

A. GOsC Management of Concerns Policy

A.1 Procedure for dealing with concerns about osteopathic education

A.1.1 Summary

1. This document sets out how the General Osteopathic Council deals with concerns reported to it about osteopathic education.

A.1.2 Introduction

2. This guidance is for providers, students, staff, patients, osteopaths and others who have a concern about education being delivered in an OEI awarding qualifications in the United Kingdom recognised by the General Osteopathic Council and approved by the Privy Council.

A.1.3 Purpose

3. The purpose of the General Osteopathic Council in relation to quality assurance of undergraduate and pre-registration education is to ensure that 'Recognised Qualifications' deliver graduates meeting the Osteopathic Practice Standards.
4. This policy outlines how we manage concerns about osteopathic education.

A.1.4 About the General Osteopathic Council

5. The General Osteopathic Council is established under the Osteopaths Act 1993. Our statutory powers in relation to education are set out in sections 11 to 16 of the Osteopaths Act 1993. We have powers to recognise pre-registration qualifications, subject to the approval of the Privy Council, if the qualification is evidence of meeting our Osteopathic Practice Standards (referred to as the standard of proficiency in our legislation). We only have powers to withdraw this recognition if there is evidence that the qualification no longer meets the Osteopathic Practice Standards.
6. Decisions concerning the granting, maintenance and renewal of RQ status are made by the General Osteopathic Council and approved by the Privy Council following reviews of osteopathic courses and course providers.

A.1.5 What we will consider

7. GOsC will consider information from students, staff, patients or carers, or any other interested party which relates to the delivery of the Osteopathic Practice Standards. We can consider information if it is evidence of serious systemic or procedural concerns or has a broader implication of failings of the management of academic quality or standards, which impact on the delivery of the Osteopathic Practice Standards.

A.1.6 What we will not consider

8. We do not resolve individual complaints against providers. We cannot provide redress or compensation to any individual submitting a complaint to us.
9. Examples of matters which we may not be able to investigate include:
 - problems that the provider has already resolved
 - isolated mistakes or incidents of bad practice
 - individual examination results

- matters of academic judgement
- grievances against staff
- matters considered by a court or tribunal

We will not normally look at complaints where the main issues complained about took place more than three years before the complaint is received by us.

A.1.7 The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998

10. Concerns about academic standards and quality are not regarded as qualifying disclosures under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. Those submitting concerns to us are therefore unlikely to be offered legal protection under the Act. However, there may be other circumstances in which statutory protection may be afforded.
11. It is our policy that the names of people raising concerns should normally be disclosed to providers.
12. If a person raising concerns has concerns about their identity being disclosed, they should discuss those concerns with the Fiona Browne, Head of Professional Standards, General Osteopathic Council at standards@osteopathy.org.uk to explore alternative options that may be available.

A.1.8 Procedure for considering concerns

A.1.8.1 Stage 1: Screening

13. The screening process helps us to consider whether information provided constitutes a concern requiring investigation under this policy. Is this a concern that should be investigated?
14. Information submitted will be considered by the General Osteopathic Council Professional Standards Team.
15. If the concern relates to immediate, ongoing patient safety issues, a recommendation will be made to the Chief Executive to take immediate steps to protect patients. This may include:
 - a. Informing the OEI and ensuring that immediate action is taken
 - b. Informing the relevant Department of Health
 - c. Informing the police or social services
 - d. Actions taken will normally be reported both to the OEI and the complainant
16. If the concern does not relate to an immediate patient safety issue, the complaint will be considered further by the Professional Standards Team. The person raising concerns may be asked for further information.
17. The Professional Standards Team will consider the information provided and will seek further information if required.
18. When the team has the information required, the team will determine the following:
 - a. Has the complaint been made to the provider? If not, the person raising concerns will be asked to raise the complaint with the provider to provide the opportunity for a local resolution. If the complaint has been through a local resolution process, the team will consider the information provided.
 - b. Does the complaint relate to delivery of the Osteopathic Practice Standards or wider issues affecting delivery of the Osteopathic Practice Standards?
19. A recommendation is made to the Chief Executive about whether or not the complaint should be screened in. The Chief Executive will decide on the appropriate outcome. The advice of the statutory Education Committee may be sought if appropriate.
20. A screening decision should be made within four weeks of receipt of all the information required for deciding at stage 1.

