

Section 15: Complaints

CEPH expects accredited units to remain in compliance with all CEPH standards for accreditation throughout the accreditation period granted. Therefore, one of the principal concerns of CEPH when it receives a complaint about an accredited unit is whether the accredited unit continues to comply with CEPH's published standards and procedures. For this reason, CEPH requires complaints to reference the specific accreditation standards and policies that are the subject of the complaint.

Another concern involves the methods, policies, philosophy, and procedures of the accredited unit for handling complaints on an ongoing basis. CEPH requires the accredited unit to have procedures for fairly and promptly resolving complaints that are raised by students and others. Therefore, in investigating complaints, CEPH also examines whether the accredited unit's methods for handling complaints and grievances are equitable, consistently applied, and effective.

CEPH is concerned about the frequency and pattern of complaints about accredited units. CEPH requires the accredited unit to monitor all complaints it receives and to take steps to assure that similar complaints do not become repetitive or routine.

Filing a complaint

A complaint against a CEPH-accredited unit may be submitted to the CEPH executive director at any time via mail or email on the [Complaint Form](#) provided on the CEPH website. Complaints must meet all of the following minimum requirements:

- submitted in writing
- specifically indicates which accreditation criterion or policy is allegedly being violated
- includes documentation that the complainant has already exhausted the accredited unit's administrative complaint or grievance processes
- is signed
- includes the complainant's contact information

CEPH also requires a release authorizing CEPH to forward a copy of the complaint, ~~including identification of the complainant,~~ to the accredited unit for a response. ~~The Complaint Form informs the complainant that CEPH will identify the complainant in the notification to the unit. In the event the complainant requests to remain confidential, CEPH will make every effort to honor such request. However, such requests may hinder CEPH's ability to conduct a full investigation into the allegations of the complaint. CEPH cannot guarantee confidentiality.~~

In rare circumstances, where credible violations of CEPH standards or policies are alleged, CEPH may, in its sole discretion, investigate complaints that are not submitted on the CEPH Complaint Form or without a release.

Jurisdiction

CEPH is not a mediator of disputes and, generally, will not interpose itself in a manner that limits the discretion of CEPH-accredited units in the normal operation of their personnel or academic policies and procedures, unless a violation of CEPH standards or policies is specifically alleged. Such matters include admission; grading; credit transfer decisions; fees or other financial matters; disciplinary matters; and contractual rights and obligations of students and personnel. CEPH will not seek any type of compensation, re-admission, or other redress on behalf of an

individual. CEPH will not respond to or take action on any complaint that is defamatory, hostile, or profane. In addition, CEPH will not involve itself in collective bargaining disputes.

Exhausting administrative rights

CEPH expects a complainant first to attempt to resolve a grievance through the accredited unit's own published policies and procedures through the level of the college or university before submitting a complaint to CEPH. Therefore, the complainant must document that all administrative processes and appeals have been exhausted in the complaint filing.

Time limitation

CEPH will not review or act upon a complaint if it is filed with CEPH more than one year after the circumstances leading to the complaint occurred or more than one year of the final disposition of the complaint by the accredited unit after the application of its own grievance policies and procedures through the college or university level.

Complaint procedure

If the complaint meets all of the above requirements, is specific, and includes documentation that administrative processes have been exhausted, the following steps will be taken by CEPH:

- 1) After receipt of the complaint, CEPH staff will send a letter or email to the complainant, within 15 days, acknowledging receipt of the complaint and explaining the process CEPH will follow in investigating the complaint.
- 2) CEPH staff will conduct an initial review of the complaint to determine whether it sets forth information or allegations that reasonably suggest that the accredited unit may not be in compliance with CEPH accreditation standards. If additional information or clarification is required, the executive director will send a request to the complainant. If the requested information is not received within 15 days, the complaint may be considered abandoned and may not be investigated by CEPH.
- 3) If the executive director determines after the initial review of the complaint that the information or allegations do not reasonably demonstrate that an accredited unit is out of compliance with CEPH standards, the complaint may be considered closed and will not be investigated by CEPH.
- 4) If the executive director determines, after the initial review of the complaint, that the information or allegations suggest that an accredited unit may not be in compliance with CEPH standards, the executive director will notify the accredited unit that a complaint has been filed. The notice will summarize the allegations, identify the CEPH standards that were allegedly violated and provide a copy of the original complaint to the accredited unit. The accredited unit will be given 30 days to provide a response. A shorter response time may be required where, in the judgment of the executive director, a complaint alleges serious violations of accreditation standards or policies that may pose a potential risk to students and/or the public.
- 5) The executive director will provide the complaint materials and the school or program's response, to the CEPH Executive Committee at its next regularly scheduled meeting, or sooner where circumstances require.
- 6) The Executive Committee shall be the final decision-making body on the complaint and its decision may include any of the following:

- a. Consider the complaint resolved and continue the accreditation status of the SPH, PHP, or SBP without change;
 - b. Continue the accreditation status of the unit, but require further reporting from the SPH, PHP, or SBP to include an interim report, substantive change, additional information or other reporting, as appropriate;
 - c. Continue the accreditation status of the SPH, PHP, or SBP, but initiate an earlier focused or full review of the accreditation unit;
 - d. Direct an on-site visit to be conducted at the accreditation unit by a full or partial team to investigate the allegations;
 - e. Recommend to the Council that it place the accredited unit on probation, subject to an appeal in accordance with CEPH policies and procedures; or
 - f. Recommend to the Council that it revoke the SPH, PHP, or SBP's CEPH accreditation, subject to appeal in accordance with CEPH policies and procedures.
- 7) In all instances, the executive director will send a letter to the complainant and the accredited unit informing it of the final disposition of the complaint.

Appeal rights

The accreditation unit may not appeal a decision on a complaint except where probationary accreditation is conferred or accreditation is revoked. The appeals procedures described elsewhere in the CEPH policies and procedures shall apply.

If a complainant is not satisfied with the resolution determined by the Executive Committee, CEPH will provide the complainant with the name and address of the appropriate office within the USDE and of any other applicable recognition bodies.

Recordkeeping

CEPH maintains a record of all complaints. The maintenance and destruction of complaint records shall comply with CEPH's Document Retention Policy.

Expenses

In the event that the Council directs an on-site visit to an accredited unit to investigate complaint allegations, the costs of the visit will be borne by the accredited unit.

Complaints against CEPH

Complaints about CEPH's performance related to its own procedures, policies, or criteria may be forwarded to CEPH's offices. Complaints must be in writing, must be specific, and must be signed by the complainant. The executive director will seek to achieve an equitable, fair, and timely resolution of the complaint. As necessary, complaints may be referred to the CEPH Executive Committee and if so referred, will be considered at the Executive Committee's next regular meeting. Executive Committee decisions relative to the complaint will be communicated to the complainant in writing within 30 days of the meeting. CEPH maintains complete and

accurate records of complaints, if any, against itself and makes those records available for inspection upon request at the CEPH office.