

Complaint Procedures

The faculty and staff of the Speech-Language Pathology Program welcome your feedback about your experiences in the program, including concerns you may have, and/or suggestions for how the program may accomplish its mission in a better way. We have provided a “Suggestion Box” and encourage you to use this, if you wish.

Students are expected to share concerns related to a specific supervisor or faculty member directly with that person and to make every effort to resolve the issue(s) with the individual involved. If, following efforts to resolve the concern, the student feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved, he/she may submit a formal complaint in writing to the Program Director. The Program Director will meet with the student and offer to serve as a consultant to both the student and the supervisor/faculty member. If the problem is not resolved satisfactorily at this level, the student’s written complaint and a record of efforts to resolve the problem will be forwarded to the Chair of the Department of Rehabilitative Services for further action. Keep in mind that anonymous complaints are difficult to investigate. Thus, students are strongly encouraged to sign written complaints or voice concerns in person. Please see the Student Handbook for the University’s Student Grievance Procedure.

For complaints or concerns regarding the program’s compliance with standards for accreditation or appeals related certification, students are expected to adhere to the following procedures (ASHA, 2006):

Procedures for Complaints Against Graduate Education Programs

A complaint about any accredited program or program in Candidacy status may be submitted by any student, instructional staff member, speech-language pathologist, audiologist, and/or member of the public.

Criteria for Complaints Against Graduate Education Programs

For a complaint to be considered by the CAA, it must:

- (a) be against an accredited education program or program in Candidacy status in speech-language pathology and/or audiology,
- (b) relate to the Standards for Accreditation of Graduate Education Programs in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology, and specify where possible the relevant standards,
- (c) include verification and documentation (e.g., copies of grievance processes, communications verifying completion of processes, etc.) if the complaint is from a student or faculty/instructional staff member at that institution, that the complainant exhausted all relevant institutional grievance and review mechanisms before submitting a complaint to the CAA, if relevant to the complaint.

The complaint must clearly describe the specific nature of the complaint and the relationship of the complaint to the accreditation standards, and provide supporting data for the charge. The burden of proof rests with the complainant. All written testimony must include the complainant's name, address, and telephone contact information and the complainant's relationship to the program in order for the Accreditation Office to verify and communicate with the source of the complaint.

All complaints must be signed and submitted in writing to the Chair, Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology, American Speech Language-Hearing Association, 10801 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852. Complaints will not be accepted by email or facsimile.

Determination of Jurisdiction

Within 15 days of receipt of the complaint, Accreditation Office staff will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and will forward a redacted copy of the complaint to the Executive Committee of the CAA. The original letter of complaint is placed in an Accreditation Office file separate from the program's accreditation file.

The Executive Committee determines whether the complaint meets the above-specified criteria. Staff, because of the need to redact the complaint, verifies the accreditation status of the program against which the complaint is filed, and communicates this information to the Executive Committee with the redacted complaint. Although complainants are encouraged to specify the accreditation standards as the basis for the complaint, the Executive Committee will verify the relevant standards related to the complaint as part of its jurisdiction review.

An affirmative vote by two-thirds of the voting members of the Executive Committee, exclusive of the chair, is required to proceed with an investigation of a complaint.

If the Executive Committee of the CAA makes the determination that the complaint does not meet the above-listed criteria, the complainant is informed within 30 days of the letter transmitting the complaint to the EC that the CAA will not review the complaint.

Evaluation of Complaint

If the Executive Committee of the CAA determines that the complaint satisfies the above-listed criteria, the CAA will evaluate the complaint.

The chair of the CAA informs the complainant within 30 days of the letter transmitting the complaint to the chair that the Council will proceed with an evaluation, including the specification of the standards upon which the investigation will be based. Because it may be necessary to reveal the identity of the complainant to the affected program or to other potential sources of relevant information, the complainant will be required to sign a waiver of confidentiality within 30 days of the letter indicating that the CAA will proceed with its evaluation. The complainant is given the opportunity to withdraw the complaint during that time. If the complainant does not wish to pursue the matter, the investigation is concluded. If the complainant does not wish to withdraw the complaint, the complainant is asked to keep the initiation of an investigation confidential.

Within 15 days of receipt of the waiver of confidentiality, the chair of the CAA notifies the program director and the institution's president or president's designee by certified return receipt mail that a complaint has been registered against the program, including the specification of the standards upon which the investigation will be based. The notification

includes a redacted copy of the complaint without revealing the identity of the complainant. The program's director and the institution's president or president's designee are requested to provide complete responsive information and supporting documentation that they consider relevant to the complaint within 45 days of the date of the notification letter.

