



# QAA Comments, Compliments and Complaints Procedure

## Introduction

1 We are committed to providing the best possible service, and to working in an open and accountable way. One of the ways in which we continue to improve our service is by listening to the views of our members, stakeholders and customers. This includes responding positively to complaints and putting mistakes right. If you are not satisfied with the service you have received from us, please let us know.

2 This policy sets out guidelines to ensure that compliments, comments and complaints received by QAA are handled with courtesy, respect and fairness.

3 QAA defines a complaint as an expression of an individual's dissatisfaction with their experience of dealing with QAA. It may be on behalf of the individual's institution. Complaints are distinct from appeals and representations, which are challenges by an institution to the outcome of a QAA review or to another decision made by QAA.

4 Complaints that are upheld help QAA learn from experience, and may lead QAA to apologise to the complainant and to review its policies and procedures.

## Compliments and comments

5 In circumstances where you may wish to register a compliment or comment, you can do so by emailing the relevant team. Details of compliments and comments will be shared with relevant members of staff to address views and suggestions.

## How to make a complaint about QAA

6 First, you should contact the person you have been dealing with at QAA, so they can assist you and try to find a resolution.

7 If you are not satisfied with the explanation you receive and the resolution, you can contact the QAA Governance team in one of the following ways to lodge a formal complaint:

- send details of your complaint to [governance@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:governance@qaa.ac.uk)
- call 01452 557000 to make a complaint by telephone.

8 Our staff have a right to be treated with respect. We rarely encounter aggressive, abusive or vexatious complainants, but we reserve the right to end contact in such cases.

## Standards for handling complaints

9 We will be better able to respond to your complaint if it is raised promptly and accompanied by supporting information. Please state the area, date and time of incident to which your complaint relates, and provide supporting evidence and any relevant information regarding communication you have had with us on the subject.

10 We will:

- implement the Compliments, Comments and Complaints Procedure in an open, transparent and accountable way
- handle your complaint with courtesy, respect and fairness
- communicate reasons for the outcome
- use any knowledge and experience gained from complaints to improve how we operate.

11 QAA provides in-house training for its staff both on how to handle complaints in-line with this Procedure and on the requirements of our Welsh Language Compliance Notice. Complaints training is delivered by the Facilities and Compliance team. Training on Welsh Language Compliance is delivered by the Welsh Language Officer for QAA.

## Welsh Language Compliance

12 We work by the principle that in our work in Wales, we will treat the English and Welsh languages as equal and meet our Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 Compliance Notice.

13 We will therefore deal with any complaints relating to our compliance with any service delivery, operational or policymaking standards to which we have committed, as set out in this Procedure, regardless of whether the complaint is received in English or Welsh, and replied to in the language the complaint is submitted in unless the complainant provides an alternative preference.

14 QAA staff receive regular training to ensure that our commitment to the Welsh language can be met.

15 Complaints about QAA's compliance with Section 44 Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 are handled in the same way as other formal complaints and can also be made, and responded to, in either Welsh or English.

16 Complaints should first be sent to the person you have been dealing with at QAA. If you are still not satisfied with the outcome, you can then follow the formal complaints procedure below.

## Complaints procedure

17 Once your complaint has been received by the Governance team, the complaint is logged and acknowledged, normally within three working days of receipt.

18 The Director of Corporate Affairs will consider the complaint and decide how it will be dealt with. All complaints will be handled by an officer who has no conflict of interests with the subject of the complaint. If your complaint relates to QAA's compliance with the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, the officer appointed will have been trained in handling complaints related to compliance with the Measure. The Director of Corporate Affairs may decide to involve other colleagues in the consideration of your complaint, including (but not limited to) those from internal departments, independent reviewers, and members of the QAA Board and its sub-committees.

19 When consideration of your complaint is complete, the Director of Corporate Affairs (or nominated representative) will contact you to explain the outcome. We aim to respond to complaints within four weeks of receipt, but sometimes we may need more time to investigate. If this is the case, we will write to you to explain how your complaint is being handled, and when a full reply can be expected.

20 Where a complaint is submitted with an appeal or a representation, consideration of the complaint will normally be deferred until the completion of the appeal or representation procedure, so that the investigation of the complaint does not prejudice, and is not seen to prejudice, the handling of the appeal or representation. However, in exceptional cases the Director of Corporate Affairs can determine that the complaint's consideration is necessary alongside the appeal or representation.

