

National Specialist SCITTs

National Mathematics and Physics SCITT

National Modern Languages SCITT

Fitness to Study Policy

Important: this document can only be considered valid when viewed on the SCITT Intranet or SCITT website. If this document has been printed or saved to another location, you must check that the version number on your copy matches that of the document online.

The accredited provider for both the National Mathematics and Physics SCITT and the National Modern Languages SCITT, is Chorus Education Trust operating as National Specialist SCITTs.

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Contents

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Purpose	3
3.	Aims	4
4.	Grounds for concerns about a Trainee’s Fitness to Study.....	5
5.	Stages in the Process	6
5.1	Stage 1: emerging or initial concerns.....	6
5.2	Stage 2: continuing and/or significant concerns	7
5.3	Stage 3: serious or persistent concerns	8
5.4	Review of/end of interruption/suspension	8
5.5	Appeals	9
5.6	Completion of Appeals Procedures.....	9
6.	Publishing this Policy.....	10

1. Introduction

National Specialist SCITTs as the accredited provider is committed to supporting and responding to trainee needs and to seeking to ensure a positive experience and success in their training and studies.

The SCITT is committed to supporting trainees when difficulties arise and recognises the importance of a trainee's health and wellbeing in relation to their progression and wider training experience. The SCITT has a responsibility to support trainees to feel and function well in order to maximise their potential while completing their initial teacher training. However, there may be occasions when the health or wellbeing of a trainee causes concern to the point at which it raises questions about their suitability to continue their training and studies.

The SCITT has a duty of care to respond appropriately to situations where there are concerns relating to visible signs of illness, mental health difficulties, psychological, personality or emotional disorders and the detrimental impact on the functioning of the individual trainee. This may arise when, for example, the SCITT is concerned that:

- i. A trainee's ability to study is neither manageable nor achievable in relation to specific tasks and/or activities
- ii. A trainee poses a risk to their own health, safety and/or wellbeing and/or that of other persons
- iii. The trainee's behaviour is, or is at risk of, negatively affecting the teaching, learning, and/or experience of pupils/students/fellow trainees
- iv. The trainee's behaviour is or is at risk of negatively affecting the day-to-day activities of the school and/or the SCITT.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy and Procedure is to outline the steps that the SCITT will follow when concerns are raised about the fitness to study of one of its trainees, or when a trainee is returning to study following a break enforced by ill health.

This guidance explains the procedure that the SCITT will follow in investigating concerns about a trainee's fitness to study. It should be noted that this procedure applies to all trainees registered with the SCITT but does not replace or supersede the policies of any Higher Education Institution who may be providing an academic qualification such as the PGCE on behalf of the SCITT. It is therefore possible that a trainee can be subject to both the SCITT and a University's policy concurrently. The policy and process of each institution will remain the responsibility of each organisation and should be considered as standalone policies.

If the trainee has failed to comply with the expectations within the ***Fitness to Study Policy*** requirements of the SCITT and the SCITT are no longer prepared to accept the trainee, the SCITT will confirm with the Placement School and PGCE Provider that the trainee should no longer attend the placement. In such circumstances, the PGCE Provider [***Trainee Fitness to Study Regulations***](#) and /or ***Disciplinary procedures*** will be followed if appropriate.

The document also outlines the procedure and support available where a trainee's health and wellbeing deteriorates to the point where they may not be fit to train and study, including where they may be at risk

of harm to themselves and others. It is designed to ensure a consistent and sensitive approach to managing situations.

Concerns for the health or wellbeing of a trainee can be raised by both staff and students, and this document is to be used by the SCITT in any situation where a trainee's welfare is at risk. Trainees will not be expected to manage these situations and should always approach the SCITT Course Leader, SCITT Programme Lead, SCITT Hub Lead teacher, School Based Subject Mentor or SCITT Director if they have concerns.

School Based Subject Mentors, the SCITT Programme Lead, the SCITT Course Leader, and Hub Lead Teachers are the staff members most likely to identify that a trainee is experiencing difficulties, and they will be provided with advice and support from the SCITT to enable them to manage the situation initially using this procedure.

This policy is not concerned with academic progress which is dealt with under separate arrangements under the SCITT's academic regulations/requirements. This policy is also not about discontinuation or expulsion of trainees for misconduct as this is dealt with under the **SCITT Disciplinary Policy**.

