



# Complaints Policy & Procedure

MANCHESTER NEXUS  
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## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Manchester Nexus is committed to provide the best possible initial training programme for its trainee teachers and SCITT staff in all partner schools. We welcome feedback from our trainees and third parties and we accept that not all of this will be positive.
- 1.2 Where concerns are raised Manchester Nexus intends for these to be dealt with fairly, openly, promptly and without prejudice.
- 1.3 In order to do so, The Cranmer Education Trust Board has approved the following procedure which explains what you should do if you wish to make a complaint about Manchester Nexus.
- 1.4 All members of staff will be familiar with the procedure and will be able to assist you. The Office of the independent adjudicator (OAI) have produced good practise guidelines and can be found at the following link:  
<http://www.oiahe.org.uk/media/96361/oia-good-practice-framework.pdf>

## 2.0 Complaints that fall outside of this procedure

- 2.1 A concern raised by a student about the outcome of their own disciplinary process.
- 2.2 A concern about a decision made under other specific regulations, such as fitness to practise.
- 2.3 Matters relating to the Student Loans Company, which has its own complaints procedures.

## 3.0 Resolving concerns informally

- 3.1 For the purpose of this procedure concerns are defined as having a worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought. The majority of concerns can be dealt with without resorting to the formal stages of the formal complaints procedure (see below). The SCITT Executive Board encourages those that have concerns to raise them with the appropriate person at the school (Mentor) or a member of the SCITT team. The extent to which this was both attempted and followed may be taken into consideration when assessing the reasonableness of a complaint during the formal stages of the procedure.
- 3.2 The formal stages of the procedure should be followed when attempts to resolve concerns informally have proved unsuccessful.

## 4.0 Complaints about the SCITT Director

- 4.1 Where a complaint is about the SCITT Director, the stage one process (see 10.0) will commence with the Strategic Director for Teacher Training and Development as the individual responsible for the investigation, rather than the SCITT Director.

## 5.0 The timescale for making a complaint

- 5.1 Notification of a complaint should be given as soon as possible after the issue that led to the complaint has occurred and after informal attempts to seek resolution have proved unsuccessful.
- 5.2 Complaints that are submitted three months after the issue that led to the complaint occurred will not be considered under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances. These may include (but are not limited to) subsequent information about the complaint coming to light and a valid explanation of why it was not possible to give notification of the complaint sooner. In such cases the SCITT Director or Strategic Director for Teacher Training and Development will review the circumstances, seek advice and determine whether the complaint should be considered under the formal procedure.

## 6.0 Maintaining Records

- 6.1 A confidential written record of all complaints that are made in accordance with this procedure will be kept by the SCITT. The written record will include whether the complaint has been resolved following a formal procedure and whether it proceeded to a panel review meeting. It will also refer to any action taken by the SCITT as a result of the complaint regardless of whether it has been upheld. It will include the panel's findings and recommendations which will be provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about and will be available for inspection. The Cranmer Education Trust Board monitors complaints made to the SCITT as part of this procedure and reports to the Executive Trust Board.

## 7.0 Maintaining confidentiality

- 7.1 Informal concerns and complaints will be dealt with confidentially at all stages and at the conclusion of the procedure. Confidentiality should be maintained all times by everyone involved. The Cranmer Education Trust Board requests that complaints are not discussed publicly, including via social media.
- 7.2 Actions taken in relation to staff that arise as a result of the complaint will remain confidential to the Teacher Training and Development Department and the member of staff concerned except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Education and Skills Act requests access to them.
- 7.3 Written records taken and used throughout the complaints process, including correspondence, notes of meetings, telephone calls etc., will be kept securely and in accordance with the principles of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018.

## 8.0 Safeguarding

- 8.1 Wherever a concern indicates that a child's wellbeing or safety is at risk, the SCITT is duty bound to report this immediately to the local authority. Any action taken will be in accordance with the Trust's safeguarding policy, details of which may be found on the Cranmer Education Trust website.

