Managing Director’s Guidance Memo

Standard 510
(March 2015, Revised January 2019)

Standard 510. STUDENT COMPLAINTS IMPLICATING COMPLIANCE WITH THE STANDARDS

(a) A law school shall establish, publish, and comply with policies for addressing student complaints.

(b) A law school shall maintain a record of student complaints submitted during the most recent accreditation period. The record shall include the resolution of the complaints.

Interpretation 510-1
A “complaint” is a communication in writing that seeks to bring to the attention of the law school a significant problem that directly implicates the school’s compliance with the Standards.

Interpretation 510-2
A law school’s policies on student complaints must address, at a minimum, procedures for filing and addressing complaints, appeal rights, if any, and timelines.

Background
This memo provides guidance on compliance with Standard 510, which covers complaints that implicate one or more of the Standards for Approval of Law Schools. Schools may have other forms and procedures for complaints that do not implicate a Standard and are therefore not covered by Standard 510.

What types of complaints does the Standard cover?
The Standard requires that law schools have a policy for addressing complaints that seek to bring to the attention of the law school a significant problem that directly implicates the school’s compliance with the Standards.
Where must a complaint policy be located?
The complaint policy must be in writing and must be located in a prominent place such as the student handbook and on the law school's website.

What must a law school’s complaint policy include?
A law school’s complaints policy must include, at a minimum:
- The procedures for filing the complaint (e.g., whether they must be in writing).
- A description of the applicable procedures for handling the complaint.
- The timeline for handling the complaint.
- A description of appeal rights, if any.

In addition, it is recommended that a law school’s complaint policy also include:
- A description of the types of complaints covered by this policy (clearly distinguishing between other complaint policies).
- The name of the person to whom complaints should be addressed.
- A description of what must be included in the complaint (e.g., detail regarding the behavior, program, or process that is the subject of the complaint, citations to relevant ABA Standards, name and address of complainant).
- A link to the ABA Standards and Rules of Procedure for Approval of Law Schools.
- A description of any additional requirements.
- Information about the correct place to file other types of complaints, if appropriate.

How long must law schools maintain a record of complaints?
Complaints must be maintained for a period of at least ten years or until the next regular comprehensive review by the Council.

What must be included in the record of complaints?
A law school must maintain a copy of the complaint and a summary of the process and resolution of the complaint. In addition, a law school must maintain adequate records to demonstrate compliance with its policy, as required in Standard 510(a) and 510(b).

The Managing Director’s Office will issue Guidance memoranda from time-to-time when new Standards or Interpretations have been adopted or when, in the course of the Office’s dealings with schools about compliance with the Standards, a number of schools are asking for clarification or direction regarding a particular Standard, Interpretation or reporting requirement. The Office does its best to provide helpful guidance, but we remind schools that we do not have the authority to bind the Council. That said, the Council understands the necessity of providing this guidance by the Managing Director’s Office and will take that guidance into account in any determination about a law school’s operating in compliance with the Standards.