GCTEQA

GLOBAL COMMISSION FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION & QUALITY ASSURANCE, INC.

COMPLAINTS & APPEALS POLICY

2026 Public Policy Edition

Fair Process. Clear Standards. Independent Review.

Public procedures for complaints concerning applicant or accredited institutions, complaints concerning GCTEQA, and appeals of eligible accreditation decisions.

Document Control

Policy Title	Complaints & Appeals Policy
Organization	Global Commission for Theological Education & Quality Assurance, Inc. (GCTEQA)
Edition	2026 Public Policy Edition
Applies To	Applicant institutions, accredited institutions, students, personnel, reviewers, and other stakeholders
Policy Owner	Board of Directors / Accreditation Governance Function
Review Cycle	At least annually or when accreditation procedures materially change

1. Purpose

GCTEQA maintains complaint and appeal procedures to promote accountability, fairness, due process, learner protection, accurate public representation, and integrity in accreditation. These procedures are intended to provide an orderly method for reviewing concerns within GCTEQA's authority while preserving impartial decision-making.

2. Complaints and Appeals Are Different

Process	Purpose	Typical User
Complaint	Raises a concern that an institution or GCTEQA may not be following applicable standards, policies, or ethical expectations.	Students, employees, institutions, members of the public, or other stakeholders
Appeal	Requests reconsideration of an eligible adverse accreditation decision based on specified grounds.	The institution that received the adverse decision

A complaint is not an appeal, and an appeal may not be used merely to express disagreement with an evaluator's opinion. GCTEQA may redirect a submission to the appropriate process when necessary.

3. Scope of GCTEQA Complaint Review

GCTEQA may review complaints that reasonably relate to:

- Possible noncompliance with applicable GCTEQA accreditation standards
- Material misrepresentation of accreditation status or scope

- Student-protection, records, refund, disclosure, or institutional-integrity concerns relevant to GCTEQA standards
- Failure to follow GCTEQA-required substantive-change, reporting, or monitoring obligations
- Conduct of GCTEQA reviewers, personnel, committees, or decision-makers
- Conflict-of-interest or accreditation-independence concerns
- Material departures from published GCTEQA policies or procedures

4. Matters Generally Outside GCTEQA's Complaint Authority

GCTEQA generally does not serve as a substitute for:

- Courts or private legal counsel
- Law-enforcement agencies
- Government education departments or licensing authorities
- Professional licensing boards
- Employment tribunals or labor agencies
- Consumer-protection agencies
- Immigration authorities
- Financial-aid agencies
- Emergency-response or child-protection authorities

When a complaint principally concerns a matter outside GCTEQA's authority, the complainant may be directed to an appropriate external authority. GCTEQA may still consider whether the underlying facts raise a separate accreditation-compliance concern.

5. Good-Faith Use of the Complaint Process

Complaints should be submitted honestly and in good faith. Knowingly false, fabricated, altered, malicious, harassing, or bad-faith submissions may be rejected and may result in appropriate action when the submitter is subject to GCTEQA authority.

GCTEQA will not reject a complaint merely because it is critical, uncomfortable, or alleges serious misconduct.

6. Institutional Grievance Process First

When appropriate, a complainant should ordinarily use the institution's own published complaint or grievance process before asking GCTEQA to intervene.

GCTEQA may consider bypassing that expectation when:

- The institution has no meaningful grievance process
- The complainant reasonably alleges retaliation or danger
- The complaint concerns senior leadership or governance and internal review would be impracticable
- The issue involves systemic accreditation compliance rather than an individual dispute
- Immediate action may be necessary to protect students, records, or the integrity of accreditation

7. How to Submit a Complaint

A complaint should be submitted in writing through GCTEQA's designated complaint form, electronic submission system, or official contact channel.

