

## PROCEDURE FOR CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

### 1. Scope:

**1.1** This document describes the procedure for handling all complaints received by SLAB from various sources against the quality of the services provided, personnel involved in accreditation process, Accredited / Applicant CAB's, or any other.

**1.2** This procedure covers complaints received through any means like letters, e-mails, faxes, telephones (followed by written complaints). Reports appearing in print media and references in electronic media may also be investigated where relevant.

### 2. Responsibility:

**2.1** Primary responsibility for handling of complaints rests with the Director / CEO. Any other officer of SLAB may be designated as Staff Officer (Complaints) by the Director to assist him in such matters. He may also act as the convener (secretary) of the Panels appointed by the Director /CEO. Director / CEO may involve any other SLAB officers/staff in the complaint investigation process.

**2.2** Director is responsible for monitoring of complaints and is also responsible for final decision on closure of the complaints.

**2.3** Panel appointed by Director in accordance with this procedure is responsible for submitting its findings and recommendations after thoroughly investigating the matter under consideration.

**2.4** Quality Manager is responsible for analyzing all the complaints and their outcome for possible trends and presenting them to the management review meeting.

### 3. References:

**SLAB Quality Manual Clause 5.9**

### 4. Definitions:

**4.1 Appeal:** A request submitted by a client Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) to the SLAB for reconsideration of a decision taken by the SLAB affecting the attainment of Accreditation by the CAB.

**4.2 Complaint:** Expression of dissatisfaction other than appeal, by any person or organization to the SLAB relating to activities of SLAB or activities of an Accredited CAB with regard to accreditation.

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## 5. Procedure:

### 5.1 Receipt of Complaints

**5.1.1** SLAB system shall be open to receiving complaints from any source against the quality of the services provided, personnel involved in accreditation process, activities and conduct of accredited / applicant CAB's. All

**5.1.2** All complaints (verbal and written) received in SLAB shall be channeled to the Director /CEO. Arrangements shall be made by Director to maintain Records pertaining to all complaints covering date of receipt, date of acknowledgement, action taken, date of closure or final disposal. Each complaint shall be registered in the Complaints Register GN-RE-01 and recorded separately in a complaints handling form GN-FM-09 where the progress of the investigations and the decisions taken are recorded. All complaints shall be treated as confidential unless otherwise required by law.

**5.1.3** Immediately on receipt, the complaint shall be acknowledged with the assurance that SLAB will be investigating the complaint and will be informing the complainant of the outcome within a reasonable period of time depending on the nature of complaint. Anonymous complaints shall also be registered only if a prima-facie case exists and it appears to be valid and having some substance.

**5.1.4** All complaints shall undergo initial scrutiny by Director /CEO or by an Officer assigned by Director for the task to determine whether the complaint fall within the ambit of SLAB activities and whether the complaint is valid, based on which any of the following action shall be taken.

- a) If a complaint is outside the ambit of SLAB activities, the complainant shall be informed accordingly and the complaint shall be treated as closed.
- b) If information provided in the complaint is inadequate for any meaningful follow-up and the complainant is not able to provide minimum required information such complaints shall also be treated as closed and the complainant shall be informed accordingly.
- c) If the complaint clearly falls within the ambit of SLAB activities and appears to be valid, and the initial information provided is sufficient for an investigation the same shall be taken up for further action.

### 5.2 Investigation of Complaints

**Complaints received by SLAB may broadly fall in to three categories:**

- a) Complaints against CAB's.
- b) Complaints against Quality of services provided by SLAB.
- c) Complaints against Officials involved in the Accreditation process.

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Procedure for dealing with each category of complaints is in given sections 5.3 to 5.5.

### **5.3 Procedure for Dealing with Complaints against CAB's**

5.3.1 To deal with a complaint against a CAB, Director shall constitute panel consisting of Additional Director or a Deputy Director, Authorized Officer dealing with the concerned CAB and an Assessor (External Pool) or Technical Expert as required. The complaint shall not be reviewed and approved by individuals who are not directly involved in the matters that are in the subject of the complaint.

5.3.2 The panel where appropriate shall give opportunity to the CAB to address the complaint. When this is not appropriate, the committee may seek clarifications from the CAB and if required may depute SLAB representative, or an assessor, or an expert to investigate the matter. All expenses related to investigation shall be borne by SLAB.

5.3.3 The panel shall place the findings of the investigation along with the recommendation on action to be taken against the CAB, to Director, SLAB. The Director if necessary may consult the appropriate Accreditation Committee and take a decision.

