

# AVR Accreditation Mark crop

COSCA (Counselling and Psychotherapy in Scotland)

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**Complaints Procedure for COSCA Validated Training Providers**

This procedure is to be used by students wishing to complain using the Professional Body route of COSCA (Counselling and Psychotherapy in Scotland) about an alleged breach of COSCA’s Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice (<http://www.cosca.org.uk/guidance-policies/ethics>). COSCA can only act upon complaints investigated under this procedure and not under any other procedure e.g a university or college procedure.

In the interests of a speedy and mutually agreeable resolution, students are encouraged to speak informally to their trainer or course co-ordinator before starting the formal complaints process, and/or to take part in a formal mediation process.

**Formal complaints procedure**

Complaints can be made about trainers and those providing work relating to counselling and psychotherapy on behalf of the trainers by any current student on one of COSCA’s Validated Counselling and Psychotherapy courses, but not their representatives nor any third party.

In line with COSCA’s Standards, anonymous complaints may be logged, but will not be investigated.

If the COSCA Validated trainer/ COSCA student member being complained about is no longer involved with the course and not a current member of COSCA they are not able to be investigated under this procedure. The training organisation may have another procedure that would be suitable.

In line with COSCA’s Standards, if a complaint is considered vexatious or malicious \_\_\_\_ will not engage with the complaint.

Complaints will be accepted for a maximum of \_\_\_\_ months/ years [delete as appropriate] after the alleged breach of COSCA’s Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice, but the sooner you make your complaint the easier it is to investigate.

The Complaint Manager will be ­­\_\_\_\_, [full contact details] \_\_\_\_ . This is also the person to whom all participants in the complaints process should declare any possible conflicts of interest.

Support for making your complaint can be found \_\_\_\_.

In accordance with COSCA’s Standards \_\_\_\_ [the COSCA Validated Training Organisation] will only investigate if there is sufficient corroborating evidence and a breach of COSCA’s ­Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice.­

**Stage one – Investigation**

Once any informal investigation or mediation process has been attempted, and the complaint remains unresolved, a formal complaint should be submitted to the Complaint Manager (see above). They will manage the process and see that it runs smoothly.

The Complaint Manager will submit the complaint to \_\_\_\_ (this could be themselves) for investigation. If those people [COSCA recommends that more than one person investigate where practical]/ that person is not able to be impartial and independent of the complaint the Complaint Manager will submit it to \_\_\_\_.

All those involved will act confidentially in their handling of the complaint. They may seek legal or specialist advice. Anyone making a complaint must give their permission for confidential information, pertinent to the complaint, to be disclosed by all parties cited in the complaint to all those involved in the handling of the complaint (including those providing any legal or specialist advice).

The Complaint Manager can halt the process at any time should it emerge that legal action is underway, pending or intended until any legal process is complete. They may adjourn or put the process in recess to be restarted at the point at which it was stopped and within a reasonable time. They can also discontinue the complaint if the complainant fails or refuses to participate at any stage without good reason. The student may formally withdraw the complaint at any time. In all cases, both/all parties will be informed.

Complaints will be acknowledged by the Complaint Manager within \_\_\_\_ days of receiving the complaint by \_\_\_\_ [letter/ email etc] and will communicate with both the student making the complaint and the person/people they are complaining against in this way.

The Complaint Manager will notify both parties of their right to attend a meeting, separately and not together, with the person/ people hearing the complaint and that they may be accompanied by a supportive person if they choose. The student and complained against will not come into contact at any time in the course of the investigation. This includes being asked to wait in the same area to give evidence to the investigator(s), but not outside of the investigation of the complaint.

The investigation will take place within \_\_\_\_ days of receiving the complaint. It is expected to take \_\_\_\_ days for an outcome to be reached, unless the complaint is of a more complex nature when it may take a further \_\_\_\_ days. In exceptional circumstances the Complaint Manager may extend the process further and all parties will be informed.

Both parties will be informed of the outcome within \_\_\_\_ days of an outcome being reached by \_\_\_\_ [letter/ email etc] including the reason(s) for the decision.

**Stage 2 - Appeal**

If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome they may appeal to the Complaint Manager within \_\_\_\_ days of learning of the outcome. A new investigation will be conducted by at least two investigators independent and impartial of the complaint and with no previous contact with its investigation. These Investigators will be \_\_\_\_ [people or panel].

The investigation is expected to take \_\_\_\_ days for an outcome to be reached, unless the complaint is of a more complex nature when it may take a further \_\_\_\_ days. In exceptional circumstances the Complaint Manager may extend the process further and all parties will be informed.

As before, the Complaint Manager will communicate with both the student making the complaint and the person/ people they are complaining against.

The Complaint Manager will notify both parties of their right to attend the appeal meeting, separately and not together, with the people/ panel hearing the complaint and advise that they may be accompanied by a supportive person if they choose. The student and complained against will not come into contact at any time in the course of the investigation. This includes being asked to wait in the same area to give evidence to the investigator(s), but not outside of the investigation of the complaint.

The whole process will not be expected to exceed \_\_\_\_ days.

Both parties will be informed of the outcome within \_\_\_\_ days by \_\_\_\_ [letter/ email etc] including the reason(s) for the decision.

**Sanctions**

If the complaint is upheld possible sanctions could be ceasing

to deliver/ receive training, either temporarily or permanently; changing working structures and management systems; undertaking further training or personal therapy; increasing and/or changing supervision arrangements. They will be imposed and monitored by the Complaint Manager who will inform both the student making the complaint and the person/ people complained against when they have been fulfilled.

**Outcome Report to COSCA**

In accordance with COSCA’s Standards \_\_\_\_ [the training organisation] will submit immediate reports at the conclusion of the above complaints proceedings, whether

upheld or not upheld, and notify COSCA of any sanctions applied. COSCA reserves the right to publish decisions/recommendations of the complaint investigator(s) against COSCA Individual Members and Organisational Members, after the possibility of an appeal being upheld expires.

**Request for a procedural review by COSCA**

Once the above procedure has been exhausted, the student has the right to request a procedural review by COSCA within one month of notification of the result of the investigator(s) decision.

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COSCA will verify that the member’s complaints procedure has been followed and the outcome was lawful, reasonable and properly explained.

COSCA’s Complaints Procedure can be found here: <http://www.cosca.org.uk/guidance-policies/complaints>

**Amendments**

\_\_\_\_ [the training provider] has the right to amend/add to any/all parts of this procedure at any time, but any amendments have been submitted and approved by COSCA to ensure compliance with COSCA’s Standards.