

CAIS Policy O-101 Complaints Against Members

Purpose: To describe CAIS' approach towards complaints against member schools

Policy Statement:

CAIS serves schools through the development of National Standards, a rigorous accreditation process and a variety of professional development, research and other offerings. Membership in CAIS is voluntary and requires all schools to be accredited. CAIS schools are independent, self-governing entities and, as independent schools accredited by CAIS, strive to operate in the interest of their constituents and the public interest in accordance with recognized and applicable ethical and legal practices.

CAIS occasionally receives requests to investigate complaints related to CAIS schools. CAIS' expectation is that any concern that arises within a CAIS school will first be addressed directly with the school's leadership. Should the school's leadership not satisfactorily address the complaint and the complainant has exhausted all other procedures within the school's process and the regional process, if a request to investigate the complaint further is shared with CAIS, CAIS's response will be dependent upon the nature of the complaint, the specific allegations and the verifiable factual information offered in support of such allegations.

CAIS does not intervene on behalf of individuals in matters between an individual and a CAIS school. Individuals will be advised to utilize the appropriate reporting structure within the applicable school. When a complaint is made, CAIS will notify the applicable school of the matter.

CAIS will investigate a complaint against a CAIS school when there are substantially supported allegations of practices that could seriously impair the quality and effectiveness of a school's program and are in conflict with CAIS's National Standards. CAIS's response to receipt of such information is limited to making further inquiry. CAIS cannot investigate a complaint if the matter is the subject of civil or criminal legal proceedings.

If the alleged circumstances would appear to impact the school's accreditation status, CAIS may conduct a confidential inquiry in accordance with the below procedure.

OP-101 Procedure for Confidential Inquiry of Complaints Impacting a CAIS School's Accreditation Status

Purpose: To define the process to be followed for a Confidential Inquiry of Complaints Impacting a CAIS School's Accreditation Status

Procedures:

1. A complaint describing the allegations against a CAIS school must be written, signed, dated, and submitted to the CAIS office. Anonymous complaints cannot be considered or accepted.
2. A complaint received by the CAIS office will be evaluated and initially reviewed by the Executive Director.
3. If the complaint is filed in respect of a school that is not a CAIS school, the complainant will be so informed by the Executive Director.

4. If the complaint is filed in respect of a school that is accredited by or is in the process of becoming accredited by CAIS, the Executive Director will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing. The protocol outlined in steps 5 through 12 will be followed.
5. If the Executive Director finds the complaint to be outside the scope of the policies of CAIS, the complainant will be so informed by the Executive Director. This decision of the Executive Director may be appealed by the complainant, in writing, directly to the Evaluation Council.
6. If the complaint appears to be within the scope of the policies of CAIS, the Executive Director will forward a copy of the complaint to the Head of the school in question who will be asked to respond to the complaint. The Executive Director will confirm to the complainant when this step has been taken.
7. The Executive Director will review the response from the school and determine if (a) the response is acceptable and the matter is closed, or (b) the complaint should be referred to the Evaluation Council for further review. The Executive Director will inform the complainant of the Executive Director's decision in this regard. The decision of the Executive Director to close the matter may be appealed by the complainant, in writing, directly to the Evaluation Council.
8. If the matter is escalated to the Evaluation Council, the Evaluation Council will review the matter at a regularly scheduled meeting of the Evaluation Council, or the Executive Director, together with the Chair of the Evaluation Council, may call a special meeting of the Evaluation Council. The Executive Director will confirm to the complainant that the Evaluation Council is reviewing the matter.
9. The Evaluation Council will submit a report of its findings to the Board at a regularly scheduled meeting of the Board or the Executive Director, together with the Chair of the Board, may call a special meeting of the Board. The Executive Director will confirm to the complainant that the Evaluation Council has submitted its report to the Board and that the Board is reviewing the matter.
10. Should the Evaluation Council's review lead to a recommendation by the Evaluation Council to the Board, or should the Board independently determine, to change the school's status with CAIS, the school will be advised of this and may pursue an opportunity to be heard by the Board in accordance with the appeals procedure established and published by CAIS. It will be in the sole and absolute discretion of the Board as to whether and to what extent the complainant is informed that any of this is occurring at the relevant time.
11. Once a final decision of the Board has been rendered, the Chair of the Board will inform both the complainant and the school of the Board's final decision. It will be in the sole and absolute discretion of the Board as to whether and to what extent any reasons underlying the decision will be provided to either or both the complainant and the school.
12. It is absolutely essential that confidentiality be maintained throughout the foregoing steps. CAIS reserves the right to adapt and/or derogate from these procedures and take whatever steps it deems appropriate in the event that either the complainant or the school breaches this requirement of confidentiality. All documents received or generated by CAIS pursuant to the Complaint Policy generally and these procedures in particular will be retained as confidential material. The complaint, the school's response and any action taken will be maintained in CAIS's files relating to the school until, at a minimum, the next accreditation review of the school has been completed in its entirety.