ACCSM
AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE
OF COSMETIC SURGERY AND MEDICINE

Raising Standards – Protecting Patients

Complaints Management Policy

1. Introduction

The Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery and Medicine (ACCSM) is committed to maintaining the highest standards of professional conduct, patient safety, and public trust. This Complaints Management Policy outlines the principles, procedures, and responsibilities for the receipt, management, and resolution of complaints against Fellows, trainees, supervisors, or members.

2. Guiding Principles

- Patient safety and public protection are paramount.
- Complaints will be managed fairly, transparently, and promptly.
- All parties are entitled to natural justice, including the right to be heard and to respond.
- Complaints will be handled confidentially, with outcomes shared only on a need-to-know basis.
- Cultural safety, equity, and respect will guide all interactions.
- Serious complaints may be referred to external regulatory authorities (e.g., AHPRA, MBA).

3. Scope

This policy applies to all complaints involving Fellows, trainees, supervisors, and members of the ACCSM. It covers allegations of:

- Professional misconduct
- Breaches of good medical practice: a code of conduct for doctors in Australia
- Inappropriate supervision or training practices
- Cultural safety breaches or discrimination
- Patient safety or clinical quality concerns
- Bullying, harassment, or unethical behaviour

4. Complaints Pathway

Step 1 – Lodgement of Complaint

Complaints may be submitted by patients, trainees, Fellows, staff, or members of the public via the ACCSM Complaints Form, email, or telephone. Anonymous complaints will be considered where sufficient detail is provided.

Step 2 – Triage and Initial Review

The administrator will log all complaints into the Complaints Register and conduct an initial review to determine:

- Whether the complaint falls within the jurisdiction of the College
- The seriousness and potential risk to patient safety
- Whether immediate referral to a regulator is required

The complaint will then be referred to the Chair of the Complaints and Professional Standards Committee (CPSC).

Step 3 – Investigation

If deemed necessary, the CPSC will commence an investigation regarding the complaint. Investigations may include document review, interviews, and consultation with subject matter experts. The respondent will be given an opportunity to respond to allegations.

Step 4 – Determination

The CPSC will consider the evidence and make findings on whether the complaint is substantiated. Recommendations may include:
- No further action
- Mediation or remediation
- Education or supervision requirements
- Formal warning or censure
- Suspension or expulsion
- Referral to external regulators (AHPRA, MBA, HCCC, etc.)

Step 5 – Outcome and Communication

Parties will be advised of the outcome in writing. De-identified data on complaint outcomes will be reported to Council and the Public Safety and Patient Protection Committee (PSPPC).

5. Escalation and Regulatory Reporting

If a complaint raises immediate risks to patient safety or involves alleged breaches of law, or meets the threshold for mandatory reporting, it must be referred to the appropriate regulatory authority (AHPRA, Medical Board of Australia, or state health complaints entities). The College will cooperate fully with external investigations.

6. Record-Keeping and Confidentiality

All complaints will be recorded in the secure Complaints Register, maintained by college administrator. Records will be kept confidential and retained for a minimum of seven years. Access will be restricted to authorised personnel.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

Council: Oversees governance of the complaints management system and makes final determinations from recommendations of the CPSC.
CPSC: Investigates, determines outcomes, and makes recommendations to Council.
PSPPC**:** Receives de-identified reports of trends and systemic risks.
Administrator: Administers the complaints register, provides support to the CPSP.
Members, Fellows, and Trainees: Must cooperate with investigations and comply with recommendations.

8. Review

This policy will be reviewed biennially or earlier if required to ensure compliance with regulatory standards, evolving community expectations, and alignment with College governance structures.

This policy takes effect from:	22 Sep 2025
Approved by:	ACCSM Council
Next Review Date:	22 Sep 2027