

STAR INSTITUTE

STAR TEACHERS

Academic Appeals Policy

SCITT

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy applies to appeals against the academic award of QTS accredited by the SCITT to a trainee. There is a separate Complaints Procedure. If the matter appears to be both an appeal and a complaint, then the Head of ITT and Teacher Development will determine the most appropriate process to be followed and clearly inform the trainee in writing. For the purpose of this policy, an academic appeal is defined as:

“request for a review of a decision of an academic body charged with making decisions on trainee progress, assessment and awards” (OIA, 2016).

- 1.2 Academic appeals cover decisions of awards of QTS or decisions to terminate studies prior to an award due to poor engagement. Where trainees have an academic issue against the PGCE provider, the trainee(s) will be directed to use the organisation’s own Academic Appeals procedures.
- 1.3 Any trainee concerns with regards to teaching and learning, including on-course assessment should be brought to the notice of the SCITT and resolved before the meeting of the Moderation and Mitigation Board (MMA), or should be made known to the SCITT by the trainee in advance.
- 1.4 The trainee must recognise that the due processing of an appeal, even if not upheld, may prevent attendance at an award ceremony. Once a trainee has graduated, the award classification will be deemed to have been accepted and an academic appeal will no longer be possible.
- 1.5 All trainees should familiarise themselves with the rules and regulations governing their programme of study. All such regulations are available on the Star Institute website.

2 Aims

- 2.1 To provide a fair and respectful academic appeals procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make an academic appeal against the SCITT.
- 2.2 To publicise the existence of our academic appeals procedure so that people know how to contact us to make an academic appeal.
- 2.3 To ensure all academic appeals are investigated fairly, confidentially and promptly.
- 2.4 To ensure that academic appeals are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired.
- 2.5 To gather information which helps us to improve what we do.
- 2.6 To support the mission, vision and values of the Trust and its establishments.

3 Who is Responsible for this Policy?

- 3.1 The Trust has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the SCITT framework. The Trust has delegated day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy to the Head of ITT and Teacher Development and the Quality Assurance and Management Board (QAM).
- 3.2 The QAM Board and Senior Leadership Team of the SCITT has a specific responsibility to ensure the fair application of this policy and all members of staff are responsible for supporting trainees and colleagues in ensuring its success.

4 Appeals against Decisions of Awards (QTS)

- 4.1 It should be noted that all trainees' performance will be marked on merit. Tutors and mentors will not take into account any evidence of mitigating circumstances when recommending the grade to be awarded to a trainee. Responsibility rests on the trainee, therefore, to consider whether s/he is fit to undertake an assessment, thus a trainee who stands for an assessment on the required date is deemed to be declaring that s/he is fit to be assessed.
- 4.2 Medical or other evidence supporting a candidate's absence from an assessment on the required date may be taken into account by the SCITT when determining the consequences, provided that this has been presented to the SCITT Team within three working days of the date.
- 4.3 A trainee may give notice of an academic appeal against the decision of an award based on the following grounds that:
 - 4.3.1 s/he was unable to divulge evidence of mitigating circumstances relating to an assessment before the award was decided upon by the SCITT Team;
 - 4.3.2 there had been a material administrative error;
 - 4.3.3 the assessments were not conducted in accordance with the current regulations;
 - 4.3.4 some other material irregularity had occurred.
- 4.4 A trainee may not appeal on any ground whereby:
 - 4.4.1 a decision has already been considered for that award;
 - 4.4.2 a trainee cannot present a valid reason for having failed to provide notice within the timeframe;
 - 4.4.3 an issue could have been considered under the Complaints Procedure;
 - 4.4.4 a dispute is against the professional and academic judgement/ integrity of members of staff.

5 Stage One – Informal Resolution

- 5.1 The Trust expects that before seeking to use formal procedures, the complainant:
 - 5.1.1 will have raised the issue with the relevant staff member within the SCITT; and
 - 5.1.2 will have made reasonable attempts to seek an informal resolution.
- 5.2 Where a minor problem arises at source, or where a minor academic complaint is made directly and verbally, this should be dealt with at source with explanation and mediation being the key forms of resolution.

6 Stage Two – Formal Procedure

- 6.1 Only when the informal stage has been exhausted and the trainee remains convinced that s/he has firm grounds for appeal, should the formal academic appeals procedure be initiated. The final decision on whether to proceed with an appeal must, however, rest with the trainee.
- 6.2 The Chair of QAM shall have a discretion, which will be exercised reasonably, not to allow a written appeal to be pursued where an Informal Resolution has not been sought. Or, to consider whether a trainee's notification constitutes a 'prima facie case' and, if so, whether the matter can be resolved before a panel hearing.

- 6.3 The trainee must put the academic appeal in writing within 10 working days of the decision using the SCITTs Academic Appeal Form (Appendix 1) unless the trainee has a disability which prevents this, in which case the complainant may contact the Trust for assistance.
- 6.4 The Head of ITT and Teacher Development will acknowledge receipt of the academic appeal by letter within 5 working days and pass the academic appeal to the Director of Star Institute as appropriate for investigation.
- 6.5 An investigation of the academic appeal will be carried out by the Director of Star Institute who will report to the Head of ITT and Teacher Development.
- 6.6 The Head of ITT and Teacher Development will discuss the matter with the trainee. This will be during a face-to-face meeting.
- 6.7 The Head of ITT and Teacher Development will then put their findings in writing and indicate what steps, if any, should be taken in order to resolve the matter. Whenever reasonably possible, this will be done within 5 working days of the discussion with the trainee at 6.6 above.
- 6.8 A copy of the Academic Appeals Form and the written response will be submitted to the QAM Board by the Head of ITT and Teacher Development.
- 6.9 Where an academic complaint relates to the Head of ITT and Teacher Development, the Director of Star Institute will take over this role.

7 Stage Three – Academic Appeals Panel

- 7.1 If the trainee is not satisfied with the outcome of the first and second stage, the complainant may request that the academic complaint be considered by the Academic Appeals Panel of the SCITT which will comprise of two members of the QAM Board who have not previously been involved in the complaint, and one person independent of the management and running of the SCITT. The complainant will be permitted to bring a representative/ witness.
- 7.2 A request to use the third stage must be in writing, addressed to the Head of ITT and Teacher Development within 10 working days of the Stage Two response being sent to the complainant and must set out briefly the reasons why the complainant is dissatisfied with the response.
- 7.3 The Head of ITT and Teacher Development will put in writing its response to the complainant's reasons for requesting the appeal. The SCITT will do this within 10 working days.
- 7.4 A trainee who has been informed that their case is to be considered by Academic Appeals must, by the deadline stated, submit all the evidence referred to in the initial notification and a response to any queries raised by the QAM Board.
- 7.5 The Head of ITT and Teacher Development will then inform the trainee of one of the following outcomes:
 - a) the appeal has been upheld without the need for a formal panel hearing;
 - b) the appeal has been rejected by the panel as not constituting a prima facie case;
 - c) there is a prima facie case and the matter will be referred to the Academic Appeals Panel.
- 7.6 At the end of that 10 day period the SCITT Business Support Coordinator will convene a hearing of the Academic Appeals Panel. That hearing will be held as quickly as practicable given the need to find a date that is reasonably convenient for the complainant, the SCITT and the

members of the Panel. Whenever possible, the hearing will be held within 15 working days of the end of the SCITT's response time.

- 7.7 All parties will be provided with a minimum of 7 working days' notice of the date of the Academic Appeals Panel.
- 7.8 The Panel will formulate its response as quickly as reasonably possible, aiming to do so within 5 working days, and the SCITT Business Support Coordinator will notify all concerned.
- 7.9 The Panel findings and recommendations will be:
 - 7.9.1 sent in writing to the complainant within the 'Completion of Procedure' letter (template at Appendix 2);
 - 7.9.2 available for inspection on the SCITT's premises.
- 7.10 A written record will be kept of all academic appeals by the SCITT.
- 7.11 Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual academic appeals will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 requests access to them or where the Trust is otherwise required by law to disclose them.
- 7.12 The decision of the SCITTs Academic Appeal Panel is final, although the trainee would have recourse to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

8 Accountability

- 8.1 The Head of ITT and Teacher Development holds delegated responsibility for discharging the sound application of all SCITT policies.
- 8.2 The Head of ITT and Teacher Development should inform the QAM Board of all matters relating to serious breaches of this policy including any major incident to be addressed under this policy promptly, preferably prior to action being taken insofar as is reasonably practicable.

9 Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

- 9.1 The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the SCITT.
- 9.2 The Trust will monitor the operation and effectiveness of arrangements referred to in this policy.
- 9.3 The Head of ITT and Teacher Development will review this policy every two years in consultation with the QAM Board.

Academic Appeal Reporting Form

Please complete in BLOCK CAPITALS and return to the Head of ITT and Teacher Development, who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:	
Address, incl. Postcode:	
Daytime telephone number:	
Evening telephone number:	
SCITT Programme	
Please give details of your grounds for appeal:	
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your academic complaint? (To whom 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:

For official use only	
Date acknowledgement sent	
Acknowledgement sent by	
Academic Appeal referred to	
Academic Appeal referred on (date)	

Appendix 2: Template Completion of Procedures Letter

<* Please add required detail/ deletion options as appropriate. Do NOT delete any non* parts within the letter as it is a statutory template. Seek guidance from the Governance Team of the Central Office if required>

Dear <*Name of complainant>

Completion of Procedures Letter

This letter confirms that the internal procedures of this establishment in relation to your Academic Appeal regarding <*please describe> have been completed.

The issues that you raised in your Academic Appeal were <*please summarise>.

The issues that were considered in relation to the Academic Appeal were: <*brief summary of the complaint >.

The final decision of the SCITT is <*detail> because <*reasons>.

The <*procedure/ policy / regulation> applied were: <*details >.

Under the Higher Education Act 2004, the Establishment subscribes to the independent scheme for the review of student complaints. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome, you may be able to apply for a review of your Academic Appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) providing that the complaint you take to the OIA is eligible under its Rules.

Should you decide to make a complaint to the OIA, your OIA Academic Appeal must be received by the OIA within three months of the date of this letter, that is, it must be received by the OIA on or before <insert date - e.g. if the Completion of Procedures Letter is dated 7 January, this date should be 7 April>.

The OIA's leaflet, 'An Introduction to the OIA for Students', can be downloaded from http://www.oiahe.org.uk/media/34396/oia_intro_leaflet.pdf and a link to the OIA Academic Appeal is available on page 8. Alternatively, you can telephone or write to the OIA for a form. **You should send a copy of this letter to the OIA with your OIA Academic Appeal Form.** Guidance on submitting an Academic Appeal to the OIA and the OIA Academic Appeal Form can also be found on the OIA's website <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/making-a-complaint-to-the-oia.aspx>. You may also wish to seek advice from the Students' Union about taking your complaint to the OIA.

Please note that the OIA will normally only review issues that have been dealt with through the Establishment's internal procedures.

Yours sincerely

<Authorised signatory>