3. Aims

In conjunction with the **SCITT Occupational Health and Reasonable Adjustments Policy**, this policy aims to ensure that:

- Appropriate consideration is given to the personal situation, their health, wellbeing and/or any disability they may experience.
- Trainees who are experiencing difficulties are supported to address their difficulties at the earliest appropriate point.
- Trainees, where possible, take an active part in the process and are encouraged to make informed decisions regarding available options.
- Reasonable adjustments are considered and implemented and where appropriate reviewed.
- Trainees are offered a non-judgemental, consistent, and sensitive approach to the management of issues. This may require different stages of response according to the perceived stage of concern.
- The SCITT seeks to provide a suitable and co-ordinated network around a trainee involving academic and professional services staff working together to support a trainee where their ill health impacts on their ability to train.
- Where appropriate, certain behaviours which would usually be dealt with as a disciplinary matter, may be considered under this policy.
- The SCITT will ensure that trainees properly consider the impact of ill-health on their ability to train and study when committing to the trainee contract.
- The SCITT will also discuss with the trainee whether there are strategies and support that could help them manage their training successfully, and the likely impact the pressures of training might have on a trainee who is unwell.

4. Grounds for concerns about a Trainee's Fitness to Study

This might include (but not be limited to):

- progressive or sudden deterioration in a trainee's attendance, engagement, quality of work, demeanour, mood swings or behaviour
- that serious concerns about the trainee's well-being or safety have been expressed to a Subject Based Mentor, the Hub Lead Teacher, the SCITT Programme Lead, the SCITT Course Leader, the SCITT Director, or to any member of the NML or NMAP SCITT, by a member of school staff, another trainee, a placement provider, or an external agency (e.g. care team), that indicate that there is a need to address the trainee's Fitness to Study
- the trainee has told a member of the SCITT that they have a problem and/or provided information that indicates that there is a need to address the trainee's Fitness to Study
- the trainee has behaved in a way that would otherwise be dealt with as a disciplinary matter, but independent evidence has been provided to show that the trainee's behaviour may be the result of an underlying physical or mental health problem linked to their Fitness to Study
- the trainee's attendance and participation in their training programme (including placements or other training related activity) are not enabling them to make progress with their training and studies and there is reason to believe that this is linked to their Fitness to Study
- the trainee's physical behaviour or demeanour is not acceptable or is causing others to fear for their safety including pupils/students, school staff and/or third parties, and is thought to be the result of an underlying physical or mental health problem
- where a trainee has disclosed to the SCITT or school that they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on their ability to undertake normal daily activities as a trainee.

The cause for concern can result in:

- invoking the procedure at any of the 3 stages
- staying at a stage or
- progressing through the stages should the cause for concern not be remedied by recommended and agreed actions.

In most situations, it will be appropriate to start at Stage 1 of the procedure. However, there will be some occasions when the level of risk requires a move straight to Stage 2 or 3. The level of risk must be judged based on the risk to the trainee concerned as well as the impact on students/pupils and other staff.

A trainee may disclose a mental illness or disability and may request confidentiality. This is a delicate issue and the SCITT will try to respect the trainee's wishes whenever possible. The SCITT will encourage recruits and trainees to share this type of information during the pre-course programme and enrolment process in order for the SCITT/school to offer support at an early stage.

All recruits are required familiarise themselves with the **SCITT Occupational Health and Reasonable Adjustments Policy** including the appendices outlining the Role of the Trainee Teacher, the Trainee Teacher Person Specification and the Work Pattern and Work Context for Secondary teachers to highlight the expectations and demands of the teacher training programme and the teaching profession. During the pre-course programme and enrolment process, all recruits are invited to disclose relevant information regarding their health and additional needs and inform the SCITT if any adjustments for the training and/or placement are required.

Recruits and trainees will also be informed that the SCITT has a duty of care to the school, staff and students/pupils and is therefore obligated to take action including alerting the school and PGCE Provider Organisation, should they have concerns about a trainee's wellbeing.

Throughout the training course, trainees are given opportunities to disclose information to enable the SCITT to support them effectively and it is expected that trainees and the SCITT team share the responsibility of finding constructive solutions for the trainee to be able to meet the SCITT course objectives and the Teachers' Standards by the end of their training when the SCITT will consider the recommendation for the award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

Whenever a trainee makes a disclosure of this nature, the SCITT keeps a record of any action/advice provided. The PGCE Provider will be subject to separate and over-riding obligations to declare significant health issues. The SCITT will monitor the progress of the trainee and the effectiveness of any actions and reasonable adjustments. The trainee will have a dedicated contact person to contact person for feedback on reasonable adjustments and for further support and guidance.

Trainees will be involved in the management of their own wellbeing wherever possible. However, there may be times where a trainee is unwilling or unable to work within these procedures. In these cases, the process will continue with concerns being raised, advice being sought, and action being taken as appropriate.

