

The Solent SCITT absence policy

This policy aims to enable The Solent SCITT to exercise its duty of care and responsibilities in relation to ensuring that its trainees pursue their studies with diligence and avail themselves of the educational opportunities made available.

It recognises that in such an intensive, one-year course absence, for whatever reason, leads to missed learning opportunities which may impact on the ability to provide evidence relating to the successful demonstration of the Teachers' Standards at the end of the course.

It is, therefore, expected that a trainee will be regular and punctual in attendance at all centre and school-based sessions prescribed by the course. This policy encompasses, with minor adaptations, approaches to the management of absence commonly used in the teaching profession as a whole.

This policy includes information on:

1. Notification of absence
2. Sickness absence
3. Maternity Leave
4. Paternity Leave
5. Medical Appointments
6. Leave of Absence
7. Compassionate Leave
8. Private and Personal
9. Support Processes
10. Punctuality

1 Notification of absence

- 1.1 A trainee will notify the provider of any absence from the course either by telephone or by emailing Phil Seery, whether the absence relates to school placement or training, no later than 08.00 on the first day of any period of absence. If, by that time, the provider has not been informed of an absence, the provider will make contact to confirm the safety of the trainee and ascertain why he/she is not in attendance. Failure to report an absence may lead to disciplinary procedures.
- 1.2 A trainee will also notify their school-based contact if they are to be absent on a day when they should be in school. School policies will be adhered to with regards to the setting of cover work.
- 1.3 If after ten working days the provider is unable to contact the trainee, the provider will invoke a suspension of studies, informing Student Finance England (SFE) through a Change of Circumstances (COC) submission should one be required. This may have an impact on any maintenance loans and bursaries that have been arranged. If there is no contact in the following ten working days, the trainee will be deemed to have withdrawn from the course and the relevant authorities will be informed.

2 Sickness absence

2.1 Self-certificated absence

2.1.1 For absences of five days or less, a trainee will be required to complete the self-certification of absence form obtainable from the provider.

2.1.2 There is a limit for self-certification of six days within the course as a whole.

2.2 Medically stated sickness

2.2.1 If a trainee is absent for more than five days, a medical certificate or statement signed by a doctor must be sent to the provider as soon as practicable.

2.2.2 If the trainee remains ill when the note expires, further medical evidence will be required.

2.2.3 If the absence continues for a prolonged period (more than 15 working days) or a date for the return to study exceeds 15 working days from the beginning of the absence, the provider will notify the trainee in writing that it is suspending the trainee's study from that 15 day point. If the trainee is in receipt of finance from Student Finance England (SFE) a Change of Circumstances form (COC) will be submitted to SFE by the provider suspending studies on medical grounds effective from that date.

2.2.4 If a trainee is subject to an ongoing illness such as depression, arthritis, unstable diabetes or asthma, a trainee should submit a form for mitigation together with a medical certificate which explains the extent of the illness and the likely effect on their progress through the course before the 15 working day deadline. The situation will be referred to the provider to determine whether the trainee should be considered for deferral on medical grounds.

2.3 Convalescence

2.3.1 The nature of the course does not easily allow for light duties or other ways of reducing the workload. However, the provider will ensure that on return to the course a trainee has a few days' respite to become fully fit before carrying out important assessments.

2.3.2 A trainee returning to work after an extended period of absence may be required to submit to a medical examination by Occupational Health professionals to determine whether and what staged return to work should be implemented.

3 Maternity leave

3.1 General: The nature of this one-year course means maternity leave as such is not available but the provider will aim to exercise what flexibility is possible within the course structure to enable the trainee to achieve QTS. The length of absence anticipated means that the course will have to be extended into a second year providing there is no substantial change in the requirements for QTS anticipated. A trainee who becomes pregnant after being offered a place or during the first half term of the course can apply to have the course deferred for one year only, subject to there being no substantial change to the requirements for QTS during the deferment. Any trainee requesting maternity leave must complete the course within six terms. One of those terms must be the final term of an academic year. There may be some implications for a trainee receiving finance from SFE.

