

## **Complaints Procedure (for all SCITT trainees on the Teach SouthEast programme)**

Wherever possible complaints should be raised immediately with the member of staff responsible, with the aim of resolving the problem directly and informally:

Additionally, you can approach your mentor, SCITT lead or a member of the training team if this is appropriate.

Level 1 will generally be an oral process and a written record will not be made. If you remain dissatisfied with the response to your complaint at Level 1 you should use Level 2 of the process.

Where it has not been possible to resolve matters at Level 1 you should write to the Director of Teach SouthEast. In order for your complaint to be properly investigated it is essential that you are specific about the cause and nature of your complaint. You should present full details and include all relevant documentation. You should detail what attempts you have already made to resolve the complaint, and state what outcome and remedy you are seeking.

Formal (Level 2) complaints should be lodged within three months of the conclusion of the informal (Level 1) phase. Complaints received later than this will not normally be considered. You should expect to receive an acknowledgement of the receipt of your complaint within five working days.

Your complaint, and all relevant documentation, will be reviewed by the Director of Teach SouthEast.

- Academic complaints relate to issues that have a direct effect on the provision of teaching, learning, research and supervision.
- Non-academic complaints usually relate to issues connected with Teach SouthEast services but also cover any inappropriate behaviour from Teach SouthEast staff, including allegations of behaviour which is discriminatory or harassing.

If the Director of Teach SouthEast has already been involved at Level 1, an appropriately senior alternative member of staff will be identified to deal with the Level 2 investigation. In some cases you may be contacted for further information or clarification and you have the right to request a meeting with the person investigating your complaint, to discuss the issues in person.

You will be informed in writing of the outcome of your complaint. It is our aim to resolve most complaints at Level 2 within 28 days. You will be informed if, for any reason, there is likely to be any delay in the process.



## **Independent Review**

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (the OIA) provides an independent scheme for the review of trainee complaints or appeals. When the Teach SouthEast's internal procedures for dealing with complaints and appeals have been exhausted, Teach SouthEast will issue a Completion of Procedures letter. Trainees wishing to avail themselves of the opportunity of an independent review by the OIA must submit their application to the OIA within three months of the issue of the Completion of Procedures letter. The OIA will not normally consider a case which has not previously been considered under all the procedures available within Teach SouthEast, and will not normally consider complaints where the Completion of Procedures Letter is issued more than three years after the substantive event(s) complained about.

Further details about the OIA are available from the Academic Office, from the Trainee Advice Centre, or direct from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

## **Trainees on Programmes Validated by our Partner University**

Trainees on programmes which include a PGCE qualification and an academic complaint related to that provision should follow Teach SouthEast complaints procedures in the first place. Once the Teach SouthEast procedure has been exhausted the trainee should then take their complaint to the partner university. Details of their complaints procedure can be found on their website. The partner university will only consider complaints of an academic nature.

Trainees seeking an independent review through the OIA should note that any complaint at that stage would be in respect of the partner university's procedures and not those of Teach SouthEast.

## **General Principles**

As a general principle Teach SouthEast expects that complaints will be dealt with informally in the first instance. Many complaints can be dealt with quickly and effectively in this manner without the need to follow formal procedures. This complaints procedure has been designed with this in mind. The Teach SouthEast administration team can advise you on how to deal with your complaint and help to resolve it informally. If you do decide to make a complaint you should raise the matter constructively with your mentor and/or the SCITT lead at your school in the first instance. If still dissatisfied you should seek to raise the matter with the Director Teach SouthEast.

Teach SouthEast is committed to providing a high-quality service to its trainees and you are encouraged to let it know when there is cause for concern or a need for improvement. However, Teach SouthEast will not accept complaints which are frivolous (unfounded, trivial) or malicious (with vindictive motivation). Nor will Teach SouthEast accept complaints in relation to matters of policy and management that are under the active oversight of a



properly-constituted Teach SouthEast governance body. The trainee complaints procedure is not an appropriate route for raising such issues.

You should be assured that no complainant will be disadvantaged by having raised a complaint. Privacy and confidentiality will be maintained in the handling of complaints except where disclosure is necessary to progress the complaint. It is Teach SouthEast's expectation that the confidentiality of any documentation generated by a complaint will be respected by all parties.

The following list indicates examples of the type of complaint covered by the procedure:

- Poor teaching or supervision, inadequate mentor provision.
- Misleading information in prospectuses or in advertising or promotional material
- A failing in a Teach SouthEast service, academic or non-academic
- Inadequate facilities
- The behaviour of a member of University staff

The following are not covered by the procedure:

- A request for a review of a decision of an academic body (e.g. Examination Board) regarding trainee progression, assessment and award. This is defined as an Academic Appeal and is dealt with under the separate Academic Appeals Procedure.
- Complaint against another trainee. These are dealt with under the separate Trainee Disciplinary Procedures.
- The complaints procedure cannot be used to challenge decisions relating to either admissions or trainee fee status matters. Both have their own dedicated complaints/appeal routes. Refer to admissions appeals and complaints or fee status appeals for further information.

It is important to remember that complaints will not always produce the outcome preferred by the complainant. There may be a number of reasons for this, including lack of evidence to substantiate the complaint or the fact that circumstances beyond Teach SouthEast's control may affect the level of service provided. However, whatever the decision, you will be informed of the result of your complaint in writing and will be provided with the reasons for the outcome.

A situation may arise where an initial complaint is made which requires further articulation before a reasonably focused investigation can be initiated. If the complainant does not supply a sufficiently detailed statement of complaint within a period of (normally) one month of Teach SouthEast's request for clarification of the complaint, Teach SouthEast reserves the right to suspend further steps until/unless a statement of complaint is forthcoming which can serve as a basis for investigation.

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for dealing with complaints and appeals have been exhausted, Teach SouthEast will issue a Completion of Procedures letter. Trainees wishing to avail themselves of the opportunity of an independent review by the OIA must submit their application to the OIA within three months of the issue of the Completion of Procedures letter. The OIA will not normally consider a complaint which has not previously been considered under all the procedures available within Teach SouthEast, and will not normally consider complaints where the Completion of Procedures Letter is issued more than three years after the substantive event(s) complained about.

*NB Trainees do not need to exhaust both the complaints and appeals processes before complaining to the OIA. For example, when a trainee presents a complaint, there may be clearly-separable aspects that are more relevant to be investigated under the appeals procedures: in which case, both the complaints and appeals procedures may be invoked, and progressed in parallel. In such cases, if a trainee is not satisfied with the outcome of one process (e.g. complaint), but is awaiting the result of the other process (e.g. an appeal), the trainee may submit their application to the OIA within three months of receiving the Completion of Procedures letter for the first process to be completed, and does not need to wait until both processes have been completed.*

However, Teach SouthEast continues to also reserve the right to decide, in a given case, which internal procedural route (appeals, complaints, disciplinary, etc.) is most suited to handle the issues presented by a complainant, and not to allow the re-examination of issues that are/ have been appropriately reviewed by one process, to also be reviewed by another process in a way that duplicates and does not add specific value.