

IEP Complaints and appeals criteria and procedure

Part I Grounds for complaints

An institution may complain when it considers that an evaluation has not been carried out with due consideration to IEP Guidelines and the “Charter of Conduct for Pool Members” and to general principles of evaluation and professional standards in forming and expressing a judgement. With regard to these reference points, grounds of complaints will be considered valid under the following circumstances:

1. Procedural Scope of Complaint Review

When submitting a complaint to IEP, the institution must:

- Indicate precisely the object of the complaint, by identifying either (a) specific statements in the evaluation report or (b) specific procedural activity;
- Stipulate in a substantiated manner in which way, and to what extent, and based on which evidence, (a) the facts and judgements or (b) specific procedural activity are incomplete, erroneous, or constitute gross and evident misjudgement;
- Indicate in which ways these failings should be corrected. If the institution complains against the statements in the evaluation report, the way the report should be amended must be stated.

IEP will only consider complaints that include all these elements.

2. Substantive Criteria of Complaint Decision

Within the procedural scope described above, the complaint judgement is based on, and limited to, the following criteria:

- a) Inappropriateness of process in whole or in part and its deviation from the IEP Guidelines and the “Charter of Conduct of Pool Members” and from general principles of evaluation and professional standards in forming and expressing a judgement. Considerations of failure in adhering to the normal IEP process will be limited to those that are apt to influence the judgement of the evaluation team.
- b) Inappropriateness of the judgement(s) expressed in the evaluation report¹, which is considered to be the case only under the following circumstances: 1) erroneous assumption

¹ IEP evaluations do not result in formal decisions, therefore there is no decision against which an appeal can be made. However, a complaint against a statement in the report is analogue to the appeals procedure as defined by the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG standard 2.7).

of non-existent factors as facts; 2) failure in exploring relevant facts; 3) ignoring or misjudging factual base; 4) gross and evident inconclusiveness of judgement. Each of these complaints issues will be considered only in case and to the extent that the given complaints issue may have influenced the judgement of the evaluation team.

Part II Complaints Process

An institution may lodge a complaint at any time during the evaluation process and at the latest within one month of receiving the final evaluation report. Institutions that wish to lodge a complaint are invited to contact the IEP secretariat at info@iep-qaa.org for information regarding further steps.

Following submission of a complaint, the process goes as follows:

Consideration of the complaint

- Receipt of a complaint is acknowledged within a fortnight by the Chair of the Steering Committee.
- The IEP secretariat informs the evaluation team that conducted the evaluation in question of the issue of the complaint and requests any relevant information from them.
- The IEP secretariat forwards the complaint to the Steering Committee, together with a proposal for which course of action to take. The Steering Committee discuss and agree on the course of action. Consultation shall take place via email, or by video-conference if deemed necessary.

Actions taken

The Steering Committee may decide to:

- Immediately remedy or reject the complaint as a whole or in part if the complaint is evidently justified or unjustified.
- Request that the secretariat investigate the matter further with the institution and the evaluation team and subsequently remedy or reject the complaint as a whole or in part.
- Decide to establish a Complaints Committee of three IEP pool members to investigate the matter further. In this case:
 - Each Complaints Committee is composed by three members with composition reflecting the diversity of profiles within the IEP pool. While composing the Committee, geographical, disciplinary and gender balance is taken into account, as well as required expertise and background of the Committee members. No member of the Complaints Committee may have had any prior involvement in the institution.
 - The institution is informed of the Complaints Committee membership and is given the opportunity to raise any concerns within 10 days after receipt of the aforesaid information.

- The Complaints Committee will review the complaint's issues within the scope described in Part I.
- The Complaints Committee will issue a complaint judgement on the complaint's issues in a report to the Steering Committee.
- If the Complaints Committee upholds a complaint's issue it will recommend to the Steering Committee, as is appropriate in view of the case, that the evaluation report description or judgement be amended, or that the evaluation report be set aside and an additional visit carried out by an evaluation team at no extra cost to the institution.

Decision on the complaint

In all cases, the Steering Committee makes a final decision on the matter and the Chair of the Steering Committee communicates the outcome of the process to the head of the institution, normally within four months of receipt of the complaint. The evaluation team that conducted the evaluation in questions is also informed of the outcome.