Within 15 days of receipt of the program's response to the complaint, the chair of the CAA forwards the complaint and the program's response to the complaint to the CAA. The materials are redacted and the identity of the complainant and the program under investigation is not revealed to the members of the CAA or to recipients of requests for information, unless a majority of CAA members consider such disclosure necessary for the proper investigation of the complaint. If the majority of Council members conclude that individuals other than the complainant, the program director, and the institution's president or president's designee may have information relevant to the complaint, the chair of the CAA requests such information.

After reviewing all relevant information, the CAA determines the course of action within 30 days. Such actions include, but are not limited to the following:

- Dismissal of the complaint;
- Recommending changes in the program within a specified period of time and as they relate to standards (except for those areas that are solely within the purview of the institution);
- Continuing the investigation through an on site visit to the program;
- Placing the program on probation;
- Withholding/withdrawing accreditation.

If the CAA determines that a site visit is necessary, the program director and the institution's president or president's designee are notified, and a date for the site visit is expeditiously scheduled. The program is responsible for expenses of the site visit. The site visit team is selected from the current roster of CAA site visitors. During the site visit, emphasis is given only to those standards with which the program is allegedly not in compliance. The site visit team submits a written report to the CAA no later than 30 days following the site visit. As with all other site visits, only the observations of the site visitors are reported; site visitors do not make accreditation recommendations. The CAA forwards the report to the program director and the

institution's president or president's designee within 15 days. The program or institution should provide a written response to the chair of the CAA within 30 days of the date on which the report is postmarked to the program director and the president or president's designee. The purpose of the response is to verify the accuracy of the site visit report.

The CAA reviews all evidence before it, including the site visit report and the program's response to the report, and takes one of the following actions within 21 days:

- Dismisses the complaint;
- Recommends modifications of the program within a specified period of time (except for those areas that are solely within the purview of the institution);
- Places the program on probation;
- Withholds/withdraws accreditation.

If the CAA withholds/withdraws accreditation, the program director and the institution's president or president's designee are informed within 15 days of the CAA decision that accreditation has been withheld/withdrawn. Notification also includes justification for the decision, and informs the program of its option to request Further Consideration. Further consideration is the mechanism whereby the program can present documentary evidence of compliance with the appropriate standards and ask the CAA to reevaluate its decision to withhold/withdraw accreditation.

If the program does not exercise its Further Consideration option, the CAA's decision to withhold/withdraw accreditation is final and no further appeal may be taken. If accreditation is withheld/withdrawn, the chair of the CAA notifies the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education at the same time that it notifies the program of the decision.

If the program chooses to request Further Consideration, the CAA must receive the request within 30 days from the date of the notification letter. With the request for Further Consideration, the program must submit additional written documentation to justify why accreditation should not be withheld/withdrawn. A hearing with the CAA is not provided for Further Consideration requests. The CAA will evaluate the request for Further Consideration and take one of the following actions within 30 days:

- Recommends modifications of the program within a specified period of time (except for those areas that are solely within the purview of the institution);
- Places the program on probation;
- Withholds/withdraws accreditation.

Within 15 days of its decision the CAA notifies the program and the complainant of its decision.

If the CAA decision after Further Consideration is to withhold/withdraw accreditation, the program may appeal the decision in accord with the Appeal Procedures described in Chapter VI of this manual.

Summary of Time Lines

The following summarizes the time lines in the complaint process, beginning from the date a complaint is received.

- Complaint is acknowledged within 15 days of receipt and forwarded to CAA Executive Committee (EC)
- If EC determines that complaint does not meet criteria for complaints, complainant is informed within 30 days that CAA will not review
- If EC determines that complaint meets criteria, complainant is informed within 30 days of the determination that CAA will proceed with evaluation
- Complainant is given 30 days to sign waiver of confidentiality or withdraw the complaint
- Within 15 days of receipt of waiver of confidentiality, the complaint is sent to the program for response within 45 days
- Within 15 days of receipt of program's response, Chair forwards complaint and program response to CAA for review
- Within 30 days, CAA determines course of action
- If CAA determines that a site visit is necessary, it is scheduled and site visit team submits report to CAA within 30 days of visit
- Site visit report is forwarded to program for response within 30 days
- CAA takes action within 21 days of program response

- If CAA withholds or withdraws accreditation, program is notified within 15 days of CAA decision
- If program does not request Further Consideration, decision is final and CAA notifies Secretary of U.S. Department of Education; if program requests Further Consideration, CAA must receive within 30 days from notification and takes action within thirty 30 days
- CAA informs program and complainant within 15 days of decision

Procedures for Complaints Against the Council on Academic Accreditation

Criteria for Complaints Against CAA

Complaints against the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA) must relate to the accreditation process, decisions, or actions or activities of the council.