Outcomes of stage 1:

Outcome	Action
Concern proceeds for further investigation	Person raising concerns is requested to provide consent to share the concern with the provider. Concern is shared with the provider for a response.
Concern is not relevant to the delivery of the Osteopathic Practice Standards	Person raising concerns is advised of decision. Person raising concerns is provided with advice about the GOsC complaints process. Person raising concerns is provided with advice about other avenues of redress. For example, the Quality Assurance Agency, the Office for the Independent Higher Education Adjudicator or legal advice. Further information about other routes is provided at the end of this document.

A.1.8.2 Stage 2: Investigation

21. The applicant is asked for consent to share the complaint with the provider. Anonymous complaints will not be taken forward.
22. The complaint is shared with the provider for a response. The response of the provider should include:
 - The nature of the complaint,
 - The way the provider investigated and managed the complaint, and how the outcome has been monitored,
 - The impact on the delivery of the Osteopathic Practice Standards at the time of the complaint and now,
 - Any wider learning for the provider or the sector as a whole.
23. The Professional Standards Team will liaise with the OEI until sufficient information is obtained to allow the case to proceed to stage 3: decision.

Outcomes of stage 2:

Outcome	Action
Sufficient information is provided to enable a decision to be made at Stage 3.	Person raising concerns is advised of decision that case is ready to proceed to decision. OEI is advised of decision that case is ready to proceed to decision.

A.1.8.3 Stage 3: Decision

24. The information and the response are considered by the Professional Standards Team and a recommendation made to the Chief Executive on outcome.

Outcomes of stage 3:

Outcome	Action
Concern is not relevant to the delivery of the Osteopathic Practice Standards	Person raising concerns is advised of decision. Person raising concerns is provided with advice about the GOsC complaints process. Person raising concerns is provided with advice about other avenues of redress. For example, the Quality Assurance Agency, the Office for the Independent Higher Education Adjudicator or legal advice. Further information about other routes for pursuing concerns is provided at the Annex.

Concern is relevant to the Osteopathic Practice Standards - in the past but this has now been resolved.	Person raising concerns is advised of decision. OEI is advised of the decision. Information is reported to the statutory Education Committee and issue is managed as part of the Committee's quality assurance process.
Concern is relevant to the Osteopathic Practice Standards - ongoing	Person raising concerns is advised of decision. OEI is advised of the decision. Information is reported to the statutory Education Committee along with an action plan from the provider to resolve and monitor the issues, and the issues continue to be monitored as part of the Committee's quality assurance process.

A.1.9 Alternative routes for redress

A.1.9.1 Quality Assurance Agency

The Quality Assurance Agency has a concerns process which relates to quality and standards rather than individual complaints.

Further information about this can be found at: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-highereducation/how-to-make-a-complaint/complaints-about-qaa-and-appeals-against-decisions

A.1.9.2 The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)

The OIA is an independent body set up to review student complaints in England and Wales. Further information about the OIA and the complaints they can manage are available at:

www.oiahe.org.uk/making-a-complaint-to-the-oia/can-the-oia-look-at-my-complaintcomplaints-wizard.aspx

A.1.9.3 Legal advice

In the event that the above options do not provide the redress required persons raising concerns can contact a solicitor. The Solicitors Regulatory Authority regulates solicitors in England and Wales.

Information about finding a solicitor is available at: www.sra.org.uk/consumers/using-solicitor/find-solicitor.page

A.1.9.4 GOsC Corporate Complaints Procedure

Complaints about decisions made under this policy can be made through our Corporate Complaints Procedure which is available at: www.osteopathy.org.uk/news-andresources/document-library/our-work/making-a-complaint-about-the-gosc