

Complaint Procedures

Complaint Review Procedures

Complaint review procedures are established to protect the integrity and the maintenance of accreditation standards and procedures as they relate to approved COMs having recognition from the COCA. Complaint procedures provide a mechanism for concerned individuals or organizations to bring to the attention of the accrediting agency information concerning specific actions and programs, which may be in non-compliance with the COCA's accreditation standards. The COCA recognizes the responsibility to provide complainants the opportunity to utilize the COCA as a vehicle to deal with specific grievances as well as being a mechanism for reviewing and finally resolving complaints against the COCA or the administrative staff.

Complaints may be filed by any individual or group including, but not limited to, the following:

- An osteopathic medical student;
- An individual, organization, or institution affected by the accreditation program academically or professionally; or
- A member of the general public.

Complaint Submission about a COM

The complaint must be in writing and signed by the complainant. All signed complaints must be submitted to the Secretary of the COCA via email to predoc@osteopathic.org. Complaints that are received that are not signed by the complainant(s) or are submitted anonymously will not be processed.

The complainant will present a concern regarding a violation(s) of an accreditation element or procedure that must be based upon direct and responsible information. The complainant must provide a narrative of his/her allegation, as it relates to the accreditation standards or procedures, and include any documentation that could support his/her allegation. This information must be accurate and well documented.

The complainant will provide evidence that an effort has been made to resolve the problem through the recommended route with the COM administration, and will include information about all other actions initiated to resolve the problems.

Within ten (10) business days of receipt of the final version of a signed complaint, copies of the complaint will be sent to the COM's Chief Executive Officer or Chief Academic Officer for response to the complaint. The COM's Chief Executive Officer or Chief Academic Officer will have fifteen (15) business days to respond. The complaint and the COM's response will be forwarded to the COCA Chair who will either assign the COCA Executive Committee (COCA EC) or appoint an *ad hoc* subcommittee to determine whether the complaint merits further investigation. The complainant and the COM will be notified in writing of the conclusion of the COCA EC or the *ad hoc* subcommittee regarding whether the complaint merits further investigation,. This process will be concluded within thirty (30) days.

Complaint Investigation

If an investigation is warranted, the COCA Secretary, in cooperation with AOA corporate counsel and the COCA EC or the *ad hoc* subcommittee will initiate a formal review within thirty (30) days from the decision to initiate an investigation. The COCA EC or the *ad hoc* subcommittee will decide what particular method of study and mode of investigation is most appropriate for the complaint that has been received, which may include an on-site visit.

The COCA EC or the *ad hoc* subcommittee's findings will be forwarded to the COCA. Based upon these findings, the COCA may take either of the following actions:

- Dismiss the complaint and notify the COM of its conclusion that the COM is in compliance with the accreditation standards; or
- Notify the COM that, on the basis of its investigation, the COCA has determined that the COM is failing to meet the accreditation standards.

If the COM has been found to be out of compliance with the accreditation standards, the COCA may decide upon appropriate next steps, including but not limited to:

- A Progress Report documenting the COM's plans to address the deficiencies outlined by the COCA and its implementation of the plans; or
- A site visit to determine whether a change in the accreditation status of the COM is warranted.

The COM will be notified within fifteen (15) business days of the COCA decision. Any such accreditation decision or adverse action of the COCA will be subject to the reconsideration and appeal procedures set forth in the COCA's Policies and Procedures.