

## **9.0 Complaints Policy – Complaints Against an Accredited Program or Applicant**

### **9.1 Overview**

There may be occasions when trainees, faculty, sponsoring institutions, or others involved with accredited programs have complaints regarding the program. The Accreditation Commission reviews in a timely, fair, and equitable manner any complaint it receives against an accredited institution or program that is related to the agency's standards or procedures. In addition, the Accreditation Commission may initiate its own complaint based on information available in the public domain, such as information obtained from legitimate news reports, licensing or regulatory agencies. The Accreditation Commission has developed this process for addressing such complaints.

### **9.2 Scope**

#### *9.2.1 Scope and Time limits for Filing a Complaint*

The Accreditation Commission reviews complaints against an accredited program, or an applicant program, that provide credible information to indicate that the program is not in compliance with the Consortium's accreditation standards or accreditation requirements. If a complaint raises a question of possible violation of these requirements, the program will be given the opportunity to respond to the complaint in accordance with the procedural requirements below. If a violation is found, the Accreditation Commission will take appropriate action. The Accreditation Commission maintains all records of complaints received programs.

The Accreditation Commission's complaint process relates specifically to the Consortium's standards and accreditation requirements. The Accreditation Commission will not intervene on behalf of individuals in cases of personnel action and will not review a program's internal administrative decisions. If the complaint falls outside of the Accreditation Commission's scope, the complainant may be referred to the appropriate regulatory agency or entity with jurisdiction over the subject matter of the complaint.

The Accreditation Commission accepts, actively researches, and responds to complaints that are submitted within a reasonable amount of time following the last event that is material to the complaint, typically one year. The Accreditation Commission may, at its sole discretion, elect to investigate a complaint if it is received after this one-year time period.

#### *9.2.2 Complaint Requirements*

##### *9.2.2.1 Submission process*

A complainant is not required to file a grievance with the program prior to filing a complaint with the Accreditation Commission if a complainant fears that

participation in the program's grievance process may lead to retaliation.

To submit a complaint, the online, accessible Program Complaint Form must be filled out by complainant. The complaint should include all of the following:

- a. *A narrative section for each complaint type.*
- b. *The accreditation standards and requirements that are germane to the complaint (with assistance of Commission staff if requested.*
- c. *to use the program's internal grievance procedures prior to filing a grievance with the Accreditation Commission, documentation of the grievance and the program's response, if any.*
- d. *Any additional supporting documentation*

If a complainant submits a complaint by means other than the online form, the Commission staff will instruct the complainant to resubmit the complaint using the online form and will assist the complainant as needed. The date of submission of the online form will be the date of receipt by the Commission for purposes of calculating timelines

#### ***9.2.2.2 Anonymous Complaints***

The Accreditation Commission may, at its sole discretion, accept anonymous complaints but will require the program to respond only if, in the absence of the identity of the complainant, it can be determined that the allegations constitute a possible violation of accreditation requirements. When the identity of the complainant is a material fact necessary to permit the program a full and fair opportunity to respond or the lack of identity of the complainant makes it impossible to determine with reasonable certainty that a violation of accreditation requirements may have occurred, then the anonymity of the complainant may be a basis for dismissing a complaint. Anonymity may also prevent the Accreditation Commission from communicating with a complainant and obtaining information that may be required for the complaint's resolution.

#### ***9.2.2.3 Requests for Confidentiality***

Complainants may request that the Accreditation Commission withhold their identity from a program named in the complaint. The Accreditation Commission will review the complaint but, in its discretion, may not be able to process a complaint where the identity of the complainant is a material fact necessary to determining whether a violation has occurred or is needed to permit the institution or program a full and fair opportunity to respond to the complaint allegations.

### ***9.2.3 Complaint Process***

#### ***9.2.3.1 Complaint Review and Assessment***

Within 30 business days of receipt of the complaint, the Accreditation Commission will assess whether the complaint states a possible violation of the

Consortium's standards or accreditation requirements. For the purposes only of this initial assessment of the complaint, the Accreditation Commission will accept facts alleged in the complaint as true. If more information is needed to assess the complaint, and the identity of the complainant is known, the Accreditation Commission will request it from the complainant, who then must provide the information in order for the Accreditation Commission to continue the complaint process. If the complaint does not allege a violation of accreditation requirements or fall outside of the scope of the complaint policy, the Accreditation Commission will inform the complainant and the file will be closed.

If the Accreditation Commission determines that the complaint sufficiently alleges a possible violation of the Consortium's standards or accreditation requirements, the complaint will be forwarded to the program with a directive that program respond directly to the complaint and provide any specific information or documentation requested by the Accreditation Commission. The program will be provided no more than 30 business days from the date of the Accreditation Commission directive to respond to the complaint. The response should be structured as follows:

- a. *deny the allegation(s) of the complaint and present evidence to the contrary*
- b. *acknowledge the allegation(s) of the complaint and demonstrate the allegation(s) do not constitute violation(s) of accreditation requirement(s), and/or*
- c. *accept the allegation(s) and document the actions taken to assure that the violation has been corrected and will not occur in the future*

Within 30 business days of receipt of the response, the Accreditation Commission will determine whether it appears more likely than not that there is a violation of an accreditation requirement. The Accreditation Commission may request additional information from either the complainant or respondent if it believes such information is necessary to the resolution of the complaint and will reevaluate the response after the institution or program has had an opportunity to submit such additional information.

#### *9.2.2.4 Action and Notification*

The following actions may apply to complaints that have been fully reviewed through the complaint procedure:

- a. *No violation. If it appears there is no violation of accreditation requirements, the Accreditation Commission will inform both the complainant and the program that the complaint has been closed.*
- b. *Evidence of compliance. If it appears there was a violation of an accreditation requirement and the program has demonstrated it has taken sufficient corrective action to come into compliance, the*

*Accreditation Commission will inform both the complainant and the program that the complaint has been closed.*

- c. **Possible violation.** *If it appears more likely than not that there may be a violation of an accreditation requirement and the program has not demonstrated sufficient corrective action, or if the complaint review reveals non-compliance of a more systemic nature, the Accreditation Commission may:*
  - i. *determine that there is no violation and dismiss the matter*
  - ii. *request additional information from the institution or program*
  - iii. *order the institution or program to take specific actions to bring it into compliance,*
  - iv. *issue a show cause order, or*
  - v. *withdraw the program's accreditation*
- d. *In all cases, the complainant and the program will be notified of the final disposition of the complaint within 10 business days of its decision.*
- e. *The Accreditation Commission's decision is not appealable by the complainant or the program, except that the program may appeal a decision to withdraw its accreditation in accordance with the Accreditation Commission's appeal procedures.*

### 9.3 Complaints Against The Accreditation Commission

9.3.1 The Accreditation Commission reviews complaints against the Accreditation Commission in a timely, fair, and equitable manner, and applies unbiased judgment to take follow-up action, as appropriate, based on the results of its review. The Accreditation Commission maintains all records of complaints received against the Accreditation Commission

The process for complaints against the Accreditation Commission is as follows:

**1. Submission Process.** *All complaints against the Accreditation Commission must be submitted online using the accessible complaint submission form. If a complainant submits a complaint by means other than the online form, the Commission staff will instruct the complainant to resubmit the complaint using the online form and will assist the complainant as needed. The date of submission of the online form will be the date of receipt by the Commission for purposes of calculating timelines.*

**2. Documentation.** *The complaint must state in narrative format the specific allegations in sufficient detail and with sufficient supporting documentation to permit understanding of the nature of the complaint.*

**3. Review and assessment.** *The complaint and its supporting documentation will be reviewed by a person or persons designated by the Accreditation Commission within 90 business days of receipt of the*

*complaint. Thereafter, the reviewer(s) will act to gather any additional relevant information. If the Reviewer(s) determines that additional time is needed to complete the review the Reviewer(s) may extend that time for no more than an additional 30 business days. Both parties will be promptly notified of any such extension of time.*

**4. Action and notification.** *On or before the end of the allotted review period The Reviewer(s) will issue a recommend decision to the Accreditation Commission. The Accreditation Commission will make a final decision to either accept, reject or modify the recommended decision within 30 business days of its receipt of the Reviewers' recommendation. The complainant will be notified of the Accreditation Commission's final decision within 10 business days of its decision. The Accreditation Commission's final decision is not appealable.*

#### **9.4 Provisions Applicable to Complaints Against an Accredited Program or Applicant and Complaints Against the Accreditation Commission**

##### **9.4.1 Complaint Reports**

A Complaint Report is provided to the Accreditation Commission at each accreditation Commission meeting.

##### **9.4.2 Resolution of Complaint**

In no event shall the resolution of the complaint exceed 180 business days from the receipt of complaint.

##### **9.4.3. Complaints to United States Department of Education**

The Consortium for Advanced Practice Providers is recognized by the United States Department of Education as the accrediting agency for postgraduate nurse practitioner training programs and joint nurse practitioner and physician assistant/associate training programs in the U.S. The public has a right to contact the U.S. Department of Education with feedback or a complaint.

To contact the U.S. Department of Education, please see below:

- Phone: 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327)
- Website: [Home | U.S. Department of Education](http://www2.ed.gov)
- Mailing Address:  
The U.S. Department of Education (ED)  
400 Maryland Ave., SW  
Washington, DC 20202