

BRITISH ACUPUNCTURE ACCREDITATION BOARD

COMPLAINTS AGAINST TEACHING INSTITUTIONS IN A FORMAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BOARD

1.0 Scope of complaints

- 1.1 The Board may receive a complaint about a teaching institution in a formal relationship with the Board, i.e. from the time of acceptance of Notification. Such a complaint may come from acupuncture student(s), graduate(s), member(s) of faculty or staff of a teaching institution, member(s) of the public, or another institution, which alleges a breach of an Essential Requirement, Criterion, policy, or procedure of the Board.
- 1.2 The Board shall not entertain a complaint against an institution unless such a breach is alleged. The Board shall not intercede on behalf of individuals, nor act as a 'court of appeal' for faculty or staff members, or students, in matters of admissions, refunds, appointments, promotion or suspension, or dismissal. The Board shall entertain a complaint only when it believes that the institution's practices indicate that the institution may be in breach of the Board's Essential Requirements, Criteria, policies or procedures.
- 1.3 The Board will record and acknowledge all complaints as indicated in Sections 3 and 4 of this document but will suspend any further investigation or action at any stage if the complainant is pursuing the issue through formal legal channels until the outcome of the legal proceedings is known.
- 1.4 Normally, the Board will not pursue any complaint unless the complainant has already followed the internal institutional grievance or complaints procedures, or, in the case of the complainant being external to the institution, has correspondence indicating that they have pursued their complaint with the institution.

2.0 Types of complaint: un-attributed and formal complaints, urgent and serious complaints

- 2.1 There are two major types of complaint; un-attributed and formal. Within these categories, in addition, there are urgent and serious complaints.
- 2.2 Un-attributed complaints are those received or passed on to the Board's office by phone, or in writing by email or post, where the complainant, although identified to the Board, does not wish to be identified to the institution concerned. Normally the complainant wishes to inform the Board of their concern but is not willing to pursue it themselves with the institution.
- 2.4 Formal complaints are those received by the Board office in writing by email or post where the complainant is willing to be identified to the institution concerned and is both informing the Board of their concern and asking the Board to investigate this.
- 2.5 A serious complaint is one that alleges a serious breach of the Board's Essential Requirements such that Safe Practice may be jeopardised.
- 2.6 For the complaint to be urgent it will describe circumstances which could have substantial, adverse effects upon the institution, students or staff.

3.0 Process of dealing with complaints

- 3.1 The process of following up complaints depends on the type, urgency and seriousness of the complaint.
- 3.2 All complaints will be recorded in the Board Office. Further details of this are in Section 4.0 of this policy
- 3.3 Single un-attributed complaints normally cannot be followed up by the Board.
- 3.4 Serious or urgent complaints will be followed up through a Special visit to the institution as outlined in Section 8 of this policy.

3.5 Cumulative un-attributed complaints and formal complaints not deemed to be either urgent or serious will be followed up through the normal Board processes of annual visits by the accreditation officer (AO) as outlined in Section 6.0 of this policy.

4.0 Record of Complaints

4.1 All complaints received by Board Officers or the BAcC Office, formal and un-attributed, will be noted confidentially and the information passed to the Board Office. If possible the confidential file note will include:

- Name and contact details of complainant
- Role of complainant in relation to the teaching institution
- Institution about which the complaint is being made
- Nature of the complaint
- Process that has been pursued within the institution so far

The file note will be dated and signed by the person receiving the complaint, and that person's name and designation will be noted.

4.2 This confidential file note will be circulated to the Chair of AC and the Institution's AO when it is received.

4.3 Unless the complaint is followed up, the individual confidential file notes will be destroyed after a period of two years.

4.4 The Board Office will maintain a cumulative record of all complaints received with the names of the complainants removed, this will be circulated in August of each year to the Chair of the Board, the Chair of AC and the AOs.

5.0 Initial acknowledgement

5.1 The Board's Office, after confirmation from the Chair of AC, will acknowledge all complaints in a standard letter. In this, if the individual is a student, a member of staff, or a patient of the institution involved, they will be advised to take the complaint through the processes for complaint or grievance or whatever is the relevant policy of the teaching institution, if this has not already been done. A copy of the Board's Complaints Policy and the Principles and the Essential Requirements of the Board from the Accreditation Handbook will also be sent to the complainant.

5.2 Once the complaint is formal and it is clear that the individual has already pursued this through the processes within the teaching institution if this is relevant, receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged and the complaint passed immediately to the Chair of the Board, the Chair of the AC and the institution's AO (see Section 7 onwards).

6.0 Cumulative un-attributed complaints

6.1 Should the number of un-attributed complaints about any one institution appear to be excessive, that is, normally, three or more from different sources within any twelve month period, the Chair of AC will consult with the institution's AO.

6.2 If the complaints are considered to be bone fide, the Chair of AC will inform the relevant Head of Acupuncture Course of the nature of the un-attributed allegations.

6.3 The Head will be invited to respond in writing.

6.4 Normally, within the next scheduled visit to the institution the AO must be given the opportunity to enquire further into the nature of the complaints through discussion with relevant groups, review of documentation and discussion with the Head.

6.5 The AO will write a formal report of this visit that will be sent in draft form to the institution for feedback on matters of fact.

6.6 The AC and the Board will consider the report and will agree what further action may need to be taken. This will be confirmed to the Head in a letter from the Chair of the Board.

7.0 Formal complaints

7.1 Formal complaints shall be submitted in writing and addressed to the Chair of the Board. Documentation submitted shall include;

A clear description of the specific nature of the complaint
Supporting evidence and all relevant documentation
The relationship between the institution and the individual(s) initiating the complaint
Evidence that the complainant has exhausted whatever institutional grievance or complaints procedures are available, including those of the linked university where appropriate.

- 7.2 When the written complaint is received, together with the supporting evidence, the Chair of the Board will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and will inform the relevant Head of Acupuncture Course that the complaint has been received and is being investigated.
- 7.3 The Head will be invited to respond in writing.
- 7.4 Unless the complaint is deemed to be either serious or urgent, within the next scheduled visit to the institution the AO must be given the opportunity to enquire further into the nature of the complaints through discussion with relevant groups, review of documentation and discussion with the Head.
- 7.5 The AO will write a formal report of this visit that will be sent in draft form to the institution for feedback on matters of fact.
- 7.6 The AC and the Board will consider the report and will agree what further action may need to be taken. This will be confirmed to the Head in a letter from the Chair of the Board.
- 7.7 The report, together with an indication of further action agreed, will also be sent to the complainant.

8.0 Serious and urgent complaints

- 8.1 If a formal complaint or an un-attributed complaint alleges serious breaches of the Essential Requirements such that safe practice may be jeopardised, or describes circumstances which could have substantial, adverse effects upon the institution, students or staff, the Chair of AC will consult immediately with the Chair of the Board and the institution's AO.
- 8.2 If the complaints are considered to be bone fide and it is deemed appropriate the Chair of AC will inform the relevant Head of Acupuncture Course of the nature of the allegations and request that the AO, together with a second Board officer, arrange an immediate Special Visit to the institution.
- 8.3 The Head will be invited to respond to the allegations in writing prior to the visit.
- 8.4 During the visit the officers must be given the opportunity to enquire further into the nature of the complaints through discussion with relevant groups, review of documentation and discussion with the Head.
- 8.5 The AO will write a formal report of this visit that will be sent in draft form to the institution for feedback on matters of fact.
- 8.6 The AC and the Board will consider the report of the AO's visit, together with the institution's response and will agree what further action may need to be taken including that within Section 3.11 of the Board's Accreditation Handbook.