

Complaint Regarding a GAC Accredited Program

GAC Accreditation Handbook (5.0) Section B.6.2

GAC is concerned with maintaining programmatic integrity and performance, consistent with its established policies and standards. Complaints will be considered only when made in writing and with the complainant identified. All complaints shall be addressed to the GAC and clearly provide the following:

1. Substantial evidence supporting any allegation that the accredited program is in violation of GAC policies and Accreditation Standards must be provided.
2. The complainant must demonstrate that a serious effort has been made to pursue all available review procedures, which are available within the program.
3. The complainant must grant permission to forward the complaint, in its entirety, to the program for comment. If GAC ascertains that the complainant is in litigation with the program, no action shall be taken regarding the complaint while the matter is under legal review. The complainant must sign a statement stating that they are not aware of any pending litigation.

Both the complaint and any comments received from the program shall be placed on the agenda for the next GAC directors' meeting. Both the complainant and program will then be notified in writing of any action(s) taken by the GAC directors in response to the complaint. (GAC Handbook B.6.2)

GAC Process: Complaints Against a GAC Accredited Program:

A. Grounds for Submission of a Complaint Against a Program

1. GAC will only consider and take action on specific, criterion related, written complaints concerning a program that is currently accredited or under immediate (less than six (6) months) consideration for accreditation. GAC's only jurisdiction as it relates to complaints against programs that it currently accredits or under immediate consideration for accreditation is to take action regarding accreditation. GAC cannot intervene in the affairs of a program.
2. Complaints will be considered only when made in writing and with the complainant clearly identified.
3. The complainant must demonstrate that a serious effort has been made to pursue all available review procedures which are available within the subject program; that is, that all applicable administrative channels within the program must have been exhausted prior to filing a complaint with GAC.
4. The complainant must grant permission to forward the complaint, in its entirety, to the subject program for comment.
5. The complainant must include in the complaint a statement that they are not aware of any pending claim, dispute, or litigation against the program at the time of submission of the complaint to GAC. If the GAC ascertains that the complainant is in litigation or other formal complaint resolution procedure with the program in another forum, no action shall be taken on the complaint by the GAC while the matter is under other legal review.

B. GAC Receipt of Complaint Against a Program

1. A complaint against an accredited program:
 - a. must be in writing,
 - b. must be specific as to the accreditation criteria that is being violated,
 - c. must identify the outcome sought,
 - d. must include documentation that appropriate administrative channels have been exhausted,
 - e. must include a statement that the complainant is not in litigation with the program,
 - f. and must be signed.
 - g. Must be sent via email to gac@pmi.org.
2. In the absence of documentation that verifies all of the requirements in B.1 (above), the following will occur:
 - a. GAC staff will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within fifteen (15) days and advise that no subsequent actions are planned.
 - b. Copies of all materials received will be sent within thirty (30) days of receipt of the complaint to the program against which the complaint has been made.
 - c. No further action will be taken.
3. Although a complaint may not lead to formal action, GAC will maintain a record of written and signed complaints for three (3) years. All complaints on file will be summarized and the summary provided to the visit team at the time of the next regular accreditation visit or during any special interim site visit.

C. Complaints Review Procedure

1. If the complaint is specific and includes documentation requested in B.1. (above), GAC staff will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within fifteen (15) days and provide information about subsequent actions to be taken.
2. Copies of all materials received will be sent to the program within thirty (30) days of receipt of the complaint, along with a request for verification that appropriate administrative channels have been exhausted and that the complainant is not in litigation with the program.
3. If the program verifies that appropriate administrative channels have been exhausted and that the complainant is not in litigation with the program at the time of this request, GAC staff, at the time it forwards the complaint to the program, will request that a summary of actions leading to the original complaint be submitted to GAC by the dean or program director.
4. This information shall be sent within thirty (30) days of receiving copies of the complaint materials to the GAC via email to gac@pmi.org.
5. Upon receiving the response from the program noted in C.3 (above), the GAC staff will have the matter added to the agenda for the next regularly scheduled GAC directors' meeting, at either one (1) of the bi-annual in-person meetings or a regular monthly meeting via teleconference.
6. The GAC directors will review the materials submitted by the complainant and the responses submitted by the program and will determine whether there is sufficient evidence to believe the program is in violation of GAC's accreditation criteria.

- a. If the GAC directors determine that the complaint lacks sufficient evidence to proceed with an investigation, the complainant and the program will be so notified in writing within fifteen (15) days of the GAC directors' decision.
- b. If the complaint appears valid, the GAC directors will appoint a three-member investigative team.

D. Selection of the GAC Investigative Team

1. GAC staff shall maintain a list of persons who are qualified to serve on the GAC Investigative Team as needed. The list shall consist of persons who have a working knowledge about and experience with GAC's evaluative criteria and procedures used in accreditation and shall be subject to GAC's conflict of interest policies. The list shall not include any current members of the GAC directors or any previous GAC directors or Site Team Members who participated in any aspect of the complaint.
2. The GAC Investigative Team will consist of an Investigative Team Chair and two (2) other Investigative Team members.
3. The GAC Investigative Team must include a representative from academia and a project management practitioner. The third person may be from either of these categories.
4. The names of the proposed Investigative Team Chair, the two (2) Investigative Team Members, and their resumes, shall be forwarded to the named individual who initiated the complaint process, as well as the named dean or program director from the program under investigation, within twenty (20) days following the GAC directors' decision noted in C.6.b (above).
5. If the complainant or the program believes that anyone on the Investigative Team does not meet the qualifications set out in D.1 (above), or is aware of a conflict of interest, the complainant or the program may declare that individual unqualified or in conflict of interest, by notifying GAC staff of the conflict in writing within ten (10) days of receipt of the initial listing. GAC staff will then propose a substitute Investigative Team Member, following the process noted in D.1 (above).

E. GAC Investigative Team Procedures

1. Once appointed, each member of the GAC Investigative Team shall promptly receive from the GAC staff copies of the complaint and previous related GAC action noted in C.6 (above).
2. A list of all materials that comprise the complete complaint shall be identified and be made available to the complainant and the program representative. A copy of the complaint shall be maintained in GAC's records.
3. The investigation shall begin within thirty (30) days of the appointment of the team. The team's investigation of the complaint may include a visit to the program, but in any event, both the complainant and the program representative will be offered an opportunity to appear before the team. It is expected that the team will have access to any and all information which is pertinent to the investigation. The failure or refusal of the program to permit an investigation on a timely basis shall be considered adversely to the program in the directors' deliberations.
4. The GAC Investigative Team will report its findings, along with its recommendation, to the GAC directors at its next regularly scheduled meeting.

F. GAC Directors' Decision After Investigative Team Report

1. The GAC directors shall be the final decision-making body. Based upon its review of the evidence presented, the GAC directors' decisions may include any of the following:
 - a. Continue the accreditation status of the program without change
 - b. Continue the accreditation status of the program, but initiate an earlier review of the program,

- c. Withdraw the program's accreditation.
2. The program and the complainant will be advised of the GAC directors' decision and the reasons for the decision within thirty (30) days of the final GAC directors decision. The program may appeal a GAC directors' decision. The program would follow the GAC Appeals Process noted in B.6 of the GAC Handbook of Accreditation of Degree Programs in Project Management and Related Programs, Fifth Edition.

G. Expenses of Investigation

1. The expenses incurred in the development and presentation of its complaint shall be borne exclusively by the individual filing the complaint.
2. The expenses incurred in the development and presentation of its response to the complaint shall be borne exclusively by the program against whom the complaint is filed.
3. The expenses involved in the selection of the GAC Investigative Team shall be borne by the GAC.
4. All reasonable expenses of the GAC Investigative Team members directly associated with an onsite visit and or face-to-face meeting (e.g., travel, meals, and lodging) shall be divided equally between the complainant and the program which is under investigation.