If there are any concerns that the trainee is experiencing significant difficulty or is at risk as a vulnerable adult then this will be discussed between the SCITT and the school in the first instance. Where necessary this must be reported and actioned. The SCITT Director, acting with the agreement of a member of the SCITT Strategic Board, has the right to suspend a trainee from training, with immediate effect, under the SCITT's duty of care obligations as a training provider, if they consider that there is a significant risk to the trainee and their health and wellbeing.

If a trainee elects to interrupt their study due to ill health, the **'Fitness to Study' process** will resume as soon as the trainee decides to return to the programme.

5. Stages in the Process

5.1 Stage 1: emerging or initial concerns

Emerging or initial concerns about an individual trainee's health, safety, or welfare are raised.

If concerns have been identified by a member of staff, then that member of staff will refer this to the School Based Subject Mentor as soon as possible but within one working day. The School Based Subject Mentor will then refer any emerging or initial concerns to the Hub Lead Teacher, SCITT Programme Lead, SCITT Course Leader and the SCITT administrator in writing within one working day.

This will trigger a meeting with The Subject Based Mentor and the Senior Mentor Coordinator (SMC) in the school who will talk to the trainee in a sympathetic and understanding manner and indicate that there are concerns about the trainee's fitness to teach. These concerns will be registered by use of this procedure.

The nature of the concerns will be clearly identified, and the trainee will be encouraged to discuss the issues including the potential impact on themselves and others. The key points and agreements, including action points arising from this discussion will be recorded and communicated to the trainee.

The trainee will be reminded of the **SCITT Occupational Health and Reasonable Adjustments Policy** which all trainees are introduced to during the pre-course programme. It will be made clear to the trainee that, whilst the SCITT and placement school have a duty of care to support trainees with ill health, it is the trainee's responsibility to be fit for work. If appropriate, information will be provided about sources of professional support within the school or SCITT that the trainee can access e.g., Occupational Health or Student Support Services offered by the PGCE provider. The Hub lead teacher, Subject Based Mentor or SMC will, if necessary, assist and support the trainee in making contact with local support.

The trainee and subject based mentor will agree a date to meet within one month to review the situation (Stage 1 Review Meeting) and discuss the effectiveness of the support that the trainee has been accessing.

A copy of the record of concern for a trainee's health & wellbeing must be sent to the trainee within 5 working days. A copy of this information will be sent to the SCITT Administrator and kept on the trainee's file. The trainee will be reassured that the purpose of keeping it on file is to ensure that the SCITT/School is providing all necessary support to ensure that the trainee continues to be fit to train.

Trainees will be informed that if the concerns continue, any additional cause for concern arises, or they refuse to engage in the process this could result in their fitness to study being further considered by moving to Stage 2.

The Subject Based Mentor is encouraged to make three attempts to engage with the trainee within this process as they are in the best position to have the initial meeting due to their direct observation of the fitness to study issues. If the Subject Based Mentor needs advice and support or feels unsure about whether to invoke this procedure, they will always be seeking advice from the Hub Lead Teacher or SCITT Course Leader as well as the SMC at their school.

5.2 Stage 2: continuing and/or significant concerns

Continuing or significant concerns about an individual trainee's health, safety, or welfare are raised.

Stage 2 will be carried out by the SCITT who will work collaboratively with staff within the school who will contact the Hub Lead Teacher, SCITT Programme Lead or the SCITT Course Leader if they think there are grounds to move to Stage 2. The final decision on whether stage 2 of the procedure is invoked will be taken by the SCITT Director after receiving information from the SCITT Course Leader.

The trainee will be invited to meet with the Hub Lead Teacher or SCITT Course Leader to discuss the issues with representatives of the school who have raised the concerns. Ideally, this will be arranged within 5 working days of the decision to move to stage 2. The trainee will be informed that engaging with stage 2 of the procedure is mandatory and refusal to engage may result in further escalation to stage 3.

The purpose of the meeting will be to ascertain the trainee's perception of the issues that have been identified including the impact which their ill health and/or behaviour are having upon themselves

and/or the school. This meeting will be supportive and aimed at assisting the trainee to progress on their training programme.

The trainee will be informed of the purpose of the meeting and advised of any documents they may be required to bring. The trainee may be accompanied by someone to this meeting, e.g., a support worker, family member, trade union representative, sign language interpreter or mental health worker.

During the meeting, a mutually agreed action plan will be put in place to support the trainee and formally agree expectations for the trainee to observe. This Action Plan will have a specific review date and the consequences of not keeping to the agreed plan must be clearly outlined to the trainee. The trainee will be informed that if the concerning behaviours discussed continue, or any additional cause for concern arises, this could result in their fitness to study being further considered by moving to Stage 3.

