

CAA Procedures for Complaints Against Graduate Education Programs in Speech-Language Pathology

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.

1. Criteria for Complaints

Complaints about programs must: (a) be against an accredited educational program or program in candidacy status in speech-language pathology and/or audiology, (b) relate to the standards for accreditation of education programs in audiology and speech-language pathology, and (c) include verification, if the complaint is from a student or faculty/instructional staff member, that the complainant exhausted all institutional grievance and review mechanisms before submitting a complaint to the CAA.

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. 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 complainant's burden of proof is a preponderance or greater weight of the evidence. Complaints will not be accepted by email or facsimile.

2. Determination of Jurisdiction

Receipt of a complaint is acknowledged and forwarded to the Executive Committee of the CAA within fifteen (15) days of receipt of the complaint. The original letter of complaint is placed in a National Office file separate from the program's accreditation file. The Executive Committee determines whether the complaint meets the above-specified criteria.

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 thirty (30) days of the letter transmitting the complaint to the chair that the CAA will not review the complaint.

3. 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.

- a. The chair of the CAA informs the complainant within thirty (30) days of the letter transmitting the complaint to the chair that the Council will proceed with an evaluation. 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 thirty (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.
- b. Within fifteen (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. 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 forty-five (45) days of the date of the notification letter.

c. Within fifteen (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.

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

- dismissal of the complaint
- recommending changes in the program within a specified period of time 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

e. 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 thirty (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 fifteen (15) days. The program or institution should provide a written response to the chair of the CAA within thirty (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.

f. 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 twenty-one (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

g. If the CAA withholds/withdraws accreditation, the program director and the institution's president or president's designee are informed within fifteen (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 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 United States 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 thirty (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 thirty (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

h. Within fifteen (15) days of its decision the CAA notifies the program and the complainant of its decision.

i. 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 the Accreditation Manual.

4. 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 fifteen (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 thirty (30) days that CAA will not review
- If EC determines that complaint meets criteria, complainant is informed within thirty (30) days of the determination that CAA will proceed with evaluation
- Complainant is given thirty (30) days to sign waiver of confidentiality or withdraw the complaint
- Within fifteen (15) days of receipt of waiver of confidentiality, the complaint is sent to the program for response within forty-five (45) days
- Within fifteen (15) days of receipt of program's response, Chair forwards complaint and program response to CAA for review
- Within thirty (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 thirty (30) days of visit
- Site visit report is forwarded to program for response within thirty (30) days
- CAA takes action within twenty-one (21) days of program response
- If CAA withholds/withdraws accreditation, program is notified within fifteen (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 thirty (30) days from notification and takes action within thirty (30) days
- CAA informs program and complainant within fifteen (15) days of decision