A complete complaint should include:

- Complainant's name and reliable contact information
- Name of the institution or GCTEQA office/person involved
- A clear description of the concern
- Relevant dates and persons involved
- The GCTEQA standard or policy believed to be implicated, if known
- Steps already taken to resolve the matter
- Copies of relevant documents, correspondence, screenshots, policies, or other evidence
- A description of the outcome or corrective action requested, when applicable

Anonymous information may be reviewed when sufficiently specific and credible, but anonymity can limit GCTEQA's ability to investigate, verify facts, or provide follow-up.

8. Complaint Intake and Preliminary Review

After receipt, GCTEQA may:

- Acknowledge receipt
- Request additional information
- Determine whether the matter falls within GCTEQA's authority
- Determine whether internal institutional remedies should first be used
- Dismiss the complaint if it is facially unsupported, duplicative, outside scope, or made in bad faith
- Open a formal compliance review
- Refer urgent or legally mandated concerns to appropriate authorities

9. Notice to the Institution or Respondent

When GCTEQA opens a formal review, the institution or other respondent will ordinarily receive notice of the material allegations and a reasonable opportunity to respond, unless notice must be delayed to preserve evidence, protect persons, comply with law, or address another compelling integrity concern.

GCTEQA may provide the complaint itself or a summary of allegations. Personally identifying or sensitive information may be redacted when appropriate.

10. Complaint Investigation

GCTEQA may use one or more of the following methods:

- Review of written submissions and supporting documents
- Requests for institutional records or explanations
- Interviews with institutional representatives or other relevant persons
- Review of public representations, catalogs, websites, policies, or accreditation claims
- Consultation with qualified reviewers or subject-matter experts
- Focused virtual or on-site review
- Comparison of the alleged conduct with applicable GCTEQA standards and policies

GCTEQA determines the scope and method of review. The complaint process is not formal civil litigation and does not guarantee discovery, cross-examination, legal representation, or an evidentiary hearing.

11. Complaint Outcomes

Following review, GCTEQA may determine that:

- The complaint is not substantiated
- The available information is insufficient to reach a finding
- The matter does not fall within GCTEQA's authority
- The institution is compliant but should receive advisory guidance
- Additional reporting or monitoring is required
- Corrective action is required
- A warning, probation, show-cause process, suspension, or other accreditation action is warranted
- The matter should be referred for broader accreditation review or other authorized action

12. Communication of Complaint Results

GCTEQA may provide the complainant with a general notice that review has concluded and may disclose the outcome to the extent appropriate. Confidential personnel, student, institutional, legal, or deliberative information may be withheld.

The institution will receive notice of any required corrective action, monitoring, or accreditation consequence.

13. Non-Retaliation

GCTEQA prohibits retaliation by its own personnel, reviewers, or decision-makers against persons who submit good-faith complaints or participate in a review.

Accredited and applicant institutions are expected to maintain appropriate non-retaliation protections under their own policies. Alleged retaliation may constitute a separate accreditation concern.

14. Confidentiality and Privacy

GCTEQA will seek to protect complaint information consistent with fair review, applicable law, accreditation responsibilities, and the need to verify facts.

GCTEQA cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality because information may need to be shared with the institution, reviewers, counsel, authorities, or others who require the information for a legitimate purpose.

15. Accreditation Appeals

An appeal is a formal request by an institution for reconsideration of an eligible adverse accreditation decision. Appeals are not a second application and are not an opportunity to substitute new institutional performance for the record that existed when the original decision was made, except where the applicable appeal procedure expressly permits it.

16. Decisions Eligible for Appeal

Subject to the specific decision notice and applicable policy, appealable decisions may include:

- Denial of initial accreditation
- Withdrawal or termination of accreditation
- Denial of renewal or reaffirmation
- Suspension when designated as appealable
- Other final adverse accreditation decisions expressly identified by GCTEQA as appealable

Routine requests for additional evidence, monitoring requirements, administrative completeness determinations, reviewer comments, or nonfinal procedural actions are generally not appealable unless GCTEQA expressly states otherwise.

17. Grounds for Appeal

An appeal must identify one or more recognized grounds. Examples include:

- A material procedural error that reasonably could have affected the decision
- A material factual error in the record relied upon by the decision-making body
- A material conflict of interest or lack of required impartiality
- The decision was materially inconsistent with the applicable published standard or policy
- Other grounds expressly authorized in the institution's decision notice or applicable GCTEQA appeal procedure

An appeal should not be based solely on disagreement with professional judgment when the decision was reasonably supported by the record and applicable standards.

18. Notice of Intent to Appeal

The institution must submit a written notice of intent to appeal within the deadline stated in its decision notice. Unless the decision notice establishes a different period, the default deadline is fifteen (15) calendar days after the institution receives the appealable decision.

Failure to submit a timely notice may waive the right to appeal unless GCTEQA grants an extension for extraordinary circumstances.

19. Formal Appeal Submission

Unless otherwise stated in the decision notice, the institution should submit its complete written appeal within thirty (30) calendar days after notice of the appealable decision.

The appeal should include:

- Identification of the decision being appealed
- Each specific ground for appeal

- A concise statement explaining why the ground applies
- Citation to the relevant evidence already in the accreditation record
- Identification of the relevant standard, policy, or procedure
- Any permitted supporting documentation
- Certification by the institution's authorized representative

20. Appeal Record

The appeal will ordinarily be evaluated on the record available to the original decision-making body together with the institution's appeal submission.

New evidence created after the original decision is ordinarily excluded when it reflects subsequent corrective action rather than an error in the original decision. GCTEQA may allow new evidence when necessary to establish procedural error, factual error, conflict of interest, or another recognized ground.

21. Appeal Panel Independence

An appeal shall be reviewed by persons who did not participate as decision-makers in the original adverse decision and who have no disqualifying conflict of interest.

The appeal panel may include qualified educators, public representatives, governance professionals, subject-matter experts, or other individuals authorized under GCTEQA policy.

22. Appeal Review

The appeal panel reviews whether the original decision should stand under the recognized grounds for appeal. The panel does not simply repeat the initial accreditation review.

The appeal panel may consider:

- The original accreditation decision and written basis
- The institution's appeal submission
- The underlying record relevant to the appeal grounds
- Applicable standards and policies
- Responses requested by the panel from the original decision-making body or staff

23. Appeal Hearing

GCTEQA may permit a virtual or in-person appeal hearing when appropriate. If a hearing is offered, procedures regarding participants, time limits, materials, presentations, questions, counsel, and recording shall be communicated in advance.

A hearing, when provided, is an accreditation review proceeding and not a judicial trial.

24. Appeal Decisions

The appeal panel may:

- Affirm the original decision
- Remand the matter to the original or another authorized decision-making body for reconsideration
- Modify the decision when authorized by GCTEQA policy
- Require correction of a procedural defect or additional review

The written appeal decision will identify the disposition and becomes final within GCTEQA unless a further level of review is expressly provided by policy.

25. Status During Appeal

The institution's status during an appeal will be governed by the original decision notice and applicable policy. GCTEQA will communicate how the institution may represent its status publicly while the appeal is pending.

An institution must not describe itself as accredited when it does not hold active accreditation merely because an appeal is pending.

26. Appeal Fees

An appeal fee may apply when stated in GCTEQA's published fee schedule or the institution's decision notice. Any appeal fee supports administrative and review costs and does not purchase a favorable outcome.

27. Complaints Concerning GCTEQA

A person or institution may submit a complaint concerning GCTEQA personnel, reviewers, procedures, ethics, conflicts, public representations, or administration.

When the complaint concerns senior executive leadership, the Board, or a person who would ordinarily administer the complaint, the matter should be routed to a disinterested governance authority.

28. Emergency and Serious-Risk Matters

GCTEQA may accelerate review or take temporary protective action when credible information indicates immediate risk to students, institutional records, accreditation integrity, lawful operation, or the public.

Nothing in this policy prevents GCTEQA from reporting suspected criminal conduct, abuse, fraud, threats, or other matters when reporting is required by law or reasonably necessary to protect persons or organizational integrity.

29. Records Retention

Complaint and appeal submissions, responses, evidence, deliberative records, decisions, and related communications shall be retained in accordance with GCTEQA's document-retention policy.

30. Policy Interpretation and Revision

GCTEQA may interpret and revise this policy through its authorized governance processes. The version in effect when a complaint or appeal is submitted ordinarily governs, unless a later procedural change is applied consistently and does not materially prejudice a party.

APPENDIX A - COMPLAINT SUBMISSION FORM

Use this form as a guide when submitting a written complaint to GCTEQA.

Complainant Name: _____

Email: _____

Telephone: _____

Institution / Organization Involved: _____

Your Relationship to the Institution: _____

Date(s) of Concern: _____

Nature of Complaint

[ ] Accreditation standards / compliance

[ ] Accreditation status misrepresentation

[ ] Student records / learner protection

[ ] Refund / disclosure / enrollment concern relevant to GCTEQA standards

[ ] Conflict of interest / reviewer independence

[ ] GCTEQA conduct or procedure

[ ] Other

Describe the Concern

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Steps Already Taken

_____

_____

_____

Supporting Evidence

[ ] Correspondence

[ ] Institutional policies

[ ] Website / advertisement screenshots

[ ] Enrollment or financial documents

[ ] Student records or academic documents

[ ] Other supporting material

Certification

I certify that the information submitted is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and is submitted in good faith.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Complaint Submission Instructions

Submit the completed complaint form and supporting evidence through the official complaint channel identified on the GCTEQA website. Keep a copy of everything submitted for your records.

- Organize supporting evidence by date or topic and label attachments clearly.
- Do not submit original documents unless GCTEQA specifically requests them.
- Redact Social Security numbers, bank account numbers, medical information, and other sensitive personal information that is not necessary to the complaint.
- If the complaint involves an urgent threat to safety, suspected criminal conduct, abuse, or another emergency, contact the appropriate public authority rather than waiting for the accreditation complaint process.

What Happens After Submission

- GCTEQA conducts an intake review to determine whether the complaint falls within its accreditation authority.
- Additional information may be requested from the complainant or institution.
- If a formal review is opened, the institution ordinarily receives notice and an opportunity to respond.
- GCTEQA may close the matter, require corrective action, impose monitoring, or take another action authorized by its policies.

Privacy Reminder

Complaint information is handled as confidentially as reasonably possible, but GCTEQA cannot guarantee anonymity or absolute confidentiality when disclosure is necessary to investigate the matter, provide fair process, comply with law, or protect persons and accreditation integrity.

APPENDIX B - NOTICE OF INTENT TO APPEAL

For use by an institution challenging an eligible adverse accreditation decision.

Institution Legal Name: _____

Institution ID (if assigned): _____

Decision Date: _____

Decision Being Appealed: _____

Authorized Representative: _____

Email / Telephone: _____

Ground(s) for Appeal

[ ] Material procedural error

[ ] Material factual error

[ ] Material conflict of interest / lack of impartiality

[ ] Material inconsistency with published standard or policy

[ ] Other authorized ground stated in the decision notice

This notice preserves the institution's intent to appeal only when timely submitted. The complete appeal and all required supporting materials must be submitted by the applicable deadline.

Authorized Signature: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

Public Fair-Process Statement

GCTEQA is committed to receiving good-faith concerns, evaluating relevant complaints responsibly, and providing fair appeal procedures for eligible adverse accreditation decisions. Complaint and appeal outcomes are determined by applicable standards, policies, evidence, and independent judgment.

FAIR PROCESS. CLEAR STANDARDS. INDEPENDENT REVIEW.

Diverse Traditions. Shared Standards. Global Excellence.

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