



P050 Complaints Handling Policy

1 PURPOSE

This policy demonstrates the Australasian College of Sport and Exercise Physicians' (ACSEP; "the College") commitment to handling complaints fairly, efficiently and effectively. The Complaints Policy establishes a framework for upholding the standards of professionalism, accountability, and conduct expected of all ACSEP members and staff.

2 SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- College members as defined in *P033 – Membership Policy*;
- Any external person serving on an ACSEP Committee or representing ACSEP in other forums;
- All staff employed by ACSEP, contractors and service providers acting on behalf of the College.

Matters subject to complaint under this policy:

- ACSEP service delivery (including, but not limited to, concerns regarding staff conduct, the quality of a service or its accessibility)
- ACSEP's management of a matter (including, but not limited to, delays, not responding to communications, incorrect or unfair handling of a matter and the reasons for a decision not being clearly provided)
- Policies, processes and their application (including, but not limited to, concerns that a policy or process is unfair, incorrect or inadequately explained)
- Complaints regarding breaches of policy by ACSEP Members (e.g., *P015 – Code of Ethics and Professional Behaviour*, *P001- Bullying, Discrimination, Harassment and Unacceptable Behaviour Policy*, etc.).

This policy does not apply to:

- Applicants seeking reconsideration, review or appeal of a decision made by ACSEP (refer to *P019 – Reconsideration, Review and Appeals Policy*)
- Complaints regarding ACSEP members' clinical or business practices.
- ACSEP staff grievances regarding human resources matters.

3 DEFINITIONS

The following definitions apply for the purpose of this Policy:

Term	Definition
Complaint	An implied or express statement of dissatisfaction made where a response is sought, reasonable to expect or legally required.



Feedback	Comment, criticism or compliment, made directly or indirectly, where a response is not sought, or reasonable to expect.
Complainant	A person, organisation or representative who makes a complaint.
Respondent	A person against whom a matter is raised or a complaint is made.

4 POLICY STATEMENT

4.1 Complaints management principles

Accessibility

ACSEP will provide multiple channels and contact options to make a complaint and will ensure that policies and procedures for complaints handling are accessible on the college website. Support is also available to help guide complainants through the process.

Confidentiality

Complaints will be managed confidentially as far as possible, with access to information restricted to those directly involved in or responsible for resolving the complaint. De-identified complaint information may be used to inform systems and process improvements.

Fairness

ACSEP will handle complaints impartially, with a resolution-focus. Escalation pathways will be provided to complainants and respondents will be provided with an opportunity to respond to any allegations made against them personally.

Responsiveness

ACSEP will respond to complaints within the timeframes indicated and where this is not possible, the complainant will be notified of revised timeframes and reasons for the delay.

Respect

ACSEP understands that making a complaint may be a stressful experience and will ensure that no individual is penalised for lodging a genuine complaint. The rights and wishes of the complainant will be respected at all stages of the complaint management process.

4.2 Types of complaints

ACSEP will aim to acknowledge receipt of a complaint within three business days and endeavour to provide a timely response, with timeframes dependent on the type of complaint and complexity of investigations required.

Anonymous complaints

Complaints may be made anonymously, where a person wishes to raise an issue as a matter of concern, but does not want to be identified. Anonymous complaints will be recorded, and these can



assist ACSEP to identify systemic issues, or patterns of behaviour from a respondent. However, ACSEP will be limited in its ability to investigate anonymous complaints or take further action. Anonymous complainants will not receive notification of the outcome of their complaint.

Confidential complaints

Complaints may be made on a confidential basis, whereby the complainant is willing to disclose their identity to ACSEP but does not want their identity to be disclosed to the respondent. Confidential complaints will be recorded, and these can assist ACSEP to identify systemic issues, or patterns of behaviour from a respondent. However, confidential complaints limit ACSEP's ability to investigate the matter or take further action.

Formal complaints

A formal complaint is a written or documented submission to ACSEP alleging a breach of policy, professional or ethical standards, or another serious matter.

Formal complaints relating to an individual should include:

- The name of the person the complaint is against,
- A description of the conduct or behaviour considered to be in breach of relevant policy, professional or ethical standards,
- Any evidence that supports the complaint, and
- The outcome the complainant is seeking.

Formal complaints relating to an administrative matter that do not relate to the conduct of an individual should include:

- A description of the issue or concern
- The outcome the complainant is seeking.

Frivolous complaints

A frivolous complaint is complaint that relates to a minor or trivial matter that ACSEP determines lacks sufficient merit or substance to warrant formal consideration. This includes complaints that lack sufficient detail and clarity to meaningfully assess or relate to matter that ACSEP considers to be appropriately resolved.

ACSEP may determine not to proceed with a complaint that it considers frivolous. In these cases, the complainant will be informed of this decision and the rationale.

Vexatious complaint

A vexatious complaint is one that ACSEP determines has not been made in good faith or represents a misuse of the complaints process. A complaint may be classified as vexatious where it:

- Is motivated by malice, spite or a desire for retribution rather than a genuine concern;
- Forms part of a pattern of behaviour by the complainant that demonstrates an improper use of the complaints process;
- Is intended to cause harm to, or undermine the reputation of, the respondent;
- Contains information the complainant knows to be false, fictitious or deliberately fabricated with the intent to damage the reputation of the respondent.



ACSEP may determine not to proceed with a complaint that it considers vexatious and may take additional action deemed appropriate. In these cases, the complainant will be informed of this decision and the rationale.

4.3 Management of complaints

- For procedures relating to the management of administrative complaints, refer to *P052 - Administrative Complaints Handling Procedure*.
- For procedures relating to management of formal complaints regarding ACSEP members, refer to *P051- Procedure for the management of formal complaints regarding ACSEP Members*.

4.4 Notification of complaint outcome

Complainants will receive notification of the outcome of their complaint in writing as soon as practicable, unless the complaint was made anonymously.

4.5 Reporting and Records Management

Complaints will be dealt with sensitively and kept confidential, to the extent possible. ACSEP will keep a record of all complaints received, their outcomes and timelines for actions in accordance with *P012 – Records Management Policy*. A de-identified register of complaints data will be used for the purposes of continuous improvement of ACSEP programs and services.

5 KEY RELATED DOCUMENTS

- P001 - Bullying, Discrimination, Harassment and Unacceptable Behaviour Policy
- P012 – Records Management Policy
- P015 – Code of Ethics and Professional Behaviour
- P019 – Reconsideration, Review and Appeals Policy
- P033 – Membership Policy
- P041- Whistleblower Policy
- P051 - Procedure for the management of formal complaints regarding ACSEP Members
- P052 - Administrative Complaints Handling Procedure.

6 NOTES

6.1	Contact Officer	Chief Executive Officer
6.2	Category	Governance
6.3	Approval Authority	ACSEP Board
6.4	Date Approved	August 2026
6.5	Date for Review	July 2029



6.6	Documents Superseded by this Policy	P002 – Grievance Policy and Procedure
6.7	Amendment History	V1.0 – New policy replacing P002 – Grievance Policy and Procedure (rescinded)