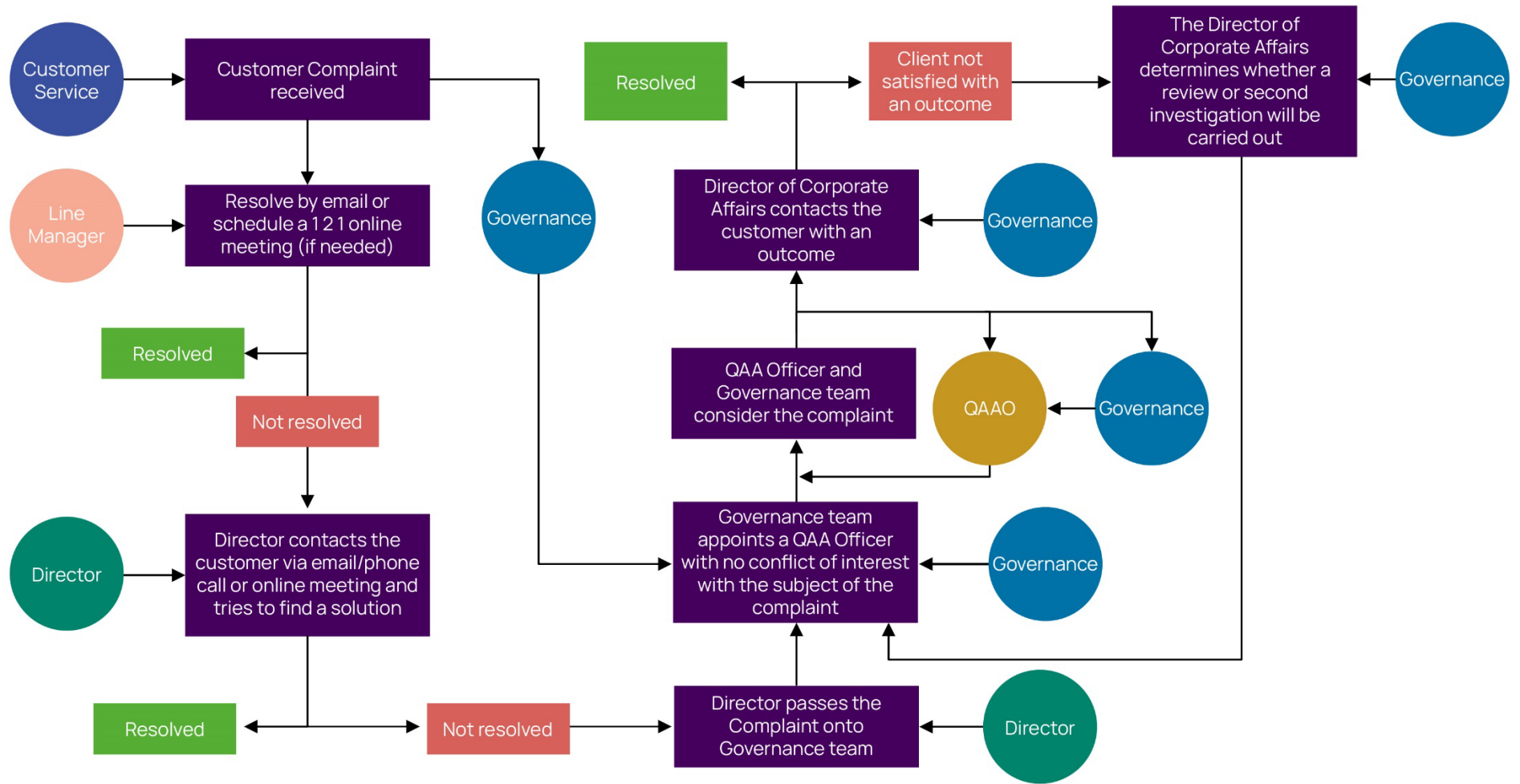
21 Complaints which the Director of Corporate Affairs classifies as 'serious' may be referred to the Chief Executive for investigation. Examples of 'serious' complaints might include, but are not limited to, those regarding allegations of improper conduct, fraud or dishonesty. Complaints of this nature may fall outside of the guideline timescales outlined above.

## What to do if you are not satisfied with our response

22 If you are not satisfied with our response to your complaint, please contact the Director of Corporate Affairs within seven days of receipt of our response, explaining the reasons for your dissatisfaction.

23 The Director of Corporate Affairs will determine whether a review or second investigation will be carried out and will respond to you within two weeks of receipt of your correspondence. In the event that a second investigation is to be carried out, the expected timescales for our response will be communicated to you.

# Complaints process flow diagram



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