3.2 The preferred plan is for a trainee to return in the second year two weeks before the anniversary of the date of commencement of maternity leave.

3.3 The trainee should notify the provider as soon as is practicable but not later than 14 weeks (unless there is good cause) before the expected week of childbirth (EWC) that she wishes to be absent for maternity.

3.4 Absence on account of illness which is attributable to the pregnancy, including absence on account of miscarriage, and which occurs outside the period of absence for maternity, shall be treated as ordinary sickness absence and shall be subject to the conditions normally governing such leave, provided it is covered by a doctor's statement.

3.5 Maternity leave should not normally be taken earlier than 11 weeks before the EWC.

3.6 When maternity leave begins, the provider will write to the trainee to formally suspend the trainee's studies, informing the SFE through a COC where required and record the trainee as dormant on the DMS.

3.7 The trainee will inform the provider of the date of birth of the child.

3.8 The trainee may not return to study less than two weeks after the birth of the child.

3.9 Thereafter, the trainee should discuss with the provider when she intends to return to study and a timeframe for the completion of the course be agreed.

3.10 Where a trainee does not make contact with the provider, the provider may write to the trainee no earlier than 21 days before the anniversary of the commencement of maternity leave, asking her to confirm the date of birth and her intention to return to work. The trainee or her representative must respond within 14 days of receiving the request. If there is no response, the provider will withdraw the trainee from the course.

3.11 If requiring student finance, the trainee will need to apply for finance (as a returning student repeating Year 1) for the second academic year. At the beginning of the first term, the trainee will continue to have her studies suspended and SFE informed through a COC. A further COC will be completed when the trainee returns to the course.

3.12 For a trainee paying fees through an SFE loan, the fee structure means that the trainee must be present in Term 3 of one of the years in question. If that is not the case, the provider has the right to request 25% of the total tuition fees direct from the trainee.

4 Paternity leave

4.1 The nature of this one-year course means paternity leave as such is not available but the provider will aim to exercise what flexibility is possible to allow a short period of absence within the course structure to enable the trainee to achieve QTS. If the length of absence anticipated is significant, the course is likely to have to be extended into a second year for which there may be financial implications. See compassionate leave below.

5 Medical appointments

5.1 A trainee should inform the provider in writing of any appointments for which he/she needs to take leave, being prepared to offer further evidence if

requested. The difficulty of obtaining GP and hospital appointments is acknowledged and these will be honoured wherever possible though a trainee should attempt to ensure follow up appointments do not impact unnecessarily on attendance on the course.

5.2 Other routine medical appointments should not be made during the working day.

5.3 Requests to attend medical appointments should be put in writing and sent to Clare Harrison on Scittco@thesolentscitt.co.uk

6 Leave of absence

6.1 Leave of absence for other reasons may be granted by the Accounting Officer acting on behalf of the provider.

6.2 For absences longer than two consecutive days, or for a cumulative total of more than five days, the request will require the additional approval of the Accounting Officer. It is expected that an application will be made for leave of absence, in writing, by email to Clare Harrison on scittco@thesolentscitt.co.uk, at least two working days before the absence occurs.

6.3 In the case of absence included in private and personal or compassionate categories, a completed proforma should be submitted to the provider on the return to study.

6.4 The following outlines the rationale for decisions relating to common requests for leave of absence. They should not be seen as an exhaustive list, but serve as an indication as to how leave of absence decisions will be expedited.

6.4.1 Graduation ceremonies:

Absence of one day to attend a graduation ceremony for a first degree will be granted. Any requests for travelling time associated with this would not be expected to exceed half a day in total.

6.4.2 Interviews:

All reasonable requests will be honoured. Decisions relating to absence for interviews abroad or in places involving extra days for travel will be limited to a cumulative maximum of three working days in the year.

