



Complaints Policy and Procedures

Approved: November 2025

Next Review: July 2028

Period of Review: Every 3 years

Complaints Policy: Key principles

Gloucestershire Initial Teacher Education Partnership (GITEP) is committed to providing the highest quality services and training. However, we recognise that on occasion that SCITT staff, school-based staff, and trainees may feel they have legitimate cause for concern or complaint.

We welcome feedback, both negative and positive, as a valuable resource to help us improve the quality of our provision to trainees.

The Complaints Policy and Procedures aim to enable individuals to bring matters of concern about their experiences of our provision to our attention and to enable investigation of those unresolved concerns with the aim of satisfactory resolution. This process provides us with feedback to help us improve the provision as well as helping us resolve any problems arising. The procedure seeks to be simple, clear and fair to all parties involved. It is based on the belief that concerns and complaints are taken seriously, should be dealt with as closely as possible to their origins and investigated promptly as outlined below. For this reason, all complainants are requested to try to resolve the issue as informally as possible in the first instance with the relevant colleagues or department. The intention is that most issues can be effectively handled locally, in a spirit of conciliation. Thus, the formal complaints procedure should be seen as a last resort in the search for a solution.

GITEP therefore sees the use of its Complaints Policy and Procedures as a positive, non-threatening means for change to the benefit of all.

The following guidelines provide a framework in which complaints made about GITEP and/or its trainees, partnership schools, or SCITT staff are dealt with fairly, quickly and efficiently.

Please note that the GITEP Complaints Procedure does not cover the following:

- matters of academic judgement relating to the PGCE (this falls within the remit of GITEP's university partner)
- requests for new or different services or provisions
- matters where there are separate policies or procedures in place (See Appendix 2)

Complaints Procedures

1. Introduction

We differentiate between a concern and a complaint.

The following procedures have been put in place to deal with concerns and formal complaints.

2. Concerns

Typically, where a concern has been raised, we aim to resolve the issue to the satisfaction of all parties involved without the need for formal procedures. The concern may be conveyed orally or in writing either as an email or letter. A written record, via email or letter, must be provided to relevant parties when concerns are responded to and when they are resolved.

We aim to acknowledge and, where possible, respond to all concerns within 48 hours (term-time). We recognise some will require further investigation and these will be resolved as quickly as possible.

i. From Trainees

Typically, in the first instance, trainees should raise any concerns about their training programme or wellbeing with their Mentor or Professional Lead. Trainees can also raise concerns with their Subject Lead and/or Programme Lead. Mentors, Professional Leads, Subject Leads, and Programme Leads can refer to the steps outlined in the GITEP Trainee Support Handbook to address the trainee's concern.

ii. From GITEP SCITT Staff

In the first instance, members of SCITT staff should raise any concerns with their relevant line manager. If the concern is regarding their line manager, SCITT staff can raise their concern with the GITEP SCITT Partnership Board.

iii. From Partnership Schools

Concerns from partnership schools (Mentors, Professional Leads, Headteachers, or other school-based staff) about trainees' progress should first be addressed through the steps outlined in the Trainee Support Handbook. Concerns regarding the training programme or SCITT staff should be raised in the first instance with the Programme Lead or SCITT Director. If the concern is regarding the Programme Lead or SCITT Director, colleagues in partnership schools can raise their concern with the GITEP SCITT Partnership Board.

When a concern is addressed to the GITEP SCITT Partnership Board, they will determine how best to respond and may delegate responsibility for responding to a member of the SCITT staff.

3. Complaints

GITEP defines a complaint as a concern which it has not been able to resolve to the satisfaction of the person who raised it originally.

When initial attempts to resolve a concern have been unsuccessful and the person raising the issue remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further, formal procedures will need to be invoked. The procedures have three stages:

- Stage 1: Complaint is made in writing to the Chair of the GITEP SCITT Partnership Board
- Stage 2: Complaint heard by a GITEP SCITT Partnership Board Complaints Panel
- Stage 3: Complainant advised in writing of the outcome
- Stage 4: Complaint heard by a GITEP Advisory Panel

We will aim to complete the process from Stage 1 to Stage 3 as quickly as possible and within 4 working weeks (term-time). We recognise that some complaints will require further investigation and these will be resolved as quickly as is reasonably possible.

Individual complaints will not be heard by the whole GITEP SCITT Partnership Board at any stage, as this will compromise the impartiality of any panel. Panel members will formally declare any interests at the start of any panel meetings or hearing.

A complaint that involves a trainee, member of GITEP staff or school-based colleague and the physical or sexual abuse of children will be dealt with through safeguarding and disciplinary procedures.

A complaint made by GITEP staff employed through The Balcarras Trust may be referred to The Balcarras Trust Staff Grievance Policy and procedures.

