



## NAAB Customer Complaint Procedure

ISO/IEC 17011:2017

### 1. Introduction

This procedure is designed to define how North American Accreditation Bureau (NAAB) handles customer complaints through investigation and resolution.

Customer complaints received may concern decisions and activities of NAAB.

NAAB keeps records of all satisfaction or dissatisfaction, complaints appeals, and disputes, and decisions taken.

### 2. Scope

This procedure applies to customer complaints received following accreditation, market surveys, workshops, seminars, complaints, appeals and disputes. Customer complaints may be in any form such as written, oral, telephonic and observations made by both external and internal certification stakeholders.

### 3. Responsibilities

- 3.1. Manager – Accreditation Services (MAcredS)
  - Ensure the effective implementation of this Procedure;
  - Ensure review of the Procedure for continued suitability.

### 4. Terms, Definitions, Abbreviations and Acronyms

For purposes of this Procedure, the terms, definitions, abbreviations and acronyms in the NAAB MSQM Quality Manual shall apply.

### 5. NAAB RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMPLAINTS

- 5.1. Complaints submitted to NAAB shall be limited to concerns or issues regarding NAAB.
- 5.2. Complaints against NAAB shall be actioned in accordance with the applicable clauses of Section 6.
- 5.3. If a complaint is made about the activities of an NAAB Assessor, whether from a third party or another NAAB Assessor, the principal role of NAAB in relation to the immediate issue is an indirect one of ensuring that the affected NAAB Assessor has first had the opportunity



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to resolve a particular matter, through direct discussions between the NAAB Assessor and the complainant.

- 5.4. It is the responsibility of the complainant to provide relevant documentation to NAAB to demonstrate that the complaint has been considered and finalized in accordance with the NAAB Assessor's own complaint handling procedure.
- 5.5. If the NAAB Assessor has not been able to make satisfactory progress in the resolution of a complaint within a reasonable length of time (normally 30 days), the complainant has the right to refer the matter to NAAB for resolution using this complaints procedure.

Note: It is expected that validated complaints not requiring an on-site investigation would normally be resolved within 30 days. The NAAB Assessor should keep the complainant informed of progress being made in dealing with the complaint and, if possible, make reasons for delays plausible. (see 6.2 and 6.3)

### **6. NAAB COMPLAINTS INVESTIGATION PROCESS**

- 6.1. All complaints shall be lodged in the first instance with NAAB. NAAB shall promptly acknowledge in writing the receipt and subject of the complaint or the rejection of the complaint (with written justification) to the complainant within 10 working days if it is not in accordance with, or has not been dealt with, the requirements of Clause 5.
- 6.2. Upon receipt of a complaint, NAAB shall ensure that the substance of the complaint is clearly understood and documented, and that all relevant claims or statements made by the complainant or other interested parties can be properly validated in writing. Such validation is essential before the complaint can be considered as a formal complaint and any investigation initiated.
- 6.3. Validation means that all information can be confirmed as accurate and correct through an independent source, other than the complainant. It is the responsibility of the complainant to submit information that can be validated.
- 6.4. When the complaint has been satisfactorily validated, NAAB shall formally bring the issue of the complaint, and any relevant facts, to the notice of the NAAB Assessor, even where these have already been made known to the NAAB Assessor by the complainant, and ask the NAAB Assessor to provide, within 5 working days, a full account as to how the complaint has been dealt with and the outcome.
- 6.5. If it is found that it has not been possible to resolve the matter satisfactorily or a report is not received from the NAAB Assessor, NAAB will take the necessary action as set out in Clause 6.6 or 6.7, as appropriate.



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6.6. If the complaint has been made against an NAAB Assessor which is a member of a Regional Assessment Group (RAG), NAAB will refer the complaint and all associated documentation to the relevant lead of the RAG for investigation and resolution in accordance with the RAG's complaints process. NAAB shall advise the complainant of the action taken and if the complainant is not satisfied by the action of the RAG they can complain to the NAAB.

