



# Complaints Procedure

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## Version Control

Version	Reviewed	Changes since last version
2	June 2025	Inclusion of mentors and applicants to the programme within the scope of the procedure. Introduction of a Formal Complaints Form (Appendix 1).
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## 1. POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 Everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect. Mulberry College of Teaching (MCoT) is committed to providing a supportive training and working environment. It is recognised and accepted however that there will be situations where complaints arise and accordingly, this policy and procedure sets out a framework for the management of such complaints. It is important to establish the difference between a concern (an informal complaint) and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage reduces the likelihood of them developing into formal complaints.

Concerns should be raised with a senior member of staff or their tutor as soon as possible, so they can quickly understand your concerns and try to put things right.

Any Beginning Teacher who raises a complaint whilst in the training programme (even when engaged at school placement) will have their complaint reviewed and investigated as part of this policy.

### 1.2 The MCoT seeks to:

- Ensure that all Beginning Teachers and those they work with, such as mentors and programme tutors are able to achieve their full potential whilst training and working by creating a training and working environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.
- Encourage open and honest conversations between managers, mentors/tutors and Beginning Teachers, so that both can work together to ensure the right support is in place to meet the aims of this policy and where possible, remedy any causes of conflict.
- Increase awareness of the unacceptability of any form of unfair treatment including harassment and bullying.
- Create a working environment in which Beginning Teachers feel confident to bring forward any complaints without fear of victimisation.
- Ensure that complaints are dealt with effectively, investigated appropriately and without unnecessary delay.

- 1.3 MCoT recognises that Beginning Teacher disputes can be a stressful and upsetting experience for all affected parties. Everyone involved in the process is entitled to be treated with respect. The matters under investigation will remain confidential at all times throughout the procedure. Putting pressure on or canvassing other parties to join in with a complaint or to not form part of a complaint, will be seen as inappropriate and will be regarded as inconsistent with the key principles in this policy and procedure. In many cases complaints will be individual but, in some cases, they may arise from issues or behaviour affecting more than person. Beginning Teachers or mentors will not be prohibited from raising collective grievances where appropriate.

- 1.4 The organisation will not tolerate abusive or threatening behaviour at any time from any staff which includes and is not limited to Beginning Teachers, mentors, placement school employees and MCoT and Mulberry Schools Trust staff including during the management of this process. Any such behaviour will be treated as misconduct and will be dealt with in accordance with the relevant Code of Conduct procedure. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the Director of MCoT with advice from HR may decide that the disciplinary, conduct and appeals process is a more appropriate way of dealing with this matter at this point.
- 1.5 This procedure is intended to deal with matters of genuine concern and substance where no other procedure would be appropriate. It cannot be used to challenge formal outcomes from other procedures which have their own agreed appeal process. However, Beginning Teachers should not be discouraged to lodge their grievance if they have genuine reasons of complaint which includes bullying, harassment etc. during the other procedures i.e., disciplinary procedure; capability procedures etc.
- 1.6 No Beginning Teacher will suffer detriment for raising a concern in good faith, or for assisting a colleague to do so. Everyone should be able to work without the fear of mischievous or malicious allegations and anyone found to be making a deliberately false or vexatious complaint or attempts to use this procedure to pursue a personal grievance not related to their training, may be subject to disciplinary action or appropriate action in lines with the training course and training board.
- 1.7 All person(s) involved in the investigation of complaints under this procedure will be mindful of their obligations and duties under the Equality Act 2010. Reasonable adjustments will be made where required, to assist a Complainant or their companion with a disability. If there are any language issues affecting a Beginning Teacher and/or their companion, these will be reasonably addressed so matters can proceed fairly.
- 1.8 Conflict at a placement school or on the programme can have a disruptive effect on Beginning Teachers and other colleagues involved. Therefore, this policy and procedure sets out a consistent and proactive approach to the management of these situations.

## 2. SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy and procedure will apply to all MCoT Beginning Teachers or mentors and those associated with working within the partnership. For the purpose of this Complaint Procedure, 'Beginning Teacher' includes applicants to the programme as well as those who formally start the programme. 'Mentors' includes school-based mentors, including Professional Mentors within the partnership.
- 2.2 The procedure applies to all complaints made by a Beginning Teacher or mentor relating to their training programme which may be either:

- A grievance regarding a relevant issue arising in the training place, or
- Any dignity at work issue involving alleged incidents of bullying and/or harassment

2.3 For ease of reference, in this procedure references to complaints will include grievances and bullying and/or harassment issues.

2.4 This procedure also applies to collective grievances concerning workplace and training issues and to collective dignity at work issues involving alleged incidents of bullying and/or harassment. Where a collective grievance is raised, the group should nominate a representative to represent the group at any hearings and appeals. This representative may be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague.

