

**BUREAU OF INDIAN STANDARDS**

*Draft Indian Standard*

**Quality management system — Requirement for Complaint handling in organizations  
with Guidance for use (First Revision)**

(ICS Number 03.120.10)

**Not to be reproduced without the  
permission of BIS or used as Standard**

**Last Date for receipt of Comments is  
December 2023**

**FOREWORD**

(Formal Clause will be added later on)

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction. Complaints handling system is developed to manage the complaints which are associated with quality of product/service. Complaints handling mechanism helps an organization to build process (es) which enable it to consistently resolve/ dispose off the complaints.

This standard addresses the following aspects of complaints handling:

- a) enhancing customer satisfaction by creating a customer-focused environment that is open to feedback (including complaints), resolving any complaints received, and enhancing the organization's ability to improve its product and customer service;
- b) top management involvement and commitment through adequate acquisition and deployment of resources, including personnel training;
- c) recognizing and addressing the needs and expectations of complainants;
- d) providing complainants with an open, effective and easy-to-use complaints process;
- e) analyzing and evaluating complaints in order to improve the product and customer service quality;
- f) auditing and certification of the complaints-handling process;
- g) reviewing the effectiveness and efficiency of the complaints-handling process.

In this standard, references have been drawn from following IS/ISO 10000 series of standard on complaint handling:

IS/ISO 10001	Quality Management — Customer Satisfaction Guidelines for Codes of Conduct for Organizations ( First Revision )
IS/ISO 10002	Quality management – Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations
IS/ISO 10003	Quality Management — Customer Satisfaction — Guidelines for Dispute

	Resolution External to Organizations ( First Revision )
IS/ISO 10004	Quality Management — Customer Satisfaction Guidelines for Monitoring and Measuring ( First Revision )
IS/ISO 10008	Quality management - Customer satisfaction - Guidelines for business - To - Consumer electronic commerce transactions

In the formulation of this standard, considerable assistance has been drawn from IS/ISO 9000 series of standards and IS 15700:2005 'Quality management systems – Requirements for service quality by service organizations'.

In this standard the following verbal forms are used:

- a) "Shall" indicates a requirement.
- b) "should" indicates a recommendation.
- c) "may" indicates a permission.
- d) "can" indicates a possibility or a capability.

Annex A and Annex B of document are for information only.

*This Standard is normative and is therefore amenable to contractual agreements including third party certification.*



*Indian Standard*

**Quality management system — Requirements for Complaints Handling in organizations with Guidance for use (First Revision)**

**1 SCOPE**

**1.1** This standard specifies requirements for the process of complaints-handling related to products and services provided by the organization. This standard is applicable for use by all organizations, regardless of size, type, products and services provided.

**1.2** The requirements for complaints-handling process covered in this standard do not apply to

- a) employment related complaints and disputes, and
- b) disputes referred for resolution outside an organization.
- c) complaints filed in any court of law
- d) appeals filed against decisions of a statutory authority
- e) management of normal service requests from consumers for post supply support which are sometimes (erroneously) referred as complaints

NOTE – This standard may also be applied to internal customers' complaints

**1.3** This standard is not intended to change any rights or obligations provided by applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.

**2 REFERENCES**

The standards given below contain provisions, which through reference in this text constitute provisions of this standard. At the time of publication, the editions indicated were valid. All standards are subject to revision and parties to agreements based on this standard are encouraged to investigate the possibility of applying the most recent editions of the standard indicated below.

SI. No	Title
IS/ISO 9000 : 2015	Quality management systems — Fundamentals and vocabulary
IS/ISO 9001 : 2015	Quality Management Systems —Requirements
IS/ISO 10001: 2018	Quality Management — Customer Satisfaction Guidelines for Codes of Conduct for Organizations (First Revision )
IS/ISO 10002: 2018	Quality management – Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations

IS/ISO 10003: 2018	Quality Management — Customer Satisfaction — Guidelines for Dispute Resolution External to Organizations (First Revision )
IS/ISO 10004: 2018	Quality Management “ Customer Satisfaction Guidelines for Monitoring and Measuring ( First Revision )
IS/ISO 10008: 2018	Quality management - Customer satisfaction - Guidelines for business - To - Consumer electronic commerce transactions
IS 15700: 2018	Quality management systems - Requirements for service quality by public service organizations

### 3 TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**3.1 Customer** - Person or organization that can or does receive a product or a service that is intended for or required by the person or the organization.

*Example:* Consumer, client, end-user, beneficiary, purchaser etc.

NOTE - A customer can be internal or external to the organization.

**3.2 Customer Experience** - Perception by a customer about their interactions with an organization, its products and services.

NOTE – IS/ ISO 23592 may be referred for Service excellence — Principles and model.

**3.3 Customer Satisfaction code of conduct** - Promises, made to customers by an organization concerning its behavior that are aimed at enhancing customer satisfaction and related provisions.

**3.4 Consumer** - Individual purchasing products or services for personal or private use.

**3.5 Customer service** - Interaction of the organization with the customer throughout the life cycle of a product or a service.

**3.6 Complaint** - Expression of dissatisfaction made to an organization, related to its product or service, or the complaints-handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

**3.7 Complainant** - person, organization or their representative making a complaint (3.6).

**3.8 Feedback** - Opinions, comments and expressions of interest in a product, a service or a complaints-handling process.

**3.9 Customer Satisfaction** - Customer’s perception of the degree to which the customer’s expectations have been fulfilled.

**3.10 Dispute Resolution** - Person or organization that supplies and operates an external dispute resolution process.

**3.11 Dispute** - Disagreement, arising from a complaint that the customer believes is unresolved.

## **4 GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

### **4.1 General**

Effective and efficient planning, design, development, implementation, maintenance and improvement of an organization's complaint handling system is based on adherence to the customer-focused guiding principles set out in Annex A. These guiding principles shall be used to enhance customer protection throughout the system.

NOTES:

1. The order of the guiding principles as listed is not intended to reflect their relative importance.
2. These principles are non-auditable clauses.

## **5 COMPLAINTS-HANDLING FRAMEWORKS**

### **5.1 Context of the organization**

In planning, designing, developing, operating, maintaining and improving the complaints-handling process, the organization shall consider its context by:

- a) identifying and addressing external and internal issues that are relevant to the organization's purpose and that affect its ability to achieve complaints-handling objectives.
- b) identifying the interested parties that are relevant to the complaints-handling process, and addressing the relevant needs and expectations of these interested parties.
- c) identifying the scope of the complaints-handling process, including its boundaries and applicability, and taking into account the external and internal issues and the needs of interested parties noted above.

### **5.2 Leadership and commitment**

Top management shall demonstrate leadership in, and the organization shall be actively committed to, effective and efficient complaints handling. It is particularly important that the commitment is shown by, and promoted from, the organization's top management.

A strong leadership in, and commitment to, responding to complaints shall allow both personnel and customers to contribute to the improvement of the organization's products, services and processes.

This leadership and commitment shall be reflected in the definition, adoption and dissemination of policy and procedures for the resolution of complaints. Management leadership and commitment shall be shown by the provision of adequate resources, including Policy, training and review mechanism.

### **5.3 Policy**

Top management should establish an explicit customer-focused complaint-handling policy. The policy shall be made available to, and known by, all personnel. The policy shall also be made available to customers and other relevant interested parties. The policy shall be supported by procedures and objectives for each function and personnel role included in the process.

When establishing the policy and objectives for the complaints-handling process, the following factors shall be taken into account:

- a) identification of any applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.
- b) financial, operational, and organizational requirements.
- c) the input of customers, personnel, and other relevant interested parties.
- d) categorization of complaint and time lines for their resolution.
- e) escalation matrix for in case complaints are not resolved.

Complaint handling policy may be integrated with quality and any other relevant policy of organization.

### **5.4 Responsibility and authority**

#### **5.4.1 Top management shall be responsible for**

- a) ensuring that the complaints-handling process and objectives are established within the organization.
- b) ensuring that the complaints-handling process is planned, designed, developed, operated,
- c) maintained and continually improved in accordance with the complaints-handling policy of the organization.
- d) ensuring that the processes are customer/user friendly
- e) awareness creation of the complaints-handling process and the need for a customer focus throughout the organization.
- f) ensuring that information about the complaints-handling process is communicated to customers, complainants, and, where applicable, other parties directly concerned in an easily accessible manner.
- g) identifying and allocating the resources needed for an effective and efficient management of complaints-handling process.

- h) Designating a nodal officer for complaint handling and clearly defining responsibilities and authority in addition to the responsibilities and authority set out in 5.4.2;
- k) ensuring that there is a process for rapid and effective notification to top management of any significant complaints.
- m) ensuring feedback to concerned internal department/functional units on categories and quantum of complaints received and set out process to reduce the complaints by improving other process within the organization
- n) periodically reviewing the complaints-handling process to ensure that it is effectively and efficiently maintained and continually improved.

**5.4.2** The Nodal officer shall be responsible for:

- a) establishing a process of performance monitoring, evaluation and reporting.
- b) reporting to top management on the complaints-handling process, with recommendations for improvement.
- c) maintaining the effective and efficient operation of the complaints-handling process, including
- d) the recruitment and training of appropriate personnel, technology requirements, documentation, setting and meeting target time limits and other requirements, and process reviews.
- e) highlighting repetitive complaints to the Top management for taking corrective actions.

**5.4.3** Other personnel may include functional heads involved in the resolution of complaints-handling process shall, as applicable within their area of responsibility, be responsible for:

- a) ensuring that the complaints-handling process is implemented.
- b) liaising with the nodal officer for complaints-handling.
- c) ensuring the promotion of awareness of the complaints-handling process and of the need for a customer focus.
- d) ensuring that information about the complaints-handling process is easily accessible.
- e) reporting on actions and decisions with respect to complaints handling.
- f) ensuring that monitoring of the complaints-handling process is undertaken and recorded.
- g) ensuring that action is taken to correct a problem, prevent it happening in the future, and that the event is recorded.



- h) ensuring that complaints-handling data are available for the top management review.

**5.4.4** All personnel in contact with customers and complainants shall:

- a) be trained / qualified in complaints handling.
- b) comply with any complaints-handling reporting requirements determined by the organization.
- c) treat customers in a courteous manner and promptly respond to their complaints or direct them to the appropriate individual.
- d) demonstrate good interpersonal and good communication skills.

NOTE - As in marketing, sales, customer communications, customer relationship management, counter services, help desks, call services and others.

**5.4.5** All personnel shall:

- a) be aware of their roles, responsibilities and authorities in respect of resolution of complaints.
- b) be aware of what procedures to follow and what information to give to complainants.
- c) report any complaints/feedback which they may come across which have a significant impact on the organization.

NOTE - Significant impact could include significant health and safety issues, national security, environmental concerns, cyber security etc.

## **6 Planning, design and development**

### **6.1 General**

The organization shall plan, design and develop an effective and efficient complaints-handling process in order to enhance customer satisfaction, and also to improve the quality of the products provided. The complaints-handling process shall be aligned and integrated with other management systems implemented in the organization.

#### NOTES

1. This process shall comprise of a set of interrelated activities that function harmoniously to conform to the complaints-handling policy and achieve the complaints-handling objectives.
2. The organization may take into account and learn from the best practices of other organizations with regard to complaints handling.

### **6.2 Objectives**

Top management shall ensure that the measurable complaints-handling objectives are established for relevant functions and levels within the organization. The complaints-handling objectives shall be consistent with the complaints-handling policy.

The complaints-handling objectives shall be reviewed at periodic intervals for achievement and updated if needed.

### **6.3 Activities**

Top management shall ensure that the complaints-handling process is implemented.

### **6.4 Resources**

In order to ensure that the complaints-handling process operates effectively and efficiently, top management shall identify the need for resources and provide them.

#### NOTES

1. The resources may include trained personnel, documented procedures, specialist support, materials & equipment, computer hardware & software, and finances.
2. The selection, training and qualification of personnel involved in the complaints-handling process are particularly important factors for an effective and efficient complaints-handling process.

## **7 Operation of complaints-handling process**

### **7.1 Communication**

Information concerning the complaints-handling process, such as brochures, pamphlets or electronic- based information, shall be made readily available to customers, complainants and other relevant interested parties. Such information shall be provided in clear language including its availability in concerned regional languages and, so far as is reasonable, in formats accessible to all including website, so that no complainants are disadvantaged.

The following information shall be made available:

- a) details of complainant;
- b) Regulatory or statutory Requirements;
- c) information to be provided by the complainant (see Table 1);
- d) where complaints can be made;
- e) how complaints can be made;
- f) the process for handling complaints;
- g) time periods associated with various stages in the process;
- h) the complainant's options for remedy, including external means (see 7.9);
- k) how the complainant can obtain feedback on the status of the complaint.

Table 1

Sample Form for complainant

The following is a form containing the principal information which can aid a complainant to provide the key details required by the organization to handle the complaint effectively and efficiently.

1 Details of complainant

Name/organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode, town \_\_\_\_\_

Country \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Details of person acting on behalf of complainant (if applicable)

\_\_\_\_\_

Details of person to be contacted (if different from above)

\_\_\_\_\_

2 Product description / service description

Reference number (if known or applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Description

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3 Problem encountered Date of occurrence

\_\_\_\_\_ Description

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4 Remedy requested Yes ♦ No ♦

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5 Date, signature

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

6 Enclosure List of enclosed documents

---

## 7.2 Receipt of complaints

Upon reporting of the initial complaint, the complaint shall be recorded with supporting information and a unique identifier code. The record of the initial complaint shall identify the remedy sought by the complainant and any other information necessary for the effective handling of the complaint including: (see Table 2)

- a) a description of the complaint and relevant supporting data;
- b) details of the complainant
- c) the requested remedy;
- d) the products and services or related organization practices complained about;
- e) the due date for a response;
- f) data on people, department, branch, organization and market segment;
- g) immediate action taken (if any).
- h) person or function responsible for initial assessment, investigation and remedial actions

Table 2

### Sample Complaint follow-up form

The following is a form (for internal use only), containing the principal information which can aid the organization in following up on a complaint.

#### 1 Details of complaint receipt

Date of complaint \_\_\_\_\_

Time of complaint \_\_\_\_\_

Name of recipient \_\_\_\_\_

Complaint medium Phone • Email • Internet • Personal •

Postal mail • Others •

Unique identifier code \_\_\_\_\_

2 Details of complainant

See form for complainant

Reference number of complaint

Relevant data on complaint

Complaint referred by

3 Problem encountered

Date of problem

Recurrent problem Yes • No •

Problem category

1 • Product not delivered

2 • Service not provided/partially provided

3 • Delay in delivering product

Duration of delay: \_\_\_\_\_

4 • Delay in providing service

Duration of delay: \_\_\_\_\_

5 • Defective product

6 • Poor service Details: \_\_\_\_\_

7 • Product not in conformity with order

8 • Products not ordered

9 • Damage suffered

10 • Refusal to honour the guarantee

11 • Refusal to sell

12 • Refusal to provide service

13 • Commercial practices/sales methods

- 14 • Incorrect information
- 15 • Inadequate information
- 16 • Payment arrangements
- 17 • Price
- 18 • Price increase
- 19 • Supplementary charges
- 20 • Unjustified costs/billing
- 21 • Terms of contract
- 22 • Coverage of contract
- 23 • Assessment of damage
- 24 • Refusal to pay compensation
- 25 • Inadequate compensation
- 26 • Modification of contract
- 27 • Poor performance of contract
- 28 • Cancellation/rescission of contract
- 29 • Cancellation of service
- 30 • Loan reimbursement
- 31 • Interest demanded
- 32 • Failure to honour commitments
- 33 • Incorrect invoicing
- 34 • Undue delay in dealing with a complaint
- 35 • Other type of problem:

---

---

---

Additional information:

---

---

---

4 Complaint assessment Evaluate the scope and severity of the actual and potential effects of the complaint:

Severity: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Complexity: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Impact: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Safety concern? Yes • No •

Need for immediate action Yes • No •

Availability of immediate action Yes • No •

Likelihood of compensation Yes • No •

5 Complaint resolution

Remedy requested Yes • No •

Action to be taken

1. Delivery of the product
2. Repair/rework of the product
3. Exchange of the product
4. Cancellation of sale
5. Enforcement of the guarantee
6. Honouring of commitments
7. Conclusion of a contract
8. Cancellation/rescission of contract
9. Cancellation of invoice
10. Information
11. Correction of assessment of damage
12. Payment of an indemnification in the sum of: \_\_\_\_\_
13. Reimbursement of a down payment in the amount of: \_\_\_\_\_
14. Reimbursement of other payments effected in the amount of: \_\_\_\_\_
15. Price rebate in the amount of: \_\_\_\_\_

16. Payment facilities

17. Apology

18. Other action:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**6 Complaint tracking**

Action taken	Date	Name	Remark
Complaint acknowledged to complainant			
Complaint assessment			
Investigation of complaint			
Resolution of complaint			
Information to complainant			
Correction			
Correction verified			
Complaint closed			

**7.3 Tracking of complaints**

The complaint shall be tracked from initial receipt through the entire process until the complainant is satisfied or the final decision is made. An up-to-date status shall be made available



to the complainant upon initiation, at closure of complaint ~~upon request~~ including, at least at the time of pre-set deadlines which shall be declared by the organization. The complainants shall be treated courteously and be kept informed of the progress of their complaint throughout the complaints- handling process.

NOTE - The progress of the complaint can be provided through a dynamic status update on the website of the organization

#### **7.4 Acknowledgement of complaints**

Receipt of each complaint shall be acknowledged to the complainant immediately along with unique complaint Identifier code (e.g. through post, mobile message or registered email).

#### **7.5 Initial assessment of complaints**

After receipt, each complaint shall be initially assessed in terms of criteria, such as severity, safety implication, complexity, impact, and the need and possibility of immediate action. Complaints shall be addressed promptly in accordance with their urgency, for example, significant health and safety issues, national security, environmental concerns etc.

#### **7.6 Investigation of complaints**

All complaints shall be investigated. Every reasonable effort shall be made to investigate all the relevant circumstances and information surrounding a complaint. The level of investigation shall be commensurate with the seriousness, frequency of occurrence and severity of the complaint.

#### **7.7 Response to complaints**

Following an appropriate investigation, the organization shall offer an appropriate response (see Table 3), which shall include but not limited to, correcting the problem and prevent it happening in the future. If the complaint cannot be immediately resolved, then it shall be dealt with in a manner intended to lead to its effective resolution as soon as possible (Flowchart 1 regarding escalation).

Table 3

Sample Responses

The organization's policy on the provision of responses can include:

- refunds;
- replacement;
- repair/rework;
- substitutes;
- technical assistance;

- information;
- referral;
- financial assistance;
- other assistance;
- compensation;
- apology;
- goodwill gift or token;
- indication of changes in products, services, processes, policies, or procedures arising from complaints.

Issues to be considered can include:

- addressing all aspects of the complaint;
- following-up where appropriate;
- whether it is appropriate to offer remedies to others who might have suffered in the same way as the complainant but did not make a formal complaint;
- level of authority for the various responses;
- dissemination of the information to the relevant personnel.

## **7.8 Communicating the decision**

The decision or any action taken regarding the complaint, which is relevant to the complainant or to the personnel involved, shall be communicated to them as soon as the decision or action is taken.

## **7.9 Closing complaints**

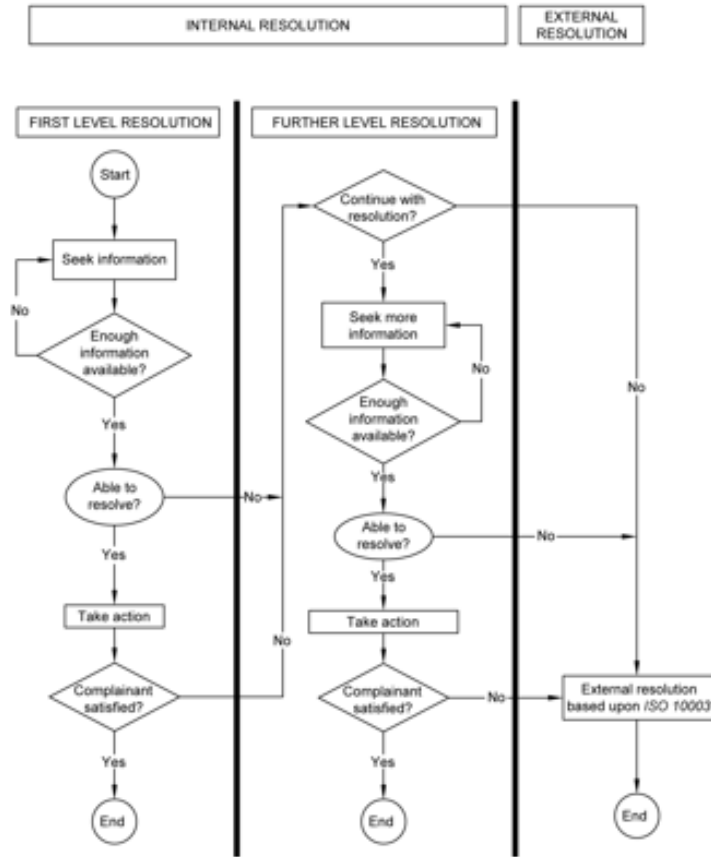
If the complainant accepts the proposed decision or action, then the decision or action shall be carried out and Documented.

If the complainant rejects the proposed decision or action, then the complaint shall remain open. This shall be Documented and the complainant shall be informed of alternative forms of internal and external recourse available (see [Flowchart 1](#)).

If the complaint is not resolved through internal recourse, the complainant shall be informed to approach appropriate Dispute Resolution Process Provider (for example, Ombudsman, Consumer redressal forums, National Consumer Commission, etc).

The organization shall notify the Dispute Resolution Process provider when implementation of the resolution has been completed or, if implementation is delayed, with reasons for such delay;

The organization shall continue to monitor the progress of the complaint until all reasonable internal and external options of recourse are exhausted or the complainant is satisfied.



Flowchart 1: Escalation Flowchart

## 8 Maintenance and improvement

### 8.1 Collection of information

**8.1.1** The organization shall document the performance of its complaints-handling process. The organization shall establish and implement procedures for documenting complaints and responses and for using these documents and managing them, while protecting any personal information and ensuring the confidentiality of complainants.

**8.1.2** Information collected shall be relevant, correct, complete, meaningful and useful. This shall include:

- a) specifying steps for identifying, gathering, classifying, maintaining, storing and disposing of Documented Information
- b) Documenting its handling of a complaint and maintaining these documents, taking utmost care to preserve such items as electronic files and documenting media, since documents in these media can be lost as a result of mishandling or obsolescence.

This shall include complaints received over Interactive Voice Recorder (IVR) system for resolution.

- c) keeping documents of the type of training and instruction that individuals involved in the complaints handling process have received.
- d) specifying the organization's criteria for responding to requests for document presentation and document submissions made by a complainant or their agent; this can include time limits, what kind of information will be provided, to whom, or in what format.
- e) specifying how and when statistical non-personally identifiable complaints data are disclosed to the public.

## **8.2 Analysis and evaluation of complaints**

All complaints shall be categorized and then analysed to identify systematic, recurring and single incident problems and trends, to help eliminate the underlying causes of complaints, and to identify opportunities for improvement or changes in processes, products and services offered.

Whenever an individual complaint or the trend of complaints reveal a significant deviation from product / service standards, the organization shall treat them as non-conformities. The further steps in the handling of non-conformities, including internal investigations, corrections and corrective actions shall be undertaken in the manner described in the relevant clauses of ISO 9001.

## **8.3 Evaluation of the satisfaction with the complaints-handling process**

There shall be regular action taken to determine the levels of satisfaction of complainants with the complaints-handling process. This can take the form of random surveys of complainants and other techniques.

### NOTES

1. One method of improving satisfaction with the complaints-handling process is to stimulate a contact with a complainant and the organization.
2. See IS15610 for guidance on monitoring and measuring customer satisfaction.

## **8.4 Monitoring of the complaints-handling process**

**8.4.1** Continual monitoring of the complaints-handling process, the resources required (including personnel), and the data to be collected shall be undertaken.

### **8.4.2** *Monitoring Criteria:*

The performance of the complaints-handling process shall be measured against predetermined criteria for its effectiveness, which could include any or a combination of the following:

- a) whether a complaints-handling policy and objectives has been established, maintained, and made appropriately available.
- b) personnel perception of the top management commitment to complaints handling.
- c) whether responsibilities for complaints handling have been appropriately assigned.
- d) whether personnel in contact with customers are authorized to resolve complaints on the spot.
- e) whether discretionary limits concerning responses have been set for personnel in contact with customers.
- f) whether personnel specialized in complaints handling have been appointed.
- g) the proportion of personnel in contact with customers who are trained in complaints handling.
- h) the effectiveness and efficiency of complaints-handling training.
- j) the number of suggestions from personnel to improve complaints handling.
- k) attitude of personnel to complaints handling.
- m) frequency of complaints-handling audits or management reviews.
- n) time taken to implement recommendations from complaints-handling audits or management reviews.
- p) time taken to respond to complainants.
- q) degree of complainant satisfaction.
- r) effectiveness and efficiency of the processes required for corrective actions and actions taken in relation to risks and opportunities, when appropriate.
- s) in case of provision for self-registration of complaints thru online mode e.g. IVR, app, web site, social media are provided, then the time required / no. of clicks / no. of choices to be made to register the complaint should be monitored.
- t) In case of above effect of these modes on overall no. of complaint as call registered thru online mode as % of total complaints registered, no. of calls not completed as % of online access, etc. may be monitored

### **8.4.3** *Monitoring data*

The monitoring of data is important since it provides a direct indicator of complaints-handling performance. Monitoring data can include the number or proportions of:

- a) complaints received.
- b) complaints resolved at the point at which they are made.

- c) complaints incorrectly prioritized.
- d) complaints acknowledged after agreed time.
- e) complaints resolved after agreed time.
- f) complaints referred to external methods of resolution.
- g) repeat complaints or recurrent problems that have not been complained about; — improvements in procedures due to complaints.

#### NOTES

Care shall be exercised in data interpretation because:

1. objective data, such as response times, can show how well the process is working but might not provide information about complainant satisfaction.
2. an increase in the number of complaints after the introduction of a new complaints-handling process can reflect an effective process rather than poor products and services.

### **8.5** *Internal Audit*

**8.5.1** The organization shall regularly perform or provide for Internal audits in order to evaluate the performance of the complaints-handling process. The Internal audit shall provide information on:

- a) process conformity to complaints-handling procedures.
- b) process suitability and effectiveness to achieve complaints-handling objectives.

**8.5.2** The Internal audit results shall be taken into account in the management review to identify problems and introduce improvements in the complaints-handling process. The Internal audit shall be carried out by competent individuals independent of the activity being audited. For example, an audit can be implemented to assess:

- a) the conformity of complaints-handling procedures with the organization's policy and objectives.
- b) the extent to which complaints-handling procedures are being followed.
- c) the ability of the existing complaints-handling process to achieve objectives.
- d) strengths and weaknesses of the complaints-handling process.
- e) opportunities for improvement in the complaints-handling process and its outcomes.

**8.5.3** The Internal audit can be conducted as part of the quality management system audit if implemented, for example in accordance with ISO 19011. Where the quality management system is not implemented, Documented Information for such audit shall be maintained.

### **8.6** **Management review of the complaints-handling process**

**8.6.1** Top management of the organization shall review the complaints-handling process on a regular basis in order to:

- a) ensure its continuing suitability, adequacy, effectiveness and efficiency.
- b) identify and address instances of nonconformity with health, safety, environmental, customer, statutory, regulatory and other relevant requirements.
- c) identify and correct product and service deficiencies.
- d) identify and correct process deficiencies.
- e) assess risks and opportunities and the need for changes to the complaints-handling process and products and services offered.
- f) evaluate the effectiveness of the actions taken in relation to risks and opportunities.
- g) evaluate potential changes to the complaints-handling policy and objectives.

**8.6.2** The input to management review shall include information on:

- a) external factors such as changes in statutory and regulatory requirements, competitive practices or technological innovations.
- b) internal factors such as changes in the policy, objectives, organizational structure, resources available, and products and services offered or provided;
- c) the overall performance of the complaints-handling process, including customer satisfaction surveys, and the results of the continual monitoring of the process.
- d) feedback on the complaints-handling process.
- e) the results of Internal audits.
- f) risks and opportunities, including the related actions.
- g) effectiveness of the actions taken to address risks and opportunities.
- h) the status of corrective actions.
- i) follow up actions from previous management reviews.
- j) recommendations for improvement.

**8.6.3** The output from the management review shall include:

- a) decisions and actions related to improvement of the effectiveness and efficiency of the complaints handling process.
- b) proposals on product and service improvement.

- c) decisions and actions related to identified resource needs. Documented Information from management review shall be maintained and used to identify opportunities for improvement.

**Note:** The management review can be conducted as part of the quality management system (ISO 9001), if implemented.

## **8.7 Continual improvement**

**8.7.1** The organization shall continually improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the complaints handling process. As a result, the organization can continually improve the quality of its products and services. This can be achieved through corrective actions, actions taken in relation to risks and opportunities, and innovative improvements. The organization shall take action to eliminate the causes of existing and potential problems leading to complaints in order to prevent recurrence and occurrence, respectively.

**8.7.2** The organization shall:

- a) explore, identify, and apply lessons learned and best practices in complaints handling.
- b) foster a customer-focused approach within the organization.
- c) encourage innovation in complaints-handling development; — recognize exemplary complaints-handling behavior.



## **Annex A**

### **Guiding Principles**

*(Clause 4)*

#### **A-1 Commitment**

An organization should be actively committed to the adoption, integration and dissemination of complaint handling system including the fulfilment of the promises that organization is making to customers and customers along with fulfilling the legal and regulatory requirements pertaining to that product/service/process.

#### **A-2 Capacity**

Sufficient resources should be made available for effectively and efficiently managing an organization's complaint handling system including its planning, design, development, implementation, maintenance and improvement.

#### **A-3 Competence**

Organization personnel's involved in complaint handling system should have the attributes, skills, training, knowledge and experience necessary to discharge their responsibilities