

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead SCITT Complaints Policy

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Complaints Procedure for Trainees 2024-2025

- A trainee who is uncertain as to whether Complaints or Appeal procedures apply to any particular case should consult the SCITT Director.
- RBWM SCITT is a member of the Office for the Independent Adjudicator for students in Higher Education (<http://www.oiahe.org.uk/rules-and-the-complaints-process.aspx>)
- If a trainee remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint it may be possible to apply for an external review of the complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) providing that the complaint is eligible under the 30 OIA Rules. Such an application must be received by the OIA within 12 months of the date of RBWM SCITT Completion of Procedures letter.

Trainee Complaint Procedure:

Principles of the Trainee Complaints Procedure

Any trainee who makes a complaint in good faith will not be adversely affected by the fact of the complaint, and there will be no impact on the trainee's academic career, whether or not the complaint is upheld.

A complaint will normally only be accepted for consideration if it is made within two months of the relevant issue occurring, unless there has been good reason for a delay.

Both the complainant and the designated person considering the complaint are expected at all stages to maintain appropriate confidentiality. However, details of a complaint may need to be shared with relevant colleagues to enable a full investigation to be carried out. It is in the best interests of both the trainee and RBWM SCITT to resolve a complaint at the least formal and lowest stage possible of the Procedure.

In any interview of the complainant he or she may be accompanied by a 'friend' who, unless otherwise agreed by the person authorised to consider the complaint, shall be a currently registered trainee, a member of SCITT Staff or a member of staff from a partner school. If a trainee is unable to attend in person, they may be permitted to attend via telephone or zoom.

The trainee complaints procedure is not a disciplinary procedure, although an upheld complaint may give rise to such a procedure or could result, for example, in an adjustment to a previous decision relating to a trainee's academic progress or award.

Reference to 'trainee' in the procedure includes any group of trainee's with a common complaint.

A complaint made anonymously will only be considered under exceptional circumstances, and where the nature of the complaint makes an investigation appropriate.

Disputes regarding matters of academic judgment will not be considered under the trainee Complaints Procedure.

RBWM SCITT will permit a trainee to submit their Stage 1 or Stage 2 complaint forms after the time limits specified in this procedure if the trainee demonstrates a good reason for their late submission, supported by medical evidence where appropriate.

Trainee Complaints Procedure

Stage 0: Informal complaint

This is raised directly with the relevant staff in the host School or RBWM SCITT Director, either verbally or by email.

The trainee should:

- be specific about the problem;
- describe the problem succinctly;
- provide supporting documentary evidence where available and appropriate;
- state the outcome requested – be clear and realistic;
- if unsure who to direct the complaint to, contact RBWM SCITT Director or Tutor for advice in the first instance.

Unless the issue can be resolved immediately, the member of staff receiving a Stage 0 complaint should respond to the complainant by email, even when the complaint was raised verbally.

Acknowledgment of the complaint should be sent within three working days, indicating the likely timescale for a full response to be received if some further investigation is required.

The email exchange will be retained for six months by the member of staff concerned as a record of the Stage 0 complaint and response. This will be passed to the SCITT Director, if requested.

RBWM SCITT expects that the majority of complaints can be resolved informally at Stage 0 through discussion and negotiation between the trainee and staff at the point closest to where the issue originated. However, where this cannot be achieved, the trainee may wish to pursue the matter under the more formal Stage 1 of the procedure. This should be done no later than two months after the Stage 0 response has been received.

Stage 1: Raising a formal complaint

Under Stage 1 of the Procedure, the complaint must be submitted in writing to the person responsible for the area within which the complaint arose.

In the majority of cases this will be the SCITT Director.

The following information should be included within the written complaint:

- complainant's name, address, contact telephone numbers, the student's email address, student number;
- that this complaint is a Stage 1 Complaint

- the nature of the complaint (attaching any supporting evidence where available);
- an outline of the steps taken to resolve the complaint informally at Stage 0;
- details of the outcome the complainant is seeking.

Receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged within three working days (subject to the availability of the relevant contact).

The person who is authorised to consider a complaint Stage 1 is the SCITT Director and SCITT Tutor who will instigate an investigation of the issues raised in the complaint.

A full response will normally be sent within four weeks of submission of the Stage 1 complaint, unless a complex or prolonged investigation is required, in which case the complainant will be kept informed of the likely timescales.

The Stage 1 investigation shall be allocated to a member of RBWM SCITT Governing Body who has had no previous involvement in the matter. The name of the person conducting the Stage 1 investigation will not normally be confidential.

The staff member investigating the complaint may meet with the trainee to facilitate the investigation. The staff member investigating the complaint should complete a copy of the investigation report and submit this to the SCITT Director for review.

The trainee should receive a Stage 1 outcome letter from the Investigating Officer and a copy of the completed investigation report. The Stage 1 outcome letter should include:

the procedure(s) followed, the conclusions, a recommendation to resolve the complaint where appropriate and inform the student that they may request a review of the outcome at Stage 2.

The Stage 1 complaint and the response will be formally recorded, and anonymised details will be reported to the SCITT Governing Body.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the Stage 1 investigation or its outcome, he or she may wish to pursue the complaint at Stage 2 of the Procedure.

Stage 2: Escalation of a formal complaint

Within two months of receiving the Stage 1 response, the complainant may request an independent review of the complaint. A complaint must be considered at Stage 1 before it can be escalated to Stage 2. Such a request must be submitted in writing to the SCITT Director (if not previously contact for Stage 1) or SCITT Chair of Governors.

The following information should be included within the written complaint:

- complainant's name, address, contact telephone numbers, their email address, student number;
- the nature of the complaint (attaching any supporting evidence where available);
- an outline of the steps taken to resolve the complaint at Stage 0 and Stage 1;
- Details of the Stage 1 response received;
- A statement of why the complainant remains dissatisfied;

- details of the outcome the complainant is seeking.

The SCITT Director or SCITT Chair of Governors will appoint a nominee to review the complaint and determine:

- whether the Stage 1 outcome was reasonable in the circumstances;
- whether the relevant procedure(s) were followed;
- consider any new information which the student was unable to provide for valid reasons earlier in the process;
- and consult as appropriate with a view to determining a suitable resolution of the complaint.

The Stage 2 review will not usually consider the issues afresh or involve a further investigation.

The Nominee will submit a report to the SCITT Director or the SCITT Chair of Governors, with a recommendation as to remedy, if appropriate. The SCITT Director or Chair of Governors will issue the formal Stage 2 response to the complainant. A full response will normally be sent within six working weeks of submission of the Stage 2 complaint, unless delay is unavoidable, in which case the complainant will be kept informed of the likely timescales.

In cases where the SCITT Director or Chair have been involved at an earlier stage of the Procedure, the independent review at Stage 2 will be carried out by an alternative senior member of Governing Body of RBWM SCITT.

The Stage 2 complaint and the response will be formally recorded, anonymised and details will be reported to the SCITT Strategic Board.

If the student remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint it may be possible to apply for an external review of the complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) providing that the complaint is eligible under the OIA Rules. Such an application must be received by the OIA within 12 months of the date of RBWM SCITT Completion of Procedures letter.