2.5 The following issues will also not be considered under this procedure; these are issues that:

- are normally subject to national conditions of service or local agreement
- are the subject of collective negotiation or consultation with recognised trade unions
- have been or are being dealt with under the Trust's Disciplinary procedure or MCoT's discipline, conduct and appeal procedure
- are about any disciplinary action taken against a Beginning Teacher (as this should be dealt with as an appeal under discipline, conduct and appeal procedure)
- in most cases are over 3 months old, (however Beginning Teachers may refer to earlier matters if they believe that they support the complaint but this will be for context matters only if relevant, and will not be investigated)
- are part of issues which have previously been investigated
- are covered by statutory controls such as Income Tax, National Insurance and Pension Schemes (likely not relevant as Beginning Teachers are not employees)
- are covered by other statutory, national or local appeals procedures
- Complaints that might be covered by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (whistleblowing complaints)

Please note, it is reasonable to expect that in general complaints should be made in good time, and it may be reasonable to discount a complaint when there is no good reason that it could not have been raised earlier. It is also appropriate to point out that in most cases such as employment tribunals only consider complaints that are raised within three months of the incident complained about and so MCoT follows this guidance with reference to trainees.

- 2.6 Complaints or appeals will only be considered from the beginning teacher or mentor concerned and not from any third party unless under the age of 18 or a vulnerable adult.
- 2.7 A beginning teacher or mentor wishing to make a complaint should do so within 20 working days of the matter with which the complaint is concerned following unsatisfactory resolution of their concerns.
- 2.8 A beginning teacher or mentor wishing to lodge an appeal should do so within 5 working days of the date of the communication, informing them of the decision on their application/withdraw is issued.

### 3.0 Procedure

3.1 Beginning Teacher and mentor complaints and appeals must be brought immediately to the attention of the Director of Mulberry College of Teaching. Complaints should be recorded on [Appendix 1](#) the Formal Complaint Form.

3.2 Once the Director of Mulberry College of Teaching is aware of the complaint or appeal, they shall:

- Acknowledge the complaint or appeal to the sender in writing within 5 working days of receipt - giving an indication of how long an investigation into the complaint will take.
- Investigate the complaint or appeal (or direct a senior leader to investigate)
- Keep the complainant/ individual appealing up to date with progress throughout the process
- Communicate the outcome of the complaint or appeal to the complainant/ individual appealing.

MCoT will investigate the complaint or review an appeal and aim to take any necessary action to resolve the situation within 20 working days. If this is not going to be possible, the reason for the delay, along with an appropriate target date for resolution must be provided to the complainant or individual appealing.

The complainant/ individual appealing has a further right of appeal to the CEO should they still feel that the problem has not been dealt with satisfactorily.

Any training needs that are highlighted because of complaints or appeals are addressed immediately.

#### 4.0 Outcome

4.1 The investigation of a complaint will result in either the complaint being rejected or upheld wholly or in part. Should a complaint be rejected, the applicant or candidate will be informed accordingly with a statement as to why the complaint has been rejected.

4.2 If the investigation determines that the complaint be upheld in whole or in part, and should the findings suggest that changes to procedures or policies are appropriate; this will be stated in any correspondence to the applicant.

#### 5.0 Appeal

5.1 Should an applicant or Beginning Teacher be dissatisfied with the outcome of an appeal or complaint, they can escalate the issue by writing to the CEO stating the reasons for their dissatisfaction and the outcome they were seeking within 5 working days of receiving their outcome. Please note the appeal can only be made on the following grounds and will be limited to a review of the original decision on the grounds you raised in your letter of appeal. Any appeal will only be considered on one or more of the following grounds:

- i. PROCEDURE: your appeal should detail how procedural irregularities prejudiced the disciplinary decision;
- ii. FACTS: your appeal should detail how the facts do not support the decision or were disregarded, misinterpreted or were considered not relevant. It should also detail any new evidence to be considered;
- iii. iii. DECISION: your appeal should state how the act/s of misconduct did not justify the level of disciplinary action taken or the act was one of misconduct rather than gross misconduct.

5.2 The CEO, will instruct a senior leader on their behalf to investigate. The decision of the CEO is final. Once this decision has been communicated to the applicant, no further correspondence will be entered into regarding this application/ withdrawal from the programme. For Beginning Teachers, MCoT hopes that once all stages of the complaint process have been exhausted, we will have satisfactorily resolved any complaints.

5.3 On some occasions this may not be the case and if the complainant is still not satisfied with the resolution offered, they may correspond with an external agency, a

government funding agency or an awarding organisation but in general external agencies would look to MCoT to complete internal processes and seek a satisfactory resolution to the issue in the first instance. This will be the final route of escalation. Therefore, if you remain unhappy after following our own internal complaints procedure and your complaint refers to services you have received relating to your course and achieving your qualification then please contact the independent student ombudsman, the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/>

## Appendix 1: Formal Complaint Form

Please complete this form and return it to the Director of Mulberry College of Teaching who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your Name:	Your email:
Full details of complaint (including the names of all persons involved and the dates of incidents referred to):_	
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint (for example, who 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:
<b><u>For official use</u></b>  Date acknowledgement sent:  Name of person Complaint referred to:	