6.4.3 Visits to schools before application/interview:

Given the open-ended nature of these absences and the significant demands of the course, leave of absence will not be granted for these visits. In refusing the application, the provider will, if requested by the trainee, contact the school in question, informing them both of the trainee's expression of interest in attending, and the rationale for the refusal of the application.

6.4.4 Visits to schools prior to employment:

One day will be granted before the end of the final teaching experience. A further day may be granted after this date and before the course ends. Additional days requested by the school employing the trainee after the course may be granted at the discretion of the provider.

7 Compassionate leave

7.1 In the event of such emergencies as bereavement, serious accident or illness of an immediate family member/dependant, up to three working days will be

allowed for the death of a father, mother, son, daughter, brother or sister and up to five working days leave on the death of a husband, wife or partner.

7.2 Requests for additional compassionate leave, or in the case of a cumulative total of more than ten working days, must be referred to the Accounting Officer.

8 Private and personal

8.1 A maximum of two days at any one time will be granted for the purposes of urgent and unforeseen personal business which does not come under the scope of compassionate leave or to fulfil an important and significant personal commitment which cannot be undertaken at any other time.

8.2 Statutory Leave of Absence up to a cumulative total of five working days during the course will be allowed. However, given the intense nature of the course, trainees will be advised that membership of bodies requiring such absence should be reviewed.

8.3 Holidays: The intensive nature of the course means that holidays, including those booked before commencement of the course, should not be undertaken.

8.4 If a provider wishes to allow holiday leave, for example to attend a family wedding, it should be noted that SFE will be informed and an adjustment to any maintenance loans may follow.

9 Support Processes

Full attendance (100%) at all timetabled sessions is a requirement of The Solent SCITT and ensures you have completed the full training necessary for the recommendation for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

It is expected that you attend all scheduled sessions in order to maximise your development. This policy is based on an approach to learning which values the learning that comes from your active engagement with your peers, staff and other external/professional experts.

Your absence matters to us for educational reasons, because absence reduces your opportunity to learn, may compromise your potential achievement and may in some cases also compromise the opportunities others have to learn (particularly in practical work or presentations, experimental or professional settings).

Attendance is also an indication of your professional commitment. It is essential that you demonstrate that you will be a reliable member of a school's teaching staff, understanding that your absence can affect the teaching and learning of pupils in your care. Furthermore, employers requesting references will request attendance information so it is vital that it is accurately recorded.

The Solent SCITT team aim to support trainees in ensuring that they are able to attend well and meet the requirements of the programme. There is a legal requirement that trainees complete a minimum of 120 days in school with training on top of this. In some circumstances top-up days will need to be used. The top-up days are extra school experience days built in to the Programme at the end of school 5.

Failure to complete 120 days in school and unsatisfactory attendance at training sessions will result in QTS not being awarded.

It is your responsibility to make yourself available for the top-up days in July. You may be required to use these days to complete your School Experience if, for any reason you are absent from school for more than 5 days. It is also your responsibility to make sure you are available for the re-submission of assignments in August should this be necessary

100% attendance is expected throughout the year. However, should absence occur, the following support mechanisms will be put in place:

Attendance will be reviewed half termly	
After 5 days absence	Meeting with trainee and SCITT link to review.
After 8 days absence	Meeting with school mentor and SCITT link. Target set.
After 15 days of absence	Support 1 package instigated

10 Punctuality

Punctuality is extremely important as it is an indication of your Professional Commitment. In addition, lateness to school has safeguarding implications for the children in your care and therefore we take all punctuality very seriously. If you know that you will be late to either school or training, you should make all reasonable efforts to notify both your school-based mentor or Phil Seery at The Solent SCITT

Repeated lateness will be seen as a cause for concern and you will be spoken to by a SCITT coordinator who will decide the appropriate course of action, this may include support package 1 being instigated.

Unless you have made a prior arrangement with a SCITT coordinator, if you arrive later than 30 minutes to training or school, it will count as an absence for that session (AM or PM).