

## **CCE Policy 64                      Complaints**

This policy addresses the requirements and procedures for filing a complaint against a Council on Chiropractic Education (CCE) accredited Doctor of Chiropractic Program/Institution or personnel representing the CCE.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The Council on Chiropractic Education (CCE) recognizes the value of information provided by students, employees, and others in determining whether a program's/institution's performance is consistent with the CCE Accreditation Standards for obtaining or maintaining accreditation. The CCE's interest is also to ensure that programs/institutions maintain appropriate grievance procedures and standards of procedural fairness and that the procedures are applied appropriately and consistently.

The procedures for the review of complaints involving programs/institutions enable the Council to address possible violations of its *Standards*, Principles, Processes & Requirements for Accreditation, and policies or procedures, as well as to address possible violations of a program's/institution's own policies and procedures, if related to the *Standards*.

Because the CCE's complaint procedures are for the purpose of addressing any significant noncompliance with the *Standards*, policies, or procedures, the procedures are not intended to be used to involve the CCE in disputes between individuals and programs/institutions, or cause the CCE to interpose itself as a reviewing authority in individual matters of admission, grades, granting or transferability of credits, application of academic policies, fees or other financial matters, disciplinary matters or other contractual rights and obligations. Nor does the CCE seek redress on an individual's behalf. Under no circumstances does the CCE respond to, or take action on, any complaint or any allegation that contains defamatory statements. Further, the CCE will not serve as a grievance panel when the outcomes of programmatic/institutional grievance or appeal processes are unsatisfactory to the complainant.

The CCE expects individuals to attempt to resolve the issue through all means available to the complainant, including following the program's/institution's own published grievance procedures, before submitting a complaint to the CCE. Therefore, the CCE's usual practice is not to consider a complaint that is currently in administrative proceedings, including programmatic/institutional proceedings, or in litigation. However, if there is substantial, credible evidence that indicates systemic problems with an accredited program/institution, the CCE may, at its discretion, choose to proceed with the review.

### **Responsibilities of Programs/Institutions**

The *CCE Accreditation Standards* state that programs/institutions must maintain; policies and procedures that equitably address student complaints and grievances, student conduct issues and academic standing reviews, documented by records of hearings and proceedings related to such matters. (Section 2.F)

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The CCE also requires, in accordance with federal regulations (§CFR 602.16), that each program/institution maintains a record of student complaints received by the program/institution that are assessed by the CCE as part of the program's/institution's site visit evaluation for initial or continued accreditation.

### **Procedures for Filing a Complaint against a Program/Institution**

An individual may make an inquiry regarding complaint procedures or about issues and concerns that could be considered complaints; however, the CCE's response and its obligations to meet the specific timetables outlined in these procedures will begin only after the complainant submits a properly completed formal written complaint.

In order to be considered, a formal complaint must be submitted in writing, signed, dated and **two copies** sent to the: Council on Chiropractic Education, Attention: President, 8049 N. 85<sup>th</sup> Way, Scottsdale, Arizona, 85258. The CCE will neither entertain complaints that are not in writing or which are anonymous, nor will it consider complaints sent through facsimile transmission. In addition, the CCE will not act on complaints submitted on behalf of another individual or complaints forwarded to the CCE. The information submitted must include:

- a. A statement describing the complaint in the clearest possible terms.
- b. The section(s) of the *CCE Accreditation Standards* alleged to have been violated and the time frame in which the significant lack of compliance is alleged to have occurred.
- c. A clear and concise written description of the evidence upon which the allegation is based. (Materials and documentation used to support a complainant's allegations should be limited to and directly related to the reported complaint.) The evidence should state relevant facts and document and support the allegation that the program/institution is in significant violation of the standards referenced in the complaint.
- d. Evidence that the program's/institution's formal complaint process has been exhausted. A description of the action taken by the program/institution to date and a copy of the program's/institution's response to the complainant as a result of prescribed procedures.
- e. An acknowledgment that CCE staff may send a copy of the complaint to the President/CAO of the program/institution.
- f. Full disclosure about any other external channels the complainant is pursuing, including legal action.

Once the formal written complaint is submitted, the CCE and the complainant are responsible for the following:

1. The CCE will acknowledge a formal written complaint within 15 business days of its receipt.

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2. Within 60 calendar days after acknowledging receipt of the complaint, the President and/or Council Executive Committee (CEC) will review the complaint and its documentation and determine (1) whether it is within the scope of CCE policies and is accreditation related, (2) if there is adequate documentation in support of the allegations, and (3) whether the complaint raises significant questions about the program's/institution's compliance with the *Standards*. The President or CEC will inform the complainant regarding the disposition of the complaint to include one of the following:

