



School Experience Professional Panel (SEPP) Procedures (including Appeals)

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Version	Type (e.g. replacement, revision etc...)	Date	History (reason for changes)
V1	New	Sept 2018	
V2	Revised	Jan 2020	Updated due to restructure, frequency of meetings reduced, removal of auto referral to FtP in cases of failure with no mitigation
V3	Revised	April 2020	Updated to make the “recommendations for QTS” more specific. Increased the membership of the panel to now include a HoS, and two additional members from each of the four main QTS bearing programmes.
V4	Revised	September 2021	Revised to reflect changes in organisational structure
V5	Revised	August 2023	Inclusion of appeals process into this procedure.

Monitoring and review

This procedure will be reviewed by the Academic Board at least every 2 years.

1. Definitions

Professional Extenuating Circumstances	Unforeseen circumstances which can be corroborated by independent evidence; which occurred during or shortly before or during a placement and which seriously impair performance. Professional extenuating circumstances are beyond the control of the student and could not be reasonably accommodated by the student
School Experience Professional Panel (SEPP)	A formal meeting held to make decisions in relation to progression for those students on a school placement
Appeal	The only method by which a student can request a review of an Assessment Board or School Experience Professional Panel decision
Transcript	The document provided to the student which confirms their ratified marks and Assessment Board decision
Extenuating Circumstances	Circumstances which are sudden, unexpected, significantly disruptive and beyond the students control and which may affect their performance
Supporting Evidence	Documents provided to support or evidence an application for an appeal.
Examination Board	The Examination Board for Student Experience is a formal meeting held where student placements are considered for progression and award
Confidentiality	In dealing with extenuating circumstances, privacy and confidentiality will be respected. Disclosure will only be made insofar as deemed necessary for dealing with the application
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
DfE	Department for Education

2. Scope of Procedure

This document outlines College procedures relating to the application of Professional Extenuating Circumstances and the conferment of the award of “QTS” for successful trainees. This process applies to placements for both first degrees and postgraduate taught degrees in initial teacher education.

The College wishes to promote the Professional Extenuating Circumstances process wherever it is current, valid and demonstrable. This paper seeks to provide an outline of the processes which should be implemented in order for members of academic staff and students to assess an applicant’s eligibility to submit an application for extenuation.

The College arranges QTS placements in order to gauge the teaching suitability of an individual student against determined learning outcomes. Students have a responsibility to meet the norms and expectations for professional conduct related to the field in which they are placed. This process applies to any placement undertaken on teaching degree programmes.

Representations cannot be made for extenuating circumstances against academic assessments under this procedure, nor can it be used to challenge academic judgement.

A student whose case is under consideration is able to continue with their studies.

2.1. The procedure can be used by:

Any student enrolled on a Teaching Degree who has had failed their placement or has experienced extenuating circumstances whilst on their placement. The student must be working towards qualified teacher status (QTS) and enrolled on an undergraduate or postgraduate degree programme at the College.

2.2. The procedure cannot be used in the following situations:

To make applications for Professional Extenuating Circumstances against taught degree modules. The student should refer to the Mitigating Circumstances or Appeal process appropriate to their awarding body.

Professional Extenuating Circumstances forms will not be accepted from parents or third parties (unless expressly authorised by both the student and the College to act on behalf of the student).

2.3. This procedure does not apply to:

- Academic Appeals
- Mitigating Circumstances
- Findings of Fitness for Professional Practice hearings
- Complaints relating to or against students, staff working at the College or the services offered by the College
- College applicants and complaints relating to the admissions procedure

2.4. Applicant Confidentiality

Applicant identities will be disclosed to School Experience Professional Panel members; however, members must not disclose details of any discussions to anyone outside the Panel.

Feedback from tutors and support staff will inform the panel where necessary. The Governance Analyst will request a copy of the Link Tutor placement fail / withdrawal form for the Panel's information. Where the circumstances relate to a failed placement, a written report may be requested from relevant staff.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

It is the student's responsibility to:

- Inform the College of any extenuating circumstances which they wish to be considered
- Submit their notification in writing using the Professional Extenuating Circumstances Form and Guidance. Additional e-mail submissions of supporting evidence are acceptable providing they are accompanied by verification of the student's identity [e.g. Student ID number]

- Submit their form and evidence to HEawards@bradfordcollege.ac.uk or C15 Lister Building
- Submit their notification within the defined timescales
- Provide relevant information [e.g. dates, placement affected]
- Provide supporting original documentation as evidence
- Sign indicating acceptance and understanding of the procedures relevant to consideration of Professional Extenuating Circumstances

It is the Quality Departments responsibility to:

- Ensure students have access to the Professional Extenuating Circumstances Form and guidance documentation
- Ensure students are made aware of the location to which they should submit their request for extenuating circumstances
- Provide students with advance notice of the dates by which requests for extenuating circumstances should be submitted
- Ensure confidentiality outside the Panel

4. Making an application for Extenuating Circumstances

4.1. Timescales for Application

An application for Professional Extenuating Circumstances should be made within 14 days of the placement ending; however, it is recognised that the nature of such concerns can vary widely, and they can be accepted up to one calendar month after the last occurrence, where there are reasons for delay. Please note that all relevant information should be submitted at this time and that it is not possible to consider information which is submitted at a later point in the process without good reason

5. The School Experience Professional Panel (SEPP)

The School Experience Professional Panel will meet at least three times per year to consider:

- The status of students placements
- Submissions for extenuating circumstances and make decisions about future placement opportunities for teacher trainees.
- Recommendations for the award of “QTS” to successful trainees.

Where an application is received and the extenuating circumstances are judged to be exceptional or further information is required, Chair’s Action may be taken outside the panel. The outcome of which will be recorded in the next panel meeting minutes.

5.1 Extenuating circumstances outcomes will be recorded on the SEPP Outcome Form by the Chair.

5.2 Trainees have no automatic right to a repeat placement.

5.3 A maximum of one repeat placement can be offered to trainees unless extenuating circumstances are accepted.

5.4 The student will normally be informed of the decision of the Panel in writing within 10 working days of the meeting following completion and approval of the minutes by the Chair.

5.5 Recommendations for QTS will be documented and recorded on the student's profiles.

5.6 All documentation will be collected by the Quality team at the end of the meeting and kept in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation Act (2018) and the College's "Information and Records Management Policy"

6. Panel Membership

6.1 The panel will normally be chaired by the Head of Department for the McMillan Department of Education and Social Care.

6.2 At the start of the meeting the Chair will remind the panel of the confidentiality of the proceedings.

6.3 A School Partnerships Manager, a Head of School for Education, one PGCE Primary, one PGCE Secondary, and at least one BA (Hons) QTS member of staff will be in attendance. A minimum of eight staff must be present at the meeting (including Quality, the Chair, and Disability Services representative).

6.4 A representative from the Disability and Learning Support Service will attend panel meetings in an advisory capacity.

6.5 A member of the Quality and Information Services Department will attend to advise on procedure, prepare papers and minute the meeting.

7. Consideration of Extenuating Circumstances

7.1 The School Experience Professional Panel will consider:

7.1.1 All applications for Professional Extenuating Circumstances.

7.1.2 Evidence submitted with applications (examples of acceptable supporting evidence are listed on the guidance notes attached to the extenuating circumstances form).

7.1.3 The Link Tutor report (where required).

7.1.4 The Placement Withdrawal Form where the student has failed the placement.

7.1.5 The Student Continuation Form (where required)

7.1.6 Any other relevant information.

7.1.7 Three types of extenuating circumstances will be considered:

- Medical
- Personal
- Professional

7.2 Following consideration of the extenuating circumstances and evidence available, the panel may:

- 7.2.1 Request further information from the College, student, or any other relevant source. This should normally be provided to the Chair within 5 working days of the request.
- 7.2.2 Dismiss the Professional Extenuating Circumstances Application, where it is agreed that the application does not meet the grounds for Professional Extenuating Circumstances based on the information submitted.
- 7.2.3 Forward recommendations for accepted extenuating circumstances to the appropriate Examination Board for ratification.
- 7.2.4 Make decisions on a case by case basis on the timing of further opportunities to complete placements. Repeat placements may be granted this or next academic year and recommendations may be attached to the repeat as the panel sees fit.
- 7.2.5 Grant a maximum of one 'refer' opportunity per placement. All repeat placements are granted on the condition that a suitable placement is able to be found in time. Where no placement can be found, the College reserves the right to move the formally agreed placement time with agreement of the Chair. Affected students will be notified of this change in writing.

7.3 Available Outcomes

- 7.3.1 Where extenuating circumstances are accepted, a repeat placement will be granted at no additional cost (Defer). A deferral may be subject to a new health questionnaire being completed, and/or a referral to Airedale Occupational Health.
- 7.3.2 Where extenuating circumstances are not accepted the placement will be considered a fail. If a repeat placement is subsequently granted the College will charge for the repeat placement (Refer).
- 7.3.3 Where the students extenuating circumstances are not accepted and the student performance is such that a repeat placement is not granted, the College will withdraw the student from their programme of study, and where appropriate, make recommendations for transfer to an alternative programme of study.
- 7.3.4 Where a student chooses to withdraw from QTS, the Panel will record the decision as a referred placement with no opportunity for a repeat placement.
- 7.3.5 Where a student has been awarded QTS, the decision will be documented and presented to the examination board.

8.0 Recommendations to the Assessment Board

- 8.1 The School Experience Professional Panel will record and make recommendations to the Assessment Board for the award of QTS.
- 8.2 The Assessment Board will consider and approve recommendations for QTS, having been made aware of the recommendations of the School Experience Professional Panel relating to extenuating circumstances and failed placements.
- 8.3 The School Partnerships Manager(s) will inform the Assessment Board of the School Experience Professional Panel recommendations. This will be executed through the reporting of placement passes and fails on the placement modules on the Student records system.

9.0 Appealing the Decision of the School Experience Professional Panel

9.1 Grounds for Appeal

There are three grounds for appeal:

- 9.1.1 That the decision not to accept professional extenuating circumstances and/or not to award QTS was inconsistent and/or unsupported by the evidence presented;
- 9.1.2 That there was a material procedural irregularity made by the School Experience Professional Panel which prejudiced the case;
- 9.1.3 Additional evidence has come to light since the decision of the School Experience Professional Panel which could not have reasonably been expected to have been produced at the time of the consideration of the application.

There is no right of appeal against professional or academic judgement and this alone cannot be considered as grounds for appeal.

In some cases the appeal, on consideration, may be found to be a complaint and handled under the Bradford College Complaints Procedure for Students on Higher Education Programmes. In the event of this happening the student will be informed of this and the paperwork passed onto the relevant person to consider.

9.2 Making a Request for an Appeal

- 9.2.1 Students cannot submit a request for an Appeal until they have received written notification of the decision of the School Experience Professional Panel (SEPP).
- 9.2.2 If the student is unhappy with the outcome of the Panel they may make a written request for a review.
- 9.2.3 Appeals must be made in writing within 10 days of receiving the decision of the Panel, to the Quality Department or emailed to appeals@bradfordcollege.ac.uk
- 9.2.4 Appeals should cite which grounds(s) are relevant to the case together with supporting evidence. It is important to note that this review is not a fresh consideration of the decision of the School Experience Professional Panel.
- 9.2.5 Where a student appeals the outcome of the School Experience Professional Panel, a copy of the minutes and Professional Extenuating Circumstances form will be provided to members of the Appeal Panel for their information.
- 9.2.6 Appeals can be submitted to appeals@bradfordcollege.ac.uk

9.3 Late Submissions

- 9.3.1 It is the students' responsibility to ensure that their completed request for an Appeal, documentation and evidence is submitted within the time limit. If the student finds they are unable to do this, they must seek an extension from the Head of Governance and Operations.
- 9.3.2 Extensions will only be considered in exceptional circumstances where the student has shown serious and valid reasons for the late submission.
- 9.3.3 Non-agreed late submissions will normally be rejected as being out of time, unless the student has

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shown a serious and valid reason for the late submission and the failure to seek an extension earlier.

9.4 Documentation

- 9.4.1 The appeals pro-forma does not constitute evidence. Students submitting an appeal must attach original copies of documentation to evidence the circumstances referred to in the appeal. It is expected that supporting evidence is received within the working day limit. If this is not possible the student must contact The Governance and Operations Team to indicate which evidence is outstanding, why it is not available and when it will be submitted. Contact can be made by emailing: appeals@bradfordcollege.ac.uk
- 9.4.2 Claims for previously undisclosed mitigating circumstances will also require evidence to show why a claim for mitigating circumstances was not made in the usual time frame.
- 9.4.3 The College reserves the right to check the authenticity of all documentation submitted as part of the appeal. Any student found to have submitted fraudulent or unauthentic evidence as part of an appeal will be subject to disciplinary procedures.
- 9.4.4 Statements provided as evidence for an appeal submission arising from a previous discussion with or disclosure to a member of College staff:
- Should be requested from the member of staff by the student.
 - Be in writing or other documentary form.
- 9.4.5 Requests for an Appeal should include names of the person(s) the student would like to call witnesses along with the expected nature of the evidence.

9.5 Requests without Evidence

- 9.5.1 Acceptance of submissions without evidence, or indication of evidence is made at the discretion of the designated officer who will notify the student of the decision.

9.6 Appeal Outcomes

- 9.6.1 The completed Appeal form will be considered by the Head of Governance and Operations (or nominee) and the student will be informed of the decision in writing by the Quality Department.
- 9.6.2 If a student remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they may make a written request to the Quality Department for the case to proceed to a Panel Hearing. The Head of Governance and Operations (or nominee) reserves the right to reject any requests for a Panel Hearing on the basis that the request is deemed to be vexatious, frivolous or malicious. The student must request the Panel Hearing within 10 working days of receiving the outcome.

9.7 Appeal Panel Hearings

- 9.7.1 Where a student's written request for a Panel Hearing is accepted, the student will be notified in writing of the date and location of the Hearing. It is the responsibility of the student to attend on this date. Dates will not be changed except in the event of exceptional circumstances arising which will be at the discretion of the Chair of the Appeal Hearing.

- 9.7.2 The student can choose to attend the hearing in person or have the hearing conducted without personal attendance. If the student chooses to attend the Appeal Hearing they must inform the Governance Analyst in writing five days before the hearing to confirm attendance.
- 9.7.3 The Head of Governance and Operations has the discretion to arrange a Hearing via telephone conference or virtual meeting platform if all parties are agreeable.
- 9.7.4 In all cases, students are expected to provide contact details and inform the Governance Analyst if they do not receive expected communications or if any other material difficulties arise, which may impede the process.
- 9.7.5 Students must inform the Panel of any witnesses they wish to call a maximum of five days before the Appeal Hearing along with the expected nature of the evidence. If this is not done within the prescribed timescales witnesses will not be permitted to attend the hearing.
- 9.7.6 Witnesses can also provide a statement for the Panel, providing their identity has been disclosed prior to the Panel. Unless deemed essential to proceedings by the Head of Governance and Operations, a witness' non availability will not be deemed a valid reason to change the date of the Appeal Hearing.
- 9.7.7 Where a student does not attend their Appeal Hearing, the Chair of the Panel will decide if the appeal should proceed or be terminated and the appeal dismissed. Where this occurs the matter will be deemed concluded, unless it is decided by the Head of Governance and Operations that there were valid grounds for non-attendance. It is the students' responsibility to inform the relevant person of the circumstances behind non-attendance and to request a re-arranged hearing. Hearings will only be re-arranged at the discretion of the Director of Quality and Information Services. If refused a 'Completion of Procedures' letter will be sent and the matter deemed to be concluded.
- 9.7.8 Where the Appeal is submitted on the basis of procedural error, the Panel will seek to:
- Establish the facts of the matter.
 - Establish the degree of gravity of the circumstances.
 - Reach a finding of accepted or rejected on the basis of the evidence submitted.
 - Determine a course of action where appeals are accepted.
- 9.7.9 Where the appeal is submitted on the basis of incapacity (extenuating circumstances), the Panel will seek to:
- Establish the facts in respect of past circumstances.
 - Establish whether there were grounds at the time of the incident for non-disclosure.
 - Establish whether the appeal is upheld or rejected.
 - Where the appeal is upheld the Panel will determine the gravity of the extenuating circumstances and determine an appropriate course of action.

Due of the confidential nature of incapacity the Panel will not invite a representative of the Division nor will they be invited to comment on the events.

9.7.10 Where the appeal is submitted against the decision of the School Experience Professional Panel, (professional extenuating circumstances), the Panel will:

- Determine whether the decision not to accept professional extenuating circumstances was inconsistent and/or unsupported by the evidence presented.
- Establish if there was a material procedural irregularity by the SEPP which prejudiced the students' case.
- Consider any additional evidence which has come to light since the decision of the SEPP which could not have reasonably have been expected to have been produced at the time of the consideration of the application.

9.8 Appeal Panel

9.8.1 Appeal Hearings are conducted by an Appeal Panel comprising of 3 people:

- The Chair, normally a member of the College's Senior Leadership Team (or nominee)
- A senior academic who will normally be the Head of Department or a Head of School.
- A Student Services Representative

9.8.2 Appeals are always heard on their individual merits and the panel should show a balanced representation.

9.8.3 A member of the original SEPP panel will be present, to present and be questioned on the case on the panel's behalf.

9.8.4 To ensure fairness and consistency of outcomes, a representative from the Quality Department will be in attendance. The representative will also advise and direct the panel.

9.8.5 Where final consideration is rejected there is no appeal against this decision with the College and a 'Completion of Procedures' letter will be sent to the student. The Quality Department will forward this information to the relevant Head of Department and Head of School.

9.8.6 A decision to reject an appeal shall not adversely affect a student's academic outcome decided by an Assessment Board, except where it is found that an incorrect mark has been presented.

9.9 Notification of Decision

9.9.1 If it has been determined that the appeal can be resolved, the Governance and Compliance Analyst will inform the student of the decision in writing and where relevant, the outcome will be taken to the next School Experience Professional Committee.

9.10 Reconsideration of Rejected Appeals

9.10.1 Students who have had their appeal rejected after the Appeal Hearing may have the right to have their appeal reconsidered by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). Appeals referred to the OIA will be reviewed independently of Bradford College.

9.10.2 Information on how to apply and links to the relevant guidance and forms will be included within the Completion of Procedures letter. If the student decides to refer the case to the OIA, the Scheme Application Form must be received by the OIA within twelve months of the date on the Completion of Procedures letter.

9.10.3 The OIA will normally only review appeals which have been dealt with through the College's internal procedures and will not review:

- Admissions.
- Academic judgement.
- Student employment.
- Matters which are being considered by a tribunal or court and where the proceedings have been concluded.
- Matters which are being considered by a court or tribunal where the proceedings have not been stayed.
- Matters which they have already dealt with.
- Any complaint which took place more than 12 months prior to it being received by the OIA.

At the conclusion of the College internal processes the student shall be issued with a 'Letter of Completion' of internal proceedings in the manner prescribed by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). A student who is of the opinion that their case is unresolved may apply to the OIA for reconsideration of the case under the rules of its scheme within three months of issue of the 'Letter of Completion'.

Details of how to appeal can be found at: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/making-a-complaint-to-the-oia/how-to-make-a-complaint.aspx> The OIA contact details are;

OIA(HE)

Second Floor
Abbey Gate
57 – 75 Kings Road
READING
RG1 3AB

Tel: **0118 959 9813**

E-form: <https://oiahe.org.uk/contact-us/e-form.aspx>

Email enquiries@oiahe.org.uk

10.0 Retention of Information and records relating to Appeals and Complaints

By making a submission for extenuation or continuation an applicant is agreeing that the College can process the information it contains for all purposes relating to the School Experience Professional Panel Procedure. This information and records will be kept in accordance with the General Data Protection

Regulation Act (2018) and the College's "Information and Records Management Policy".

11.0 Monitoring of Applications for Extenuation

The College reviews the volume and outcomes of Professional Extenuating Circumstances applications and considers the Equality Impact of decisions made by the Committee. It may report on this to its formal committees as part of impact assessment and good governance.

Related Polices/Procedures/Regulations

- Information and Records Management Policy
- Bradford College Fitness to Practise Procedures
- Higher Education Student Appeals Policy
- Higher Education Student Complaints Policy
- Higher Education Student Complaints Procedure
- Learning Support for Students with Disabilities and/or Learning Difficulties Policy