



COMMISSION ON OSTEOPATHIC COLLEGE ACCREDITATION

Complaint Review Procedures

This complaint review procedure is established to protect the integrity and the maintenance of accreditation standards and procedures as they relate to COMs accredited by the COCA. Complaint procedures provide a mechanism for concerned individuals or organizations to bring information concerning specific actions and programs that may be in non-compliance with the COCA's accreditation standards to the COCA's attention. The COCA recognizes its responsibility to provide complainants the opportunity to utilize the COCA as a vehicle to deal with specific grievances, as well as its responsibility to be a mechanism for reviewing and finally resolving complaints against the COCA or the administrative staff.

Complaints must be submitted within two years of the alleged incident that is the basis of the complaint.

The COCA does not mediate on behalf of a complainant or otherwise intervene in decisions made by an accredited program.

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 academically or professionally affected by the accreditation program; or
- A member of the 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, COCA, American Osteopathic Association, 142 E. Ontario St., Chicago, IL 60611, or via email to predoc@osteopathic.org. Complaints unsigned by the complainant(s) or submitted anonymously will not be processed. Note: While a complaint must be signed by the complainant, the COCA does not disclose the identity of the complainant to any other third party. Names of all individuals identified in the complaint will be redacted.

A complaint must present a concern regarding one or more violations of accreditation standards or procedures and must be based on direct and responsible information. A citation to the relevant standard or procedure must be included as well. The complainant must provide a narrative of their allegation as it relates to the accreditation standards or procedures and include any documentation that could support their allegation. This information must be accurate and well documented.

The complainant must provide evidence that an effort has been made to resolve the problem through COM administration, which is the recommended route, and must include information about all other actions taken to resolve the problems before filing the complaint with the COCA.

Within ten (10) business days of receipt 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 ask the COCA Executive Committee or appoint an *ad hoc* subcommittee to determine whether the complaint merits further investigation. The above-referenced time frames may be extended by the COCA Secretary when circumstances warrant.

Response to Complaints

The decision of the COCA Executive Committee or *ad hoc* subcommittee will be communicated to the complainant and the COM in writing. The complainant will not be informed of the result of any such investigation. This process will be concluded within 15 days.

Further Complaint Investigation

If an investigation is warranted, the COCA Secretary, in cooperation with AOA corporate counsel and the COCA Executive Committee or the *ad hoc* subcommittee will initiate a formal review within thirty (30) days from the decision to initiate an investigation. The COCA Executive Committee or the *ad hoc* subcommittee will decide what mode of investigation is most appropriate for the complaint, which may include a written progress report, on-site visit, or any investigation deemed appropriate.

The COCA Executive Committee 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 report that the COM is in compliance with the accreditation standards; or
- Notify the COM in question that, based on an investigation, the COCA has determined that the COM fails to meet the accreditation standards.

If the COM has been found to be out of compliance with any accreditation standard, the COCA may require any one or more of the following methods of review:

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

These procedures should be completed, and the COM notified within fifteen (15) days of the COCA decision. Any such accreditation decision or action of the COCA will be subject to the reconsideration and appeal procedures set forth in these Policies and Procedures.

Investigation and Resolution of a Complaint Against the COCA or Administrative Staff

The complaint must be in writing and signed by the complainant. All signed complaints must be submitted to the Secretary, COCA, American Osteopathic Association, 142 E. Ontario St., Chicago, IL 60611, or via email to predoc@osteopathic.org.

The COCA Secretary, in conjunction with AOA General Counsel, will present the complaint to the COCA Chair, Vice-Chair, and, when applicable, affected staff members. A subcommittee of the COCA will be appointed by the COCA Chair to formally review the complaint and develop a response. This subcommittee review process and response will be completed and forwarded to the COCA within thirty (30) days of the date that the subcommittee is convened.

The COCA will consider the complaint and the response at its next regularly scheduled meeting. The complainant will be invited to appear before the COCA to present respective views to attempt an agreed resolution. The final action of the COCA will be communicated to the complainant within fifteen (15) business days of the COCA's decision.

For additional information, contact COCA staff at predoc@osteopathic.org or (312) 202-8124.