Stage 1: Complaint made in writing to GITEP SCITT Partnership Board

All formal complaints should be addressed to the Chair of GITEP SCITT Partnership Board in writing. Where there is a potential conflict of interest, for example if the complaint involves the Chair's school, the complaint should be addressed to the Vice-Chair.

At Stage 1, the Chair (or Vice-Chair) of the GITEP SCITT Partnership Board will review the complaint and establish a Complaints Panel, with a minimum of 3 members, drawn from members of the Partnership Board, considering and avoiding any potential conflicts of interest. The Chair (or Vice-Chair) will appoint one member to chair the Complaints Panel proceedings.

In most circumstances this process should take no longer than 10 working days (term-time) from receipt of the complaint. However, where further investigations are necessary, new time limits may be set, and the complainant will be sent details in writing of the new deadline, with an explanation for the delay.

Stage 2: Complaint heard by a GITEP SCITT Partnership Board Complaints Panel

The role of the Complaints Panel is to:

- Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved
- Establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved
- Interview the complainant to hear their complaint and clarify what the complainant feels would put things right, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- Interview those involved in the matter, including those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- Keep notes of the interviews
- Reply to the complainant in writing

The panel will:

- Determine whether the complaint should be upheld or not
- Determine whether the appropriate action has been taken in response to the complaint
- Make any appropriate recommendations regarding complaint handling and any action to be taken in response to the complaint
- Recommend changes to the systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur

The chair of the panel will:

- Set the date, time and venue for the interviews, ensuring the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue, materials, and proceedings are accessible
- Collate any written material pertaining to the complaint
- Ensure a written record is made of the proceedings
- Notify the Chair of the GITEP SCITT Partnership Board of the panel's decision

Stage 3: Complainant advised in writing of the outcome

The Chair of the GITEP SCITT Partnership Board will write to the complainant within 5 working days of the conclusion of the Complaints Panel's investigation, outlining the Panel's decision whether to uphold the complaint and what actions should follow.

If the complainant continues to be dissatisfied with the outcome, they should respond in writing within 10 days of receiving the outcome of Stage 3, giving details of the reasons why they are of the opinion that the outcome was flawed.

The Chair of GITEP SCITT Partnership Board will then convene a GITEP Advisory Panel.

Stage 4: Complaint heard by a GITEP Advisory Panel

The GITEP Advisory Panel is the final stage of the GITEP complaints process. The GITEP Advisory Panel will be made up of a minimum of 3 members drawn from the membership of GASSL Ltd Trustees, one of which will chair the panel.

The role of the GITEP Advisory Panel will be to:

- Review evidence regarding the complaint and the procedures and decisions of the GITEP Complaints Panel
- Interview the complainant to clarify the reasons why they are of the opinion that the outcome was flawed, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- Interview those involved in the matter, including those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- Determine whether the appropriate action has been taken in response to the complaint
- Determine whether any further action should be taken in response to the complaint and make appropriate recommendations to the GITEP SCITT Partnership Board on the implementation of such actions
- Make any appropriate recommendations to the GITEP SCITT Partnership Board regarding complaint handling
- Recommend changes to the systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur

The GASSL Ltd Company Secretary will:

- Set the date, time and venue for a hearing, ensuring the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible

- Collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing
- Meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the meeting
- Record the proceedings
- Notify all parties of the panel's decision

This stage of the procedure may take longer than the previous stages because of the need to convene the Advisory Panel meeting and review the evidence.

A Completion of Procedures letter will be issued to the complainant by the chair of the Advisory Panel at the end of the process.