5.3.4 SLAB shall inform the CAB to take necessary corrective action that shall be verified by SLAB either immediately or in a subsequent audit. In case of any violation of SLAB Terms and Conditions for Maintaining Accreditation or non cooperation with the investigation process, accreditation status of the CAB may be put under abeyance / suspension/ withdrawal as per SLAB norms / procedures.

5.3.5 The complainant shall be informed about the outcome of the complaint and action taken by SLAB, confidentially.

5.3.6 If the complaint is found invalid, the complainant as well as the CAB shall be informed accordingly.

### **5.4 Procedure for Dealing with Complaints against Quality of services provided by SLAB**

5.4.1 A panel consisting of Additional Director, a Member of Accreditation Committee and an Assessor (External Pool) shall be appointed by the Director to investigate the complaint. The complaint shall not be reviewed and approved by individuals who are not directly involved in the matters that are in the subject of the complaint.

5.4.2 The panel may seek clarifications and information from all appropriate sources. The panel shall submit their findings to Director SLAB. The Director, if necessary may consult the appropriate parties and take decision.

5.4.3 In case of valid complaints action taken may involve feedback for corrective action followed by monitoring, and preventive action against future recurrence.

5.4.4 The complainant shall be informed about the outcome of the complaint and action taken by SLAB, confidentially. A brief summary of nature of the complaint, outcome of the investigation and action taken shall be added to the monitoring information regarding Complaints

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## **5.5 Procedure for Dealing with Complaints against Officials involved in the Accreditation Process.**

**5.5.1** Director SLAB shall seek clarification from the person concerned. If an investigation is required, Director SLAB may delegate it to a panel consisting of one or more suitable persons. The complaint shall not be reviewed and approved by individuals who are not directly involved in the matters that are in the subject of the complaint. The findings of the committee shall be placed before the Council for a decision.

**5.5.2** When the complaint is against a SLAB Officer, involvement of the person concerned in the investigation process, either directly or indirectly should be avoided. The Council shall appoint a panel of two or more persons to investigate the complaint. The panel may seek clarification from the CAB, Assessors or other persons who may have knowledge about the matter contained in the complaint.

**5.5.3** In case of complaint against an Assessor or Accreditation Committee member, a panel shall be appointed consisting Additional Director, a Member of the Council and a Member of an Accreditation Committee. The committee may seek clarification from the CAB, Assessors or other persons who may have knowledge about the matter contained in the complaint.

**5.5.4** If the complaint is found to be valid, Director SLAB shall direct the concerned staff member to take required corrective action. This information shall also be filed in performance review record of the concerned staff.

**5.5.5** In extreme case the decision may involve disciplinary action against the concerned SLAB staff member, in which case SLAB Staff Rules and regulations shall be followed. In extreme case involving Assessor or Accreditation Committee Member deletion of the assessor from the empanelled list or removal of Accreditation Committee member from the committee, shall be considered with approval of the Council.

**5.5.6** If the complaint is against the Director SLAB, then the Chairman SLAB shall handle the complaint under the guidance of the Council.

**5.5.7** The complainant shall be informed about the outcome of the complaint and action taken by SLAB, confidentially.

## **5.6 Reporting on Complaints and Other Related Actions**

**5.6.1** As an outcome of investigation of complaint and root cause analysis if any corrective action is felt necessary the same shall be initiated by Director in line with the requirements of Procedure for Corrective Action.

**5.6.2** All records pertaining to complaints shall be maintained up to date by the Officer assigned by the Director for the purpose. The status of complaints shall be reported to the Director SLAB, who is responsible for monitoring of complaints. After completion of the investigation process with satisfactory actions taken on each complaint, the complaint will be closed out and accordingly the complaints register will be updated.

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**5.6.3** The Quality Manager shall analyze all the complaints and their outcome for possible trends. The complaints received, handling of complaints and the corrective actions taken shall be discussed as one of the agenda items in the management review meeting under the Chairmanship of Director SLAB. The analysis of complaints shall be placed before SLAB Governing Council in accordance with Management review procedure.

**5.6.4** Complaints file maintained by the Director (or staff officer designated by D/CEO) where all correspondence in respect of complaints received, decisions by Director and/or Chairman and any other relevant documents are filed in chronological order (GN-FL-03)

## **6. Reference Documents:**

- 6.1** GN-RE-01: Complaints Register
- 6.2** GN-FM-09: Complaints Handling Form
- 6.3** GN-FL-03: Complaints File
- 6.4** GN-PR-06: Procedure for Corrective Action
- 6.5** AC-PR-02: Procedure for Management Review

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