

APA Accreditation Complaint - Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What type of complaints does the APA Commission on Accreditation (APA-CoA) review?

A: The APA-CoA reviews complaints regarding program compliance with accreditation standards. These reviews examine program consistency with the policies of the APA-CoA and are not ways for an individual to change their status with a program or directly affect their situation. To review a complaint, the APA-CoA must receive a completed and signed accreditation complaint form. The APA Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation has staff who are available to discuss the process and answer questions that you may have; OPCA staff may be contacted by calling 202.336.5979 or sending an email to apaaccred@apa.org.

Q: Will the Commission investigate my complaint?

A: The APA-CoA is not an investigative body. The APA-CoA reviews all complaint materials and the program's response materials to decide if a program is complying with the accreditation standards.

Q: How do I file a complaint with the APA Commission on Accreditation?

A: If you have a complaint, you can complete the online [complaint submission form](#). You can also request a Microsoft Word version of the complaint form and send it by electronic mail to apaaccred@apa.org. The complaint can also be submitted in hard copy to the Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation (OPCA), APA, 750 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002. On the form, you must provide details about your complaint and list the accreditation standards that you find apply to the complaint. You may provide documents that demonstrate the program's non-compliance with the standards. If you have questions about submitting a complaint, please contact the APA Office of Accreditation by calling 202.336.5979 or sending an email to apaaccred@apa.org.

Q: Is there a form for filing an accreditation complaint? How do I get that form?

A: You will find an online complaint form for each level of training (master's, doctoral, internship, and postdoctoral residency) on the APA accreditation [website](#). If you need assistance finding the online form or have questions about how to complete it, please contact the APA Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation by calling 202.336.5979 or sending an email to apaaccred@apa.org.

Q: How many standards should I check on the online complaint form?

A: Only the accreditation standards you have concerns about should be identified.

Q: Most of the supporting documentation for my complaint comes from email threads. How should I provide the documents?

A: Providing a non-repetitive single-email string as a PDF is the best way to provide this form of documentation.

Q: The program did not follow its remediation policy; may I file a complaint with the Commission?

A: Yes.

Q: I want to file a complaint against a program faculty member, staff member, or supervisor; will the APA-CoA consider such a complaint?

A: The APA-CoA reviews complaints against APA accredited programs. The Commission will consider a complaint against a program faculty member, staff member, or supervisor if their actions raise concerns about the program's compliance with the accreditation standards.

Q: May I file an anonymous complaint?

A: No, anonymous complaints are not accepted. However, you can choose to file a confidential complaint. This means that the APA-CoA will not provide your name or contact information to the program. If you choose to submit a confidential complaint, it is important that you remove any information from your complaint materials that you think might identify you. The APA-CoA will not make changes to complaint materials it receives.

Q: Will the program know that I filed a complaint?

A: Yes. Your complaint form and supporting material will be provided to the program within 30 days after the accreditation office receives the completed materials. If you choose to file a confidential complaint, your name and contact information will not be provided to the program.

Q: How does the accreditation complaint process work?

A: The APA-CoA provides the complaint to the program within 30 days after it is received by the APA office of accreditation. The program has 30 days to respond to the complaint. The APA-CoA then reviews the complaint and material submitted with it and the program's response to the complaint at its next regularly scheduled meeting. The schedule of APA-CoA meetings is located on the APA Accreditation website: [Important APA Accreditation Dates](#). The APA accreditation office will send a letter to the person filing the complaint (i.e., complainant) and to the program (i.e., respondent) when it completes its review.

Q: I am concerned about retaliation against me from the accredited program if I file a complaint.

A: Students, interns, and residents, as well as people filing on their behalf, are allowed 18 months (about one (1) and a half years) after the student / trainee has left a program to file a complaint with the APA-CoA. Reviewing the anti-retaliation policies and complaint procedures for the institution where your program is located is recommended if you have concerns about retaliation.

Q: I have been dismissed from my program and want to file a complaint.

A: Complaints are accepted from students, interns, and residents up to 18 months (about 1 and a half years) after they've left a program. A complaint filed during this 18-month time period will meet the timeframe established by the APA-CoA.

Q: If the CoA finds that my complaint has merit, will the program be forced to reinstate me?

A: No. The APA-CoA reviews the program's consistency with accreditation standards. This review is not a way for an individual to be reinstated, rehired, or to have a personal dispute resolved.

Q: What may happen to the program if I file an accreditation complaint?

A: Upon its review of a complaint, the CoA may:

- (a) Request an invitation from the program for a special site visit to investigate the complaint;
- (b) Request additional information from the program;
- (c) Send an informative letter to the program, the person(s) filing the complaint, or both parties;
- (d) Notify the program that no action is required by the program; or
- (e) Take other action that the APA-CoA considers appropriate following their review given the circumstances of the complaint.

Q: Do I get to see the program's response to my complaint?

A: No, but you will receive a letter from the APA-CoA after it reviews and makes a decision about the complaint.

Q: A number of us (e.g., students/interns/residents) have the same complaint about an APA-accredited program. Should we file separate complaints, or all co-sign the same complaint?

A: You may submit a single complaint if multiple persons have the same concern.

Q: The program I have a complaint against is not APA-accredited. What should I do?

A: The APA-CoA only reviews complaints against programs that it accredits. It may be helpful to review policy for complaints, which may be termed “due process” or “grievance procedures” from the non-accredited program. You can also review policies from the institution where the program is located to identify your options.

Q: May I file a complaint against a site visitor?

A: Your program may file a complaint against a site visitor. Concerns about an APA-CoA site visitor should be shared with the leadership of your program, ideally during the site visit. The *Accreditation Operating Procedures (AOP)* provides the process for a program to file a complaint against a site visitor. For more information, see [AOP Section 3.2](#).

Q: What if I have additional questions about filing a complaint?

A: Please contact the Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation (OPCA) at apaaccred@apa.org or 202.336.5979.