4. Unresolved complaints

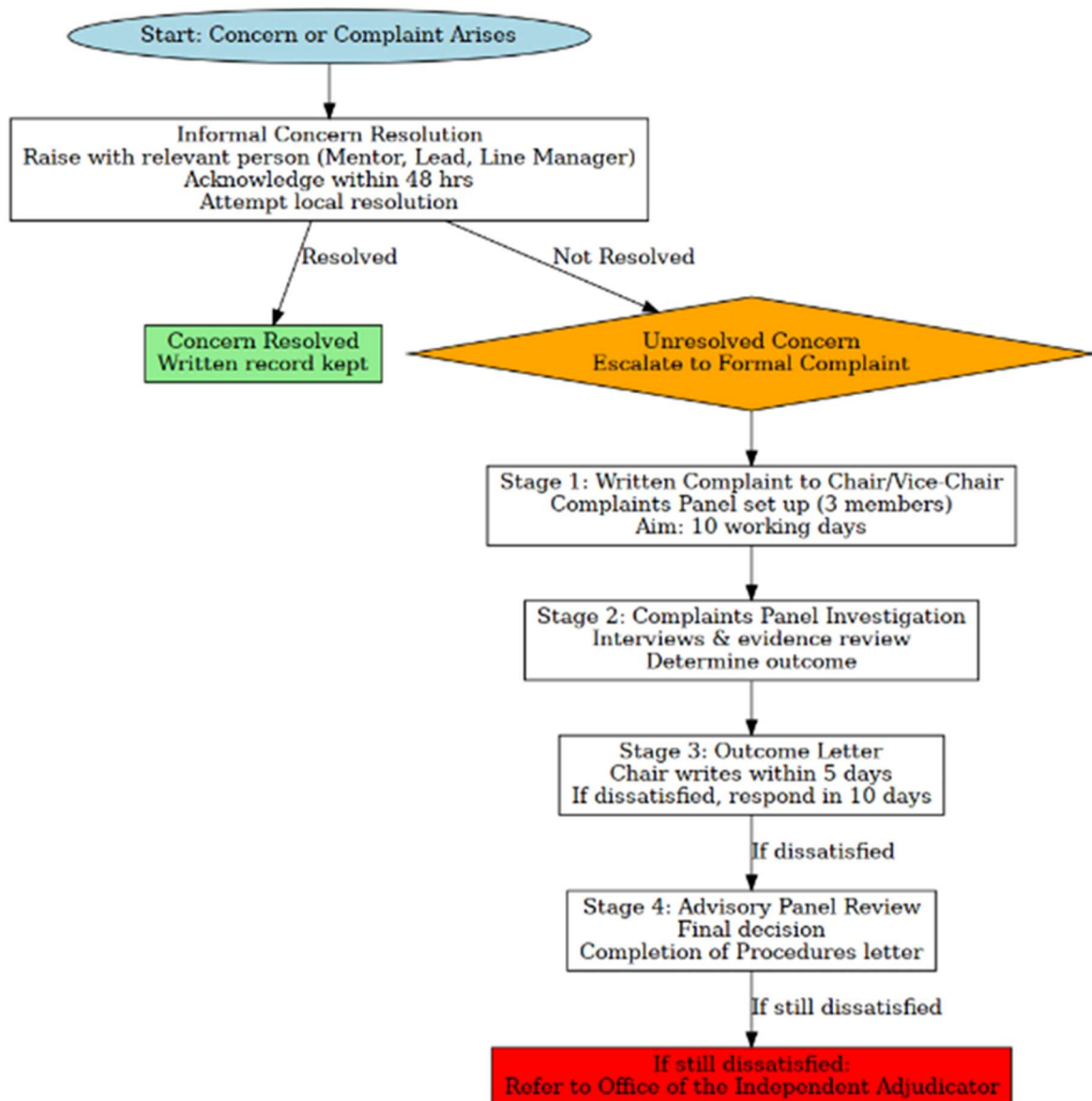
We will make our best endeavours to resolve a complaint. However, we recognise that there may be occasions when, despite all stages of the GITEP Complaints Policy and Procedures having been followed, the complainant may remain dissatisfied. GITEP is subject to the **Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education**. Complainants will be advised of this and given the relevant contact details.

If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of the GITEP SCITT Partnership Board will inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed. If the complainant writes again on the same issue, then the correspondence may be recognised as vexatious and there will be no obligation on the part of GITEP to respond.

5. Monitoring and evaluation

Numbers of complaints will be reported to the GITEP SCITT Partnership Board on the half-termly GITEP Programme Reports. The GITEP SCITT Course Administrator will record the number of complaints, monitor procedures, and produce an annual report for the GITEP SCITT Partnership Board at the final meeting of each academic year.

APPENDIX 1: OVERVIEW OF GITEP CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES





APPENDIX 2: OTHER GITEP POLICIES

Issues and concerns regarding GITEP trainees, staff, and partnership schools may be more appropriately addressed through other relevant policies or documents, such as:

GITEP Absence policy

GITEP Diversity, Equity & Inclusion policy

GITEP Fitness to Practice policy

GITEP Lead Partner Partnership Agreement

GITEP Placement School Partnership Agreement

GITEP Safeguarding policy

GITEP Trainee Code of Conduct

Balcarras Trust Sickness and Absence policy

Balcarras Trust Staff Disciplinary policy

Balcarras Trust Staff Grievance policy

Balcarras Trust Whistleblowing policy

The above list is non-exhaustive. It is for those who are responding to concerns raised by GITEP trainees, staff or partnership schools to decide which policy, procedure, or document is most applicable to the concern. The Complaints Procedure should only be resorted to either when a concern has not been resolved through local resolution, or if the use of a policy or procedure is deemed to have been inappropriate or flawed.