## 9.0 Informal Stage of the Complaints procedure

- 9.1 An initial 'Cause for Concern' is raised by the trainee teacher.
- 9.2 The trainee teacher to talk to their mentor or the staff member directly concerned to find an informal resolution. If the trainee feels uncomfortable talking with the direct staff, then they should discuss with the professional mentor.
- 9.3 The trainee may wish to appoint a representative.
- 9.4 The concern is logged by the SCITT Administrator.

## 10.0 Formal Stages of the Complaints procedure

- 10.1 The majority of concerns can be dealt with without resorting to the formal stages of the procedure (see 9.0). If you need to raise a concern then please do so with the relevant member of staff who will be happy to talk to you and seek to resolve it.
- 10.2 There are two formal stages of the Complaints procedure

### 10.3 Stage 1 – Formal investigation

- 10.3.1 A request for a formal investigation of a complaint by the SCITT Director (or Strategic Director for Teacher Training and Development, if the complaint is against the SCITT Director) should be made by completing the formal complaints form (see 13.0).
- 10.3.2 The complaint will be acknowledged in writing no later than 10 days (excluding those that fall in school holidays) of receiving it. The written acknowledgment will, as far as possible, explain how the complaint will be investigated and the timescale for completing the investigation.
- 10.3.3 A log of all correspondence in relation to the complaint will be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Principles.
- 10.3.4 The SCITT Director (or Strategic Director for Teacher Training and Development) will consider all relevant evidence. This may include, but is not limited to:
- obtaining statements from the complainant and those involved with the complaint
  - meeting with the complainant and those involved in the complaint
  - reviewing correspondence and other document relating to the complaint
- 10.3.5 After considering the available evidence, the SCITT Director (or Strategic Director for Teacher Training and Development, if appropriate) can decide to:
- uphold the complaint and direct that certain action be taken to resolve it
  - uphold the complaint in part (in other words find an aspect or aspects of the complaint to be valid, but not the whole complaint) direct for certain action to be taken, or
  - dismiss the complaint entirely
- 10.3.6 The SCITT Director (or Strategic Director for Teacher Training and Development) will inform the complainant of their decision in writing, the grounds on which it was made and any actions taken as a result of the complaint. This will be within 20 working days (excluding those that fall in school holidays) of having issued written acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint (see 2 above). The written notification shall also advise the complainant of their right to escalate the complaint to stage 2 of the formal complaints procedure if they are not satisfied with the outcome at stage 1.

#### 10.4 Stage 2 – Review by an independent appeals panel

- 10.4.1 The complainant is entitled to request a review of the decision taken at Stage 1 and the actions taken. The review is carried out by an independent panel from the SCITT Executive Board.
- 10.4.2 Requests for a review of the decision taken at Stage 1 should be made in writing to the Teacher Training and Development Administration department, (see 12.4) no later than four weeks after written notification of the decision taken has been received. The request should include a brief summary of the complaint, why the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1 and the outcome they are seeking.
- 10.4.3 A clerk will be appointed who will fulfil the role of organising the time and date of the meeting, inviting all the attendees, collating all the relevant documentation and distributing this five days in advance of the meeting. Minutes of the review meeting will be taken by a member of the clerking team and provided with the written notification of the decision taken at stage 2 (see 9 below).
- 10.4.4 The following steps are taken at stage 2:

- 10.4.4.1 The clerk will acknowledge the written request for the complaint to be reviewed no later than ten working days (not including the school holidays) after receiving it.
- 10.4.4.2 The clerk will convene a panel of two-three members of the SCITT Executive Board who are independent of the management of the running of the SCITT to review the complaint. All three panel members will not have been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.
- 10.4.4.3 The review meeting will take place within 20 working days (excluding those which fall in the school holidays) of receipt of the written acknowledgement from the clerk.
- 10.4.4.4 The panel may decide to invite the following to attend the review meeting:
- the complainant
  - the SCITT Director (or Strategic Director for Teacher Training and Development) who investigated the complaint and made the decision at stage 1
  - relevant persons involved the complaint
  - persons whom, in the view of the panel, can provide relevant advice and information relating to the subject of the complaint and the review process at stage 2
- 10.4.4.5 Where the complainant, SCITT Director and/or relevant person involved in the complaint have been invited to attend the review meeting, they are entitled to be accompanied by a family member/friend/representative as appropriate. However, legal representatives are not permitted to attend the review meeting.
- 10.4.4.6 Where the complaint is about a governor/trustee/governing board the complainant may request that the review meeting is held by an independent panel. This is at the discretion of the Cranmer Trust who will notify the clerk of their decision. Where an entirely independent panel is required, timescales may be affected while appropriate individuals for the review are sourced.
- 10.4.4.7 After considering the complaint afresh and reviewing the available evidence, the panel reviewing the complaint can decide to:
- uphold the complaint and direct that certain action be taken to resolve it;
  - uphold the complaint in part (in other words find an aspect or aspects of the complaint to be valid, but not the whole complaint) and direct for certain action to be taken, or
  - dismiss the complaint entirely.
  - Irrespective of the decision taken, the panel may also recommend steps that the complainant and the SCITT should take to move forward from the presenting issues in the best interests of all concerned.
  - The panel may also recommend steps to be taken that reduce the likelihood of a similar complaint being made in the future.
- 10.4.4.8 The complainant, the SCITT Director (or Strategic Director for Teacher Training and Development, as appropriate) who investigated the complaint and made the decision at stage 1, and, where relevant, the person complained about will be informed in writing of the outcome of the review meeting no later than 10 working days (excluding those which fall in the school holidays) after the review meeting has taken place.
- 10.4.4.9 This is the final stage at which the SCITT will consider the complaint. If the complainant feels that the SCITT Executive Board acted 'unreasonably' in the handling of the complaint, they can refer the matter to the Office of the independent adjudicator (OIA) after

the complaints procedure has been exhausted. Please note that 'unreasonable' is used in a legal sense and means acting in a way in which no reasonable SCITT would act in the same circumstances. <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/resources-and-publications/good-practice-framework/handling-complaints-and-academic-appeals/what-is-an-academic-appeal/>

## 11.0 Timescale for completing the formal stages of the procedure



The SCITT endeavours to complete the formal stages of its complaints procedure in a timely manner and within the timescale for each stage that is referred to above. However, if it becomes clear that for any reason they are unable to meet the timescale for completing a stage of the procedure, the complainant will be advised of this immediately, along with the reason for the delay and the revised timescale.

## 12.0 Serial, persistent and unreasonable complaints

- 12.1 We ask that complainants should try to limit their communication with the SCITT that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. Repeated correspondence sent either by letter, phone, email or text, could delay the outcome being reached. In these circumstances, the SCITT Director will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the SCITT causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.
- 12.2 For the purpose of this procedure a complaint may be viewed as serial and/or persistent if it relates to the same issue that was the subject of a previous complaint (made by the same complainant) which has already been through a formal complaints procedure in which the complainant has been notified of the outcome. In such cases it is likely that the complainant will be informed that the matter is now closed and that the SCITT will provide no further response.
- 12.3 For the purpose of this procedure Manchester Nexus SCITT defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders the efficient and effective running of the SCITT or makes excessive demands on staff time which prevents them from working with or on behalf of pupils or which is abusive, offensive or threatening. This includes posting inaccurate, falsified, unacceptable or potentially slanderous information/comments on social media. A complaint may also be viewed

as unreasonable where the complainant refuses to co-operate with the complaints' investigation process; refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints' procedure; insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice. In such cases the SCITT Director/ Strategic Director for Teacher Training and Development /clerk to the SCITT Executive Board (as appropriate) will consult with relevant parties and may decide that the complaint is not considered under this procedure. The complainant will be notified in writing that this is the case and that the SCITT will provide no further response.

- 12.4 Queries regarding any aspect of the complaints procedure should be directed to the Teacher Training and Development department, Manchester Nexus SCITT, c/o The Blue Coat School, Egerton Street, Oldham, OL1 3SQ.



## 13.0 APPENDIX 1 – Formal Complaint Form



# Formal Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the SCITT Administrator who will acknowledge receipt.

Name:	
Course Name and Code:	
Base School:	
Address and Postcode:	Contact Telephone Number:
	Contact email:
Please provide full details of complaint (If your complaint refers to an incident(s) please include the names of all persons involved and the dates of incidents referred to):	

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint (for example, 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: