

Academic appeals procedure

1. Definition

Academic Appeal

For the purposes of this policy an academic appeal, as defined by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA), is a *"request for a review of a decision of an academic body charged with making decisions on trainee progress, assessment and awards."*

2. Overview of the Academic Appeals procedure

There are four potential stages to the procedure.

- 1) Cases subject to triage to assess eligibility for consideration under the Academic Appeals procedure.
- 2) Case considered by the Appeal Panel.
- 3) Case considered at an Appeal Hearing.
- 4) Appeal review.

After the internal Sacred Heart Newcastle SCITT (here after 'SCITT') processes have been exhausted, appellants have the opportunity to have their case independently reviewed by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

3. Who can use the Academic Appeals procedure?

The appeals procedure is available to all SCITT trainees, with the exception of trainees who have had their programme registration suspended by the SCITT (unless this was a voluntary suspension by the trainee in agreement with the SCITT).

4. The right to appeal

Trainees have the right to appeal to the Appeals Committee against the following **final** decisions of the SCITT:

- (a) The conditions imposed and/or the requirement to take reassessment(s) to progress to the next stage of QTS.
- (b) A decision to terminate a trainee's ITT Programme.
- (c) A classification decision (Upon award of QTS)
- (d) A decision not to award the qualification of QTS. This relates to decisions made at the end of a trainee's course.

(e) A decision of the SCITT's Fitness to Practise Panel (as reviewed against the Teachers' Standards Part 2).

(f) The outcome of an Extenuating Circumstances claim.

5. Grounds for appeal

5.1

It is for the trainee to establish the case and only claims of at least one of the following circumstances will be considered as grounds for appeal:

(i) That parts of the documented assessment procedure were not applied and that this **procedural irregularity** which has disadvantaged the trainee was significant enough to have materially affected the decision/recommendation made, rendering it unsound.

(ii) That prejudice or bias on the part of one or more of the assessors took place and can be proven or there are reasonable grounds to support the perception of prejudice or bias.

(iii) That the decision making body took a **decision which no reasonable person would find comprehensible**. Disagreement with the decision does not make it manifestly unreasonable. To apply this ground you must provide substantive argumentation as to why no reasonable person could have arrived at the decision that was made.

(iv) That there were circumstances that materially affected the trainee's performance, for which supporting evidence exists, and these were not known to the Assessment Board at the time the decision was made and the trainee, for good reason, could not have made them known to the SCITT before the decision.

5.2

The following circumstances **will not** be considered grounds for appeal:

(a) Perceived **shortcomings** in tuition, supervision or support. Concerns relating to the quality of teaching or supervision, or other circumstances that relate to the delivery of the Training programme should be raised under the Trainee Complaints procedure before the point of submission for assessment. Cases where complaints are upheld and there has been a clear impact on an academic outcome may lead to an academic conclusion e.g. allow a trainee a further attempt at an assessment.

(b) Matters of **academic judgement** of an Assessment Board or individual. The trainee will not be permitted to argue the academic merits of his/her work. The trainee's assertion that the result unfairly reflects the merit of their work or their ability is not a ground for appeal.

(c) Disagreement with the **actual mark awarded** for a piece of assessed work except where grounds can be established under 5.1. If a trainee wishes to have clarification about an individual assessment they are advised to contact the SCITT manager directly.

(d) Appeals against provisional assessment grades.

6. Principles of this policy

- The decisions made will be reasonable and, where required, provide appropriate redress.
- Appeals submitted outside the timescales prescribed in the procedure will only be considered in the most exceptional circumstances and where there is good reason, supported by evidence, for the late submission.
- Appeals will be treated seriously and trainees will not suffer any disadvantage or recrimination as a result of making an appeal in good faith.
- It is expected that trainees or people communicating on behalf of a trainee will conduct themselves responsibly and treat the process and those members of the SCITT involved in the process with respect at all times. Where behaviour falls outside these expectations, the SCITT's Unacceptable Behaviour Policy will apply.
- The SCITT will not accept or investigate appeals which it considers to be in breach of the standards set out in the Unacceptable Behaviour Policy.
- The procedures are fair and transparent.
- The process is evidence-based.
- Trainees are encouraged to seek advice from a Union or equivalent at any stage in the process, including seeking advice on how to present their case effectively.
- Appeals form part of the SCITT's process of quality review and improvement and are considered as providing valuable feedback rather than criticism.
- Trainees will be notified early in the process if the remedy sought within the appeal is beyond what the SCITT can reasonably provide or what is in its power to provide.
- It is important for trainees to note that the Office of the Independent Adjudicator cannot consider matters which are or which have been the subject of court proceedings. Similarly, the SCITT reserves the right to decline, suspend or to discontinue an appeal made under the Academic Appeal Procedure, in the event that legal proceedings are commenced and the claim concerns the same subject matter as the appeal.

7. Recording and monitoring of academic appeals

It is important that appeals are monitored in order to improve the trainee experience. The SCITT will record and provide reports to indicate the nature of appeals and outcomes. Such reports will:



- Feed into the monitoring and evaluation procedure at all levels
- Feed directly into appropriate SCITT committees;
- Assist in identifying problems and trends across the SCITT Partnership;
- Form the basis of positive publicity, in demonstrating that identified issues have been resolved;
- Be made available (where applicable) to the Trainees' Union.

8. Related policies and procedures

Academic Appeals procedure

Trainee Complaints procedure

Extenuating Circumstances policy and procedures

Policy on Communications with Third Parties

Unacceptable Behaviour Policy