If an action plan cannot be agreed at Stage 2 then the case must move to Stage 3.

5.3 Stage 3: serious or persistent concerns

Serious or persistent concerns are raised about a trainee's health, actions, or behaviours that are putting the health, safety, wellbeing, or progress of them or students/pupils at significant risk.

The SCITT Director will call a 'Case Conference' to discuss the situation. Those present at the Case Conference will include the SCITT Course Leader, the Hub Lead teacher (where in a hub) and representatives from the school.

The trainee will be informed of the case conference in writing and will be entitled to submit written representations and at the discretion of the SCITT Director, the trainee with their support representatives will be invited to attend.

The case conference will determine an agreed action or enhanced action plan, or a recommendation for a possible interruption/suspension on health and wellbeing grounds. Where appropriate, the agreed action will take into account whether there are any reasonable adjustments that can be put in place, or whether the limits of reasonableness have been reached at that time (in accordance with the [Equality Act 2010](#)). The plan will have an agreed review date and the consequences of not adhering to the Action Plan will be made clear.

If the agreed recommended action is an interruption/suspension of training, the SCITT Director will inform the school in writing and will follow up the process below to suspend the trainee. Normally, no trainee shall be suspended unless they have been given the opportunity to make representations to the SCITT Director in writing or in person.

Interruption/suspension of training will only be recommended in the most serious of cases and when all avenues of support have been exhausted, or the trainee has not engaged with the support. The interruption/suspension is intended to give the trainee time away from training to address health and wellbeing issues, in order wherever possible to return to the training. Written reasons for the suspension will be recorded.

5.4 Review of/end of interruption/suspension

Any decision to suspend will be reviewed within 15 working days. Such a review will not be a hearing but the trainee either personally or through a representative will be entitled to submit written representations.

The SCITT Director will conduct the review and, where appropriate, will include the SCITT Course Leader, the SCITT Programme Lead, the Hub Lead Teacher, and representatives of the school.

Where a trainee returns to training after a break, the SCITT will consider any support that the trainee may require to support a return, such as regular review meetings or a return to the action plan. The general expectation is that the trainee will take personal responsibility for fully engaging with this support.

The decision to approve a trainee to return to training will be taken by the SCITT Director and will be communicated in writing to the trainee prior to their return, and any requirements and special arrangements will be made clear. The SCITT will determine the ongoing arrangements to support and review the progress of the trainee to minimise risk of a recurrence of the original difficulties.

The SCITT Director has a duty of care, to both the trainee and the school, not to compromise the health and safety of the trainee, pupils/students, and colleagues. Any decisions to support a lifting of the suspension and a return to training will only be taken after full consideration of all the facts and evidence and medical advice where necessary.

5.5 Appeals

A trainee may request a review of the SCITT Director's decision reached at Stage 3. Trainees should note that a request for review of a decision will only be accepted if there is evidence of the following:

- The correct procedure has not been followed.
- Further material circumstances which could not reasonably have been expected to have been submitted for consideration by the SCITT Director.

Trainees should request a review by the Appeals Committee by submitting a written statement detailing the grounds for request within 10 working days of being notified of a decision at Stage 3.

The Appeals Committee set out in the **Complaints Policy** will meet to consider any appeal representations and determine whether there is a case for consideration, or whether to dismiss the request and inform the trainee.

The SCITT will make every effort to allow the trainee to return to continue with their training, within the limits set by the appropriate regulations. This may include repeating periods of training. The ability to repeat training will depend upon the feasibility and reasonableness of such a proposal and will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

5.6 Completion of Appeals Procedures

At the conclusion of our procedures, a trainee will be offered a **Completion of Procedures letter** signifying the end of the SCITT internal Appeals Procedure as outlined in the **SCITT Appeals Policy**. A **Completion of Procedures letter** is required should the trainee wish to advance a complaint with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator regarding their appeal. The SCITT will usually only issue a **Completion of Procedures letter** once our appeals procedure has concluded and a final decision has been provided to the trainee.

6. Publishing this Policy

This policy is available through the SCITT website and the SCITT Intranet. A copy can also be requested via the SCITT office.

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) runs an independent scheme to review student complaints. Chorus Education Trust operating as National Specialist SCITTs, and the accredited provider for the National Modern Languages (NML) SCITT and the National Mathematics and Physics (NMAP) SCITT, is a member of this scheme. If a trainee is unhappy with decisions made by the SCITT regarding this Policy, they may be able to ask the OIA to review this decision. More information about making a complaint to the OIA, what it can and can't look at and what it can do to put things right if something has gone wrong can be found here: <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students>.