Note: Investigations are to be undertaken in the most efficient and effective manner. It is an expectation that investigations will be undertaken remotely. However if an on-site visit is necessary, the cost of the on-site visit will be borne by the body that is the subject of the complaint.

6.7. Any individuals named as investigators that have a real or perceived conflict of interest or confidentiality issue with the information included within the complaint shall excuse themselves immediately from any discussions or potential receipt of information regarding the specific complaint.

6.8. All persons involved shall take necessary measures to preserve the confidentiality of information obtained during the investigation of the complaint. A complainant may request to remain anonymous to other parties involved in providing information for the investigation and the designated investigator shall take adequate steps to preserve confidentiality.

6.9. The designated investigator(s) shall proceed with a thorough investigation of the complaint and seek a resolution of the issue(s) involved. It is the responsibility of the designated investigator(s) to ensure that the investigation is performed in a timely manner.

Note: It is expected that validated complaints not requiring an on-site investigation would normally be resolved within 30 days.

6.10. When the issue has been investigated, the designated investigator(s) shall submit a draft copy of the report to the NAAB Assessor to allow them to comment upon the accuracy of the facts. Once the accuracy has been established then the designated investigator(s) shall submit a detailed written report on the complaint, including a statement indicating whether the complaint has been found to have been substantiated or not, including recommendations on resolving the complaint, to the NAAB Senior Leadership. NAAB Senior Leadership shall decide if the report/recommendations are likely to be satisfactory in terms of resolving the matter. NAAB Senior Leadership shall make or request any amendments to the report/recommendations considered necessary. The final outcome shall include a recommendation on action(s) to be taken, if any, in relation to the



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complaint. If grounds have been found for the NAAB Senior Leadership to consider taking remedial action, the report shall recommend the specific action to be taken.

- 6.11. NAAB shall notify the complainant in writing and the NAAB Assessor of the final outcome of the complaint.
- 6.12. NAAB shall maintain a detailed and complete record of the receipt, handling and outcome of every complaint. A summary of all complaints handled since the previous meetings will be discussed at the next ISO Management Review meeting.

## **7. TIMING OF COMPLAINTS PROCESS**

- 7.1. If the complainant is unable to submit all necessary information within 5 days of the submission of the original information to enable NAAB to validate the complaint, NAAB shall close the complaint and inform the complainant of the closure.
- 7.2. NAAB shall refer a validated complaint to the relevant RAG or within 5 working days of concluding that the information relating to the complaint can be validated.
- 7.3. For those complaints actioned in accordance with Clause 6.6, the designated investigator(s) shall complete the investigation and provide a written report to NAAB as soon as possible. If the investigation has not been finalized within 30 days of the investigator(s) being appointed a written progress report shall be prepared and forwarded to NAAB.

Note: It is expected that both the complainant and NAAB Member will assist the investigator complete their work in a timely manner. It is expected that the complainant and NAAB Member will provide requested information within 5 working days of the request.

- 7.4. NAAB shall forward the final outcome to the complainant within 5 days of receipt from the Chair of the MLA Management Committee.

## **8. RECONSIDERATION OF THE COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION OUTCOME**

- 8.1. The complainant may request NAAB to reconsider the outcome of their complaint by sending the request to NAAB within 30 working days of receiving the final outcome of the complaint.



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- 8.2. Any request to reconsider a final outcome shall be heard by NAAB Senior Leadership and shall be conducted to ensure that the investigation was performed in full conformance with this complaints procedure.
- 8.3. NAAB Senior Leadership may request to reopen or reconsider any aspect of the investigation, with a maximum period for resolution of 30 working days.
- 8.4. The decision made by NAAB Senior Leadership shall be conveyed to the complainant by NAAB, shall be final and the complaint closed.

End of Procedure for the Investigation and Resolution of Complaints.

### **9. Records**

Records resulting from the implementation of this procedure are kept in the NAAB Platform and controlled in accordance with the ISO/IEC 17011:2017.