Complaints may be filed by any student, instructional staff member, speech-language pathologist, audiologist, and/or member of the public. All complaints must be signed and in writing to the vice president for academic affairs (vice president), American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 10801 Rockville Pike, Rockville MD 20852. The burden of proof rests with the complainant. Complaints will not be accepted by email or facsimile.

Determination of Jurisdiction

Receipt of a complaint is acknowledged by the ASHA Accreditation Office staff and forwarded to the vice president within 15 days of receipt of the complaint. The original letter of complaint is filed in the ASHA Accreditation Office. The vice president determines whether the complaint meets the above-specified criteria. If the vice president makes the determination that the complaint does not meet the above criteria, the complainant is informed within 30 days of transmitting the complaint to the vice president that the complaint will not be evaluated.

Evaluation of Complaint

If the vice-president determines that the complaint meets the above criteria, the complaint will be evaluated as specified below.

1. The vice president informs the complainant within 30 days of the letter transmitting the complaint to the vice president that the evaluation will proceed. Because it may be necessary to identify the complainant to the CAA, a review committee, or to other sources of relevant information, the complainant will be required to sign a waiver of confidentiality within 30 days of the letter indicating that the complaint will be evaluated. The complainant is given the opportunity to withdraw the complaint during that time. If the complainant does not wish to pursue the matter, the process is concluded. If the complainant wishes to proceed, the complainant is asked to keep the initiation of an investigation confidential.
2. Within 15 days of receipt of the complainant's waiver of confidentiality, the vice-president notifies the CAA that a complaint has been registered against the Council and that an evaluation is in process. Notification includes a redacted copy of the complaint without revealing the identity of the complainant. The CAA is requested to provide complete responsive information and supporting documentation that it considers relevant to the complaint within 45 days of the date of the notification letter.
3. Within 30 days of receipt of the complainant's waiver of confidentiality, the vice president shall appoint a Review Committee to review the complaint against the Council. To assure that the committee is thoroughly familiar with accreditation standards and Council policies and procedures, the Committee shall consist of three past members of the CAA who have served during the preceding 5 years, none of whom shall have any relationship or conflict of interest with the complainant. Within 15 days of receipt of the CAA's response to the complaint, the vice-president forwards the complaint and the CAA response to the complaint to the Review Committee.
4. After reviewing all relevant information, the Review Committee shall determine the course of action within 60 days from the date material related to the complaint is mailed to the Review Committee. Such recommendations may include, but are not limited to:
 - Dismissal of the complaint;
 - Recommended changes in Council policies and procedures within a specified time period;
 - Other recommendations.

5. Within 15 days of the conclusion of its evaluation of the complaint, the Review Committee will forward its recommendations to the vice president. Such recommendations will be disseminated to the CAA for its review. A full discussion of the recommendations of the Review Committee shall be placed on the agenda for the next regularly scheduled meeting of the CAA and for consideration of appropriate Council action. In the event that more immediate action is required, the CAA may have a conference call for discussion and consideration of appropriate Council action.
6. The vice president will notify the complainant of Council action on the complaint within 15 days of the Council's decision in the matter. Decisions of the Council relative to complaints may not be appealed.

Summary of Time Lines

- Complaint is acknowledged and forwarded to vice president within 30 days of receipt
- If vice president determines that complaint does not meet criteria for complaints, complainant is informed within 30 days that complaint will not be evaluated
- If the vice president determines that complaint meets criteria, complainant is informed within 30 days that evaluation will proceed
- Complainant is given thirty (30) days to sign waiver of confidentiality or withdraw the complaint
- Within 15 days of receipt of waiver of confidentiality, the complaint is sent to the CAA for response within 45 days
- Within 30 days of receipt of waiver of confidentiality, the vice president appoints Review Committee to review complaint
- Within 15 days of receipt of CAA's response, the vice president forwards complaint and CAA response to Review Committee
- Within 60 days, Review Committee determines course of action
- Review Committee forwards recommendations to vice-president within 15 days of decision, and vice president disseminates recommendations to CAA
- CAA discusses Review Committee recommendations at its next regularly scheduled meeting (or by conference call if immediate action is required) and takes appropriate action

- Vice President notifies complainant of CAA action within 15 days of CAA decision
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