

## Policy on Complaints Against the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges

*(Adopted January 1999; Edited August 2007, August 2012; Revised June 2014)*

The purpose of this policy is to provide a process whereby individuals who have been aggrieved as a direct result of acts or omissions by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) related to its accreditation functions may file a complaint. Complaints against the ACCJC may be about the ACCJC's lack of compliance with its own published Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies (together Commission's Standards), with federal regulations, and with accreditation procedures.

In order to be considered a formal complaint against the ACCJC, a complaint must involve issues broader in scope than a concern about a specific institutional action or a specific evaluation team. The ACCJC does not review complaints seeking to substitute Commission or team judgments related to institutional reviews or raise matters about which a member institution has due process procedures as a part of accreditation reviews.<sup>1</sup> An accreditation action not in accord with a complainant's expectation is not in and of itself cause for review of a complaint against ACCJC.<sup>2</sup> The ACCJC does not review complaints presented primarily to indicate disagreement with accreditation standards, or to indicate comment concerning the accredited status of a member institution.<sup>3</sup>

The complaint must be written, and must state clearly the nature of the complaint and the manner in which the complainant was directly aggrieved by the acts or omissions. The complainant must be clearly identified and the complaint must contain an original signature.

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<sup>1</sup> In accordance with Commission policies, the institution through its Chief Executive Officer is provided the opportunity to challenge the appointment of any evaluation team member for cause, and to provide an evaluation of the team chair and team visit to the Commission following an on-site visit. The institution also is provided the opportunity to review draft team reports for errors or omission of fact, to provide comment or supplemental information following receipt of the final team report, and to present oral comment at the Commission meeting during which the institution is being reviewed. In the event of an adverse action (denial or termination of accredited status), the institution may request a review by the Commission of its action, and then may appeal the adverse action.

<sup>2</sup> In accordance with the Commission's Policy on Public Disclosure and Confidentiality in the Accreditation Process, the institution's CEO is required to notify the campus community about accreditation activities and participation in them, about submission of third party comments, and about providing input related to the review of the institution's accredited status. In accordance with the Policy on the Role of Accreditation Liaison Officers, the ALO is appointed by the institution's CEO and is responsible to communicate information about accreditation and institutional quality to the constituencies at the college and to facilitate communications related to the institution's team evaluations. College constituents and interested members of the public are encouraged to follow institutional procedures for providing information or complaints related to the institution's accreditation review.

<sup>3</sup> Please refer to the forms and formats for Third Party Comment, Complaints Against Member Institutions, and for submitting comment on policies and standards (Policy on Review of Accreditation Standards) for these kinds of communication.

The complaint must identify the Commission's Standards, or procedure in question and include substantial evidence to support the allegations being made. Should a complaint require Commission consideration and action, the complainant will be notified of the timing of the Commission's review.

Except in extraordinary circumstances, the ACCJC does not consider complaints if the concern alleged occurred more than three years prior to filing the complaint. The ACCJC may elect to consider complaints together if they concern the same circumstances, complainants, or period of time. The ACCJC does not accept amendments to a complaint.

The President, on behalf of the ACCJC, responds to each complaint made against the ACCJC within 30 days of receipt of the complaint (if more time than this is required to complete an investigation, the complainant is notified within the initial 30 days); implements corrective action where appropriate or makes recommendations to the Commission to implement the corrections; reports the nature and disposition of any complaints to the Chair of the Commission; and compiles annually a list, available to the public on request, which summarizes the nature and disposition of any such complaints. Upon advice of counsel, the ACCJC retains the right to withhold public disclosure of information if potential legal action is involved in the complaint.

If a complaint filed against the ACCJC under the provisions of this section is not resolved by the President, or if the President is a direct subject of the complaint, the Commission Chair shall designate one or more persons to review the handling of the complaint. The Commission shall review the report of the designated reviewer(s) and shall notify the complainant and the President of its response.

The ACCJC's disposition of complaints under this policy is final. Complainants do not have a right to appeal the disposition of a complaint.