- a. The complaint will not be processed further because it is not within the scope of CCE policies and jurisdiction or there is inadequate documentation to raise questions concerning the program's/institution's compliance with the *Standards*.
- b. Where appropriate, a resolution is suggested to the complainant and/or the program/institution.
- c. The complaint has sufficient substance to warrant further review. In this case, the CCE will make every effort to expedite the investigation; however, the time required to conduct the investigation may vary considerably depending on the circumstances and nature of the complaint. When a complaint is further investigated, a copy of the complaint will be forwarded to the program's/institution's chief executive officer who will be asked to respond to the CCE within 20 business days. Following the review, the complainant and program/institution involved will be notified regarding one of the following:
  - (1) The complaint will not be processed further because there is insufficient evidence of significant non-compliance. The decision of the President or the CEC is final.
  - (2) There appears to be sufficient evidence of significant non-compliance or the President or CEC are unable to determine compliance, then one of the following actions may be taken:
    - (a) Authorize a Special Committee to visit the institution. The Special Committee will examine documents and interview program/institutional personnel to analyze and make a judgment about compliance, and prepare a report. The report of the committee will be forwarded to the Council for review and action at the next regular meeting of the Council. Following that meeting, the complainant and program/institution involved will be notified of the decision of the Council.
    - (b) Forward the complaint and related documentation directly to the Council for review and action. Following their review, the complainant and program/institution involved will be notified of the decision of the Council.
    - (c) Include the complaint for evaluation by a site team during an upcoming scheduled visit to the program/institution. Following the review of the site visit report, the complainant and program/institution involved will be notified of the decision of the Council.

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- (d) Request additional information. After reviewing the additional information, the President or CEC may decide to take any of the actions as described in (1), (2)(a), (2)(b), or (2)(c) above.

For items (2)(a), (2)(b), or (2)(c) above, the decision of the Council is final unless the disposition is one that is otherwise appealable as stated in CCE Policy 8, Appeals of Decisions by the Council.

Individual complaints will be retained in the CCE files by program/institution. Should a number of individual complaints suggest a pattern of concern which may evidence a significant lack of compliance with the *Standards* that was not evident from any one individual complaint, the Council may renew its consideration of the matter for whatever action may be appropriate.

**Complaints against the Council on Chiropractic Education**

Complaints against the CCE are limited to complaints regarding the agency's standards, procedures, and staff or any other CCE representative.

The procedures for filing a complaint are as follows:

1. If the complaint is against a CCE staff member, the following procedure applies.
  - a. The individual should submit a written complaint to the CCE President that includes a description of the specific complaint accompanied by documentation supporting the allegation.
  - b. The President will acknowledge the complaint within 10 business days of its receipt.
  - c. Following review, the President will inform the complainant of action within 30 days of receipt of the complaint.
2. If the complaint is against a Councilor or an agency representative, such as an on-site visiting team member, the following procedure applies.
  - a. The individual should submit a written complaint to the CCE President that includes a description of the specific complaint accompanied by documentation supporting the allegation.
  - b. The President will acknowledge the complaint within 10 business days of its receipt, and;
    - 1) Forward to the Council Executive Committee (CEC) to investigate and make a decision if the complaint is not pertaining to a member of the CEC, or
    - 2) Forward to the Council to investigate and make a decision if the complaint is pertaining to a member of the CEC.

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In both instances, adherence to conflict of interest policies is required and the investigation may include review of the complaint with the individual(s) named as well as with the complainant.

- c. Following review, the President will inform the complainant of action within 45 days of receipt of the complaint.
3. If the complaint is against the CCE President, the following procedure applies.
- a. The individual should submit a written complaint to the Council Chair that includes a description of the specific complaint. It should be addressed to the attention of the "Council Chair" and sent to the CCE Administrative Office, 8049 N. 85<sup>th</sup> Way, Scottsdale, Arizona, 85258.
  - b. The Council Chair will acknowledge the complaint within 20 business days of its receipt and will designate a committee composed of members of the Council Executive Committee and/or the Council to investigate the complaint and recommend action to the Chair. The investigation may include review of the complaint with the CCE President as well as with the complainant.
  - c. The Council Chair will review the recommended action and inform the complainant and CCE President of action within 45 days of receipt of the complaint.

In all cases, concern that action was not in accord with the complainant's expectations is not in and of itself cause for review of the complaint.

**Distinction between Submitting Third-Party Comments and Filing Formal Complaints**

The CCE is interested in ensuring that programs/institutions maintain *ongoing* compliance with CCE Accreditation Standards and policies *outside the program's/institution's scheduled formal accreditation status review* and that programs/institutions maintain appropriate grievance procedures and standards of procedural fairness that are applied consistently. Therefore, if an individual has evidence of a program's/institution's *significant* non-compliance with CCE Accreditation Standards, policies, or procedures, the individual should inform the CCE using these procedures.

Third-party comments are submitted by the public *at the time of a program's/institution's formal accreditation status review* for the purpose of informing the CCE regarding ongoing commitment to compliance with the CCE Accreditation Standards and policies. Therefore, if an individual wishes to address a program's/institution's compliance with the *Standards* at the time of the program's/institution's formal accreditation status review, he/she should reference CCE Policy 68, Provision of Opportunity for Third-Party Comment Regarding Accreditation Decisions.

**Combined:            CCE Policy COA-31, BOD-64, BOD-65 & BOD-67 (1/17/10)**  
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