

Procedures for Complaints against IACP Accredited Training Courses

The purpose of the Complaints Procedure is to provide a means of processing a complaint about an infringement (by course providers, course organisers and any personnel involved in the training course) of the IACP Code of Ethics and Practice or an infringement of the agreed criteria for course accreditation.

Membership of the Complaints against Courses Committee

The Committee is appointed as a Sub-Committee of the Complaints Committee and IACP Personnel. Additional members may be appointed by the Executive Committee. Objectivity is ensured and conflicts of interest avoided by the presence of an extern. The extern is an independent non IACP person with expertise in the field of Counselling and Psychotherapy.

Procedure for Complaints against Courses

The procedure is divided into four possible stages:

Stage 1 : A signed complaint is referred to the Secretary of the Complaints Committee.

Stage 2 : In the event of the Complaints Committee investigating a complaint the Complaints Against Courses Committee meets and uses its discretionary powers to decide whether a complaint is referred back to the Course's own Complaints Procedures, or whether it is to be investigated by Complaints Against Courses Committee. The Secretary seeks authorisation to show the complaint to the Director of the Course complained against. This done, the Director is asked to respond in writing to the complaint. Two examiners from the Complaints Against Courses Committee are appointed to investigate the complaint on behalf of the Complaints Committee. The reply is forwarded to the complainant. If the complainant is satisfied with the Director's reply, and the Complaints Committee considers there is no need for further action, the procedure may be completed at this stage. If not, the procedure moves onto stage three.

Stage 3 : The Complaints Against Courses Committee will consider the issues raised by the complaint and will have the discretion to arrange to meet both parties, together or separately as the Complaints Against Courses Committee sees fit. The complainant may be accompanied to the meeting by a supporter of his / her choice.

Those present at such a meeting may include the examiners, other members of the Complaints Against Courses Committee, the complainant and his / her support person, the training course extern and the relevant course personnel.

One Examiner will chair the meeting and will allow the statement of complaint and

response and questions by all present. Following this meeting the examiners will make a written report and recommendations to Complaints Against Courses Committee.

The Complaints Against Courses Committee and Extern will meet to consider this report and will make a decision based on the report or will proceed to Stage 4.

Stage 4 - The Complaints Against Courses Committee will call the complainant and advocate and the relevant parties from the Course Provider to a formal meeting where the Complaints Committee will be represented by a panel made up of the extern, the two examiners and a third member of the Complaints Against Courses Committee to act as Chairperson of the meeting. This Chairperson will facilitate the ensuing discussion. Other Members of Complaints Against Courses Committee may be present if deemed necessary.

The panel will prepare a report and recommendations for the Complaints Against Courses Committee which will meet to consider the matter. The Complaints Against Courses Committee will make a decision for appropriate action.

i. The Complaints Against Courses Committee may find that the complaint is not upheld and therefore no sanctions apply.

OR

ii. The Complaints Against Courses Committee recommend the appropriate sanctions which is ratified by the Executive Committee.

Sanctions:

If sanctions are required, one or more of the following may be imposed -

1. Requirement to implement change in a specific way by a specific date.
2. Requirement to work to address specific issues under the supervision of the extern.
3. Suspension of Course Accreditation for a specific period and / until specific changes have been undertaken.
4. Withdrawal of Course Accreditation.
5. In the event of the sanctions not being adhered to, Complaints Against Courses Committee may recommend to the Executive, withdrawal of Course Accreditation.

When suspension or withdrawal of IACP accreditation is involved, ratification will be sought from the Executive Committee and withdrawal of course accreditation will be published in Éisteach. The Executive Committee will communicate such action to the parties concerned in writing.

General

- i. According to these procedures, the IACP does not undertake to investigate a complaint by members of the public against Courses, which are not recognised by IACP.
- ii. When the Complaints Against Courses Committee receives a complaint for investigation, this does not mean that the Committee endorses the Complainant's view. Each case will be investigated on its merits. Expenses will only be paid to the Extern.
- iii. The Code of Ethics and Practice is indivisible; members must comply with all guidelines and stipulations laid down by IACP.
- iv. Complainants and those complained against must provide documentary evidence to substantiate all claims and statements where it becomes appropriate. All communication and reporting will be in writing.
- v. The confidentiality clause will be suspended when complaints are being considered, in so far as this pertains to the investigation of the complaint.
- vi. Under law, persons have the right to communicate freely with the Complaints Against Courses Committee when they are considering a complaint against them. The provision of communication will be occasions of qualified privilege. The IACP investigative procedures operate on the basis that, in general, communications within the complaints procedures are protected, providing they are not motivated by malice.
- vii. When work on a complaint has been finalised, all the related documentation will be placed in a sealed envelope, the date and names of those involved only on the outside of the envelope, and kept in the IACP Head Office. Records will be kept for ten years, and destroyed thereafter.
- viii. Appeals will only be entertained on the grounds of a serious departure from the procedures by the Complaints Against Courses Committee.
- ix. This procedure will be reviewed regularly by the current Complaints Against Courses Committee. This process needs approval from the Executive Committee.
- x. This procedure takes effect from 2006.