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## Policy on Complaints Against Member Institutions

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January 2024

### Policy

As an institutional accreditor, ACCJC is responsible for assuring the public of the educational quality of institutions it accredits by making sure an institution complies with the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies (together Commission's Standards).

The Commission requires each accredited institution to have in place student grievance and public complaint policies and procedures that are reasonable, fairly administered, and well publicized.

ACCJC's complaint process allows students, employees, and members of the public to provide information about an institution's ability to meet the Commission's Standards. Accordingly, ACCJC only considers a complaint against member institutions that relates solely to Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission Policies.<sup>1</sup> When the Commission does receive a complaint about a candidate or accredited institution, it reviews that information to determine if it is relevant to the compliance of that institution with the Commission's Standards.

### Criteria for Review of a Complaint

- Complaint should include a statement of facts supported by evidence of non-compliance with a specific Eligibility Requirement, Standards for Accreditation, Policy, or Procedures, and is not simply an individual grievance.
- Complainant should provide evidence that they have made appropriate efforts to follow the institution's formal complaint and/or grievance process when applicable to their concerns, and allow for that process to conclude prior to submitting their complaint.
- Complainant must submit the complaint within 18 months from the date of the alleged occurrence(s) indicating noncompliance with Commission's Standards.
- Complaint should be written and submitted through ACCJC's online complaint form <https://accjc.org/complaint-process>, or mailed in hard copy to the Commission at ACCJC, 428 J Street, Suite 400, Sacramento, CA 95814. ACCJC staff will assist complainants by phone and email to document and submit their complaint for review.

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<sup>1</sup> § 602.23 (c)(1)(2)

- Complainant must acknowledge awareness that ACCJC may send a copy of the complaint to the Chief Executive Officer of the institution. The complainant may request their personally identifiable information to remain confidential.
- Complaint must include complainant name, reply address, and signature.
- Anonymous complaints will be reviewed only if there is sufficient information and evidence to support institutional noncompliance with the Commission's Standards.

### **Complaints ACCJC Will Not Review**

ACCJC is not responsible for resolving disputes between an individual and an institution. ACCJC does not review the outcomes of institutional grievance processes to either uphold or overturn those decisions. ACCJC does not intervene in matters of an individual nature, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Admission
- Granting or transfer of academic credits
- Grades
- Fees
- Financial Aid
- Student discipline
- Faculty appointments, promotion, tenure, dismissals, hiring, or similar matters

### **Procedures**

When ACCJC receives a complaint about a candidate or accredited institution, it reviews that information to determine if it is relevant to the compliance of that institution with the Commission's Standards. If the Commission staff determines the complaint does not pertain to Commission Standards or is not within its scope of review, or if the evidence was insufficient or incomplete, they will notify the complainant in writing within ten working days.

If the complaint meets the criteria for review and warrants further consideration, ACCJC will notify the complainant and will forward a copy of the complaint, including related documentation as applicable, to the institution for review and response. The institution will generally have 30 working days to respond to the complaint in writing.

ACCJC will review the information provided by the institution within 30 working days of its receipt and make a decision regarding the complaint. If it is determined the institution is in compliance with Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission Policies, the complainant and institution will be so notified in writing and the matter will be closed. If, however, ACCJC determines the institution may be out of compliance, the complainant and institution will receive notice, including any additional follow-up required in accordance with Commission policies.

### **Policy Elements**

The Commission at all times reserves the right to request information of an affiliated institution and to visit that institution for purposes of verifying that the institution meets Eligibility

Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission Policies. Based on the results of its review of complaints, the Commission may take action, including sanctions and other enforcement actions, in accordance with its *Policy on Commission Actions on Institutions*.

The Commission will keep a record of student and public complaints against member institutions in accordance with ACCJC’s protocols for the retention of records.

ACCJC staff will report to the Commission annually regarding the status and resolution of complaints reviewed against member institutions.

**Timetable for Complaints Against Member Institutions**

Time	Responsible Party	Action
Within 18 months of occurrence	Complainant	Submit information pertaining to non-compliance
Within 10 working days of receipt	ACCJC Staff	Notify complainant whether meets criteria of policy for review; if not meets, then matter closed, if meets criteria, inform institution
Within 30 days after ACCJC notification	Institution	Responds to ACCJC regarding complaint
Within 30 days of receipt of institution information	ACCJC Staff	Determine whether institution is in compliance, if so, send communication to institution and complainant and matter is closed; if not in compliance, determine follow up course of action and communicate with institution and complainant

*Adopted June 1972; Revised January 1984, January 1993; Edited October 1997; Revised June 2001; Edited August 2007; Revised January 2013; Edited April 2013; Revised June 2019; Revised January 2024*

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