaint satisfactorily. It may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:
 - An acknowledgement that the complaint is valid in whole or in part and/or acknowledgement that the situation could have been handled differently or better (this is not the same as an admission of negligence)

- An apology
- An explanation
- An assurance and an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again
- An undertaking to review SCITT procedures in light of the complaint.

Where it is not felt that a complaint is valid in whole or in part, this will be communicated with an explanation of why the complaint is not upheld.

Stage 1: A concern is raised informally

Informal complaints or concerns should be raised with the relevant member of staff, such as mentor, professional tutor, senior tutor or supporting teacher. Where an informal complaint is raised with the CTSN SCITT Lead, it will normally be passed to the most appropriate member of staff to deal with it informally. If the complainant(s) indicates that they would have difficulty discussing the complaint with this member of staff, the Senior Tutor may direct them to another member of staff. Similarly, if the most appropriate member of staff feels they would have difficulty in dealing with the complaint objectively, the Senior Tutor may direct the complainant(s) to another member of staff.

The complaint will be acknowledged within two working days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable during school holidays.

An informal complaint should be resolved within 10 working days during term time and as soon as practicable during school holidays.

In certain circumstances, the CTSN SCITT Lead may instead choose to deal with the complaint informally in person, or the relevant member of staff may ask the CTSN SCITT Lead to deal with it informally in person.

If the complaint has been made in writing, the CTSN SCITT Lead may choose to treat it as a formal complaint and invoke the formal procedure.

If the complaint has been made to the Chair of the Strategic Board in the first instance, he or she will refer the complaint to the CTSN SCITT Lead. However, if the complaint concerns the CTSN SCITT Lead and has already been taken up with the CTSN SCITT Lead without being resolved, the complaint must be made in writing to the Chair using the Complaint Form (see Appendix A). The Chair will then invoke the formal procedure.

The person to whom the complaint is referred will carry out an investigation and decide on any appropriate action. The complainant(s) and the CTSN SCITT Lead will be informed of the conclusions drawn from the investigation and action to be taken, together with details of how to make a formal complaint if they remain dissatisfied.

We would expect that the complainant(s) shall have made reasonable attempts to seek an informal resolution and shall have acted in relation to the matter in a reasonable and measured way. The Chair of the Strategic Board shall have a discretion, which will be exercised reasonably, not to allow a complaint to be pursued where this precondition has not been met.

In some cases, matters affecting general SCITT policy may be judged by the CTSN SCITT Lead, in consultation with the Chair of the Strategic Board, to be an appropriate area for discussion at Strategic Board, in order to resolve the complaint. In these circumstances care will be taken to ensure that the identity of the complainant(s) and the individual complained of are not disclosed in case a formal complaint is made subsequently.

Every effort will be made to resolve the problem to the satisfaction of the complainant(s) at this informal stage. Possible outcomes include:

- complaint resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant(s);
- complaint not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant(s);
- complaint dealt with under another procedure.

Where an informal complaint remains unresolved, the complainant(s) has 10 working days from the outcome being given to refer to formal stage 2 resolution. However, in exceptional circumstances, this may be extended.

Stage 2: A concern is heard by the CTSN SCITT Lead / Senior Leadership Team

The CTSN SCITT Lead will ensure the complaint is investigated fully.

The CTSN SCITT Lead may delegate responsibility for conducting the investigation to another member of staff.

Where the complaint concerns the CTSN SCITT Lead another member of the Senior Leadership Team will investigate the concern.

The complaint will be acknowledged within two working days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable during school holidays.

A stage 2 complaint should be resolved within 14 working days of receiving the complaint. Where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in delays ie during the school holidays, the complainant(s) will be notified of this and informed of the new timescales as soon as possible.

Once the investigation has been completed, the CTSN SCITT Lead / Senior Leadership Team will review all the information and discuss the findings with the trainee.

The CTSN SCITT Lead will decide on the outcome and inform the complainant(s) in writing of the decision, together with details of how to appeal against the decision if they remain dissatisfied. A meeting may also be arranged to convey the reasons for the decision.

Rarely, the decision may involve taking disciplinary action against an individual, for which there is a separate procedure. In this event, the complainant(s) will be informed that the complaint will be pursued through disciplinary action. The SCITT disciplinary procedures require that all details of proceedings remain confidential, and consequently the complainant(s) will not be informed of the outcome.

Possible outcomes include:

- complaint withdrawn;
- complaint dismissed;
- complaint dealt with under another procedure;
- complaint upheld.

Where a stage 2 complaint remains unresolved, the complainant(s) has 10 working days from the outcome being given to refer to formal stage 3 resolutions. However, in exceptional circumstances, this may be extended.

Where a stage 2 complaint requires further investigation CTSN SCITT will refer to the policy below.

Stage 3 Formal Resolution: Chair of the Strategic Board

The complainant(s) must put the complaint in writing, addressed to the Chair of the Strategic Board, setting out briefly the facts and stating what it is that the complainant(s) considers should have been done or where CTSN SCITT or the school has not met reasonable expectations. The Chair of the Strategic Board may delegate this to the CTSN SCITT lead.

The complaint will be acknowledged with two working days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable during school holidays.

A stage 3 complaint should be resolved within 20 working days of receiving the complaint. Where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in delays, the complainant(s) will be notified of this and informed of the new timescales as soon as possible.

The Chair of the Strategic Board may appoint a member of the SCITT Senior Leadership team to investigate the complaint. The investigation may include the offer of a meeting with the complainant(s), whenever reasonably possible, any meeting with the complainant(s) will take place within 15 school days of the written complaint being received.

Where the complainant(s) remains dissatisfied they may request the complaint is dealt with at Stage 4 by completing the Complain Form (see Appendix A). Any such request must be set out in writing, stating where the complainant(s) remains dissatisfied, what remedies are being sought and be lodged within 10 school days of the complainant(s) receiving the findings in writing. The request must be addressed to the Chair of the Strategic Board who will convene a hearing.

Stage 4: Appeals Hearing

The Complaints Panel of the CAM Academy Trust will consider all complaints at Stage 4.

The Complaints Panel will comprise of at least three people, which will include one person who is independent of the management and running of the SCITT.

None of the members of the Complaints Panel will have been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.

The Clerk will invite the SCITT to put in writing its response to the complainant(s)'s reasons. The SCITT will provide this within 10 school days. At the end of that period (whether or not the SCITT has responded) the Clerk will convene a meeting of the Complaints Panel. That meeting will be held as quickly as practicable given the need to find a date that is reasonably convenient for the complainant(s), the SCITT and the members of the Complaints Panel. Whenever possible, the meeting will be held within 15 school days of the end of the SCITT response time. At any meeting, the complainant(s) will be entitled to be accompanied by a friend, but legal representation will not be allowed.

The meeting is not a court case, it will be held in private, and will be as informal as circumstances allow. The complainant(s) will have the opportunity to put their reasons for dissatisfaction and to enlarge on them but may not introduce reasons that were not previously put in writing. The SCITT will have the opportunity to put its side of things and each side, as well as the Panel members, will be able to ask questions. The complainant(s) will have the opportunity to make final comments to the Panel.

The Panel may make findings and recommendations and a copy of those findings and recommendations will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant(s) and, where relevant, the person complained about.

The Panel will formulate its response as quickly as reasonably possible, aiming to do so within 10 school days, and the [Clerk] will notify all concerned.

The Appeals Committee may:

- i. dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- ii. uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- iii. decide on any further action to be taken;
- iv. if appropriate, recommend changes to the SCITT so problems of a similar nature do not recur.

The decision of the Complaints Committee is binding and concludes the complaints procedures.

The Committee should automatically issue a Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter. This letter should set out clearly the issues that have been considered, the CTSN's final decision and the deadline for bringing a complaint to the OIA.

The trainee(s) will receive a decision in writing, normally within 10 working days of the appeal meeting. This should inform the trainee(s) that they can ask for a CoP letter if they want one. CTSN may set a deadline of not less than one month for the trainee(s) to make a request for the CoP.

If the trainee(s) remain(s) dissatisfied with the outcome, they should write to the Independent Adjudicators Office (*see below for contact details*).

If the trainee(s) request(s) a CoP letter within the deadline set by CTSN, it should issue these straightaway. If the trainee(s) make(s) a request after the deadline has passed, then the SCITT should issue CoP letters that states the date upon which the final decision was reached on the complaint or appeal. The time for bringing the complaint to the OIA will normally run from that date, rather than the date of the CoP letter.

Attendance at a Complaints Panel Hearing

The complaints panel hearing will be arranged, and the complainant(s) invited to attend. Should the complainant(s) choose not to attend then the panel will consider the complaint in their absence. The outcome of the hearing will be notified to the complainant(s) within 10 working days.

Serial or persistent complainant(s)

If at any level a complainant(s) attempts to reopen an issue or a closely related issue that has already been dealt with under this complaints procedure, the Chair of the Strategic Board may write to the complainant(s) to inform them that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter closed, that continued correspondence is vexatious and that the Partnership will not respond to any further correspondence on this issue or a closely related issue.

Confidentiality

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where we are legally required to do so. For example, for the detection and prevention of crime/fraudulent activity; if there are serious risks to the public, our staff or to other professionals; and to protect a child.

Record Keeping

A written record will be kept of all disciplinary procedures that were resolved at the formal stage of the complaints procedure. The SCITT reserves the right to record meetings. Records will contain

details of trainees misconducts and the disciplinary actions taken either at stage 2, stage 3 or a stage 4 panel hearing.

Office of Independent Adjudicators

The trainee has the right to make a complaint to the Office of Independent Adjudicator (OIA) however, before a trainee can complain to the OIA, they must normally have first completed their provider's internal complaints or appeals procedures. Once they have done so, the provider should issue a Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter. This letter should set out clearly the issues that have been considered, the provider's final decision and the deadline for bringing a complaint to the OIA.

OIA

Second Floor

Abbey Gate

57-75 Kings Road

Reading, RG1 3AB

Telephone: 0118 959 9813

website: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk>

This policy should be read in conjunction with the CTSN SCITT's:

- Discipline Policy

Review

This Complaints Policy will be reviewed every three years.

Policy review date: Spring 2024

Appendix A: Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the SCITT Senior Tutor who will act as Complaints Co-ordinator and who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken

Your name:

Placement School:

Mentor name:

Daytime telephone number:

Senior Tutor name:

Evening telephone number:

Professional Tutor/ITE co-ordinator name:

Email:

Please give details of your complaint:

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint?
(Who did you speak to and what was the response?)

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date: