

## **CACREP Complaint Policy: Processes and Procedures**

Students, faculty and other interested parties may submit written, signed complaints to CACREP for consideration. Only written, signed complaints will be considered by CACREP; oral and unsigned complaints will not be considered. CACREP strongly encourages attempts at informal or formal resolution through the program's or sponsoring institution's internal processes prior to initiating a formal complaint. An "appropriate" complaint is one that directly relates to a program's compliance with the CACREP Standards, policies and procedures. Therefore, the complaint must be based on the accreditation standards or required accreditation process/procedure(s). Submission of documentation which supports the non-compliance is required.

CACREP is interested in the continued quality of programs under its purview but does not intervene on behalf of individuals or act as a court of appeal for individuals in matters of admission, appointment, promotion or dismissal of faculty, staff or students. CACREP does not intervene in complaints as a mediator but maintains, at all times, an investigative role. This approach does not require that the complainant be identified to the program. CACREP, upon receipt, will take every reasonable precaution to prevent the identity of the complainant from being revealed to the program; however CACREP cannot guarantee the confidentiality of the complainant.

### *Procedures*

The following procedures have been established to manage complaints:

### *Inquiries*

When an inquiry about filing a complaint is received by the CACREP office, the inquirer will be directed to the on-line location of the CACREP Accreditation Policies and Standards.

### *Written Complaints*

When a complaint is submitted, the following procedure is followed:

- A. The materials submitted are initially reviewed by staff. This initial review would include verifying that the complaint is signed, that standards have been cited, and that supporting documents have been included.
- B. The chair of the appropriate review committee may be consulted to assist in determining whether there is sufficient information to proceed.
  1. If the complainant provides sufficient evidence of probable cause of non-compliance with the standards or required accreditation process/procedures, the complainant is so advised and the complaint is investigated using the procedures outlined in the following section "formal complaints".

2. If the complainant does not provide sufficient evidence of probable cause of non-compliance with the standards or required accreditation procedures, the complainant is so advised. The complainant may elect:
  - a. to revise and submit sufficient information to pursue a formal complaint,
  - b. or to not pursue the complaint. In that event, the decision will be so noted and no further action will be taken.

### *Formal Complaints*

Formal Complaints are investigated as follows:

- A. If it is determined that the complaint requires further investigation, the complainant is informed that CACREP will investigate the complaint. Additionally, the complainant is advised that CACREP will provide no further correspondence or information regarding this matter to the complainant. Information related to the accreditation status of the program will be reflected in CACREP's posting of its list of accredited programs located on the CACREP website.
- B. CACREP informs the chief executive officer (CEO) of the sponsoring institution [with copies sent to all administrative levels – i.e. the school/college dean and the program chair] that CACREP has received information indicating that the program's compliance with specific required accreditation procedures or designated standards has been questioned
- C. Program officials are asked to report on the program's compliance with required procedures or standards in question by a specific date, usually within thirty (30) days. Documented evidence that demonstrates compliance is required.
- C. Receipt of the program's written response to the complaint is acknowledged.
- E. The appropriate committee will review the program's written response to the complaint at the next regularly scheduled meeting. In the event that waiting until the next meeting would preclude a timely review, the appropriate committee will review and consider the report in a telephone conference call. The action of the committee will be forwarded to the CACREP Board for mail ballot approval in this latter case.
- F. CACREP may act on the compliance question raised by the complainant by
  1. determining that the program continues to comply with the procedures or standards in question and that no further action is required; or
  2. determining that the program does not or may not continue to comply with the procedures or standards in question and going on to determine whether any corrective action the program could take to fully comply could be documented and reported in a written report to CACREP or would require an on-site review.

- a. If the program may respond by written report, CACREP will describe the problem and set a compliance deadline and submission date for the report and request documentation to support the corrective action taken by the program.
  - b. If an on-site visit is required, CACREP will describe the problem and determine, based on the number and seriousness of the identified problems, whether the matter may be reviewed at the next regularly scheduled on-site review or whether a special on-site review will be conducted (at the college/university's expense).
- G. Within thirty (30) days of its action, CACREP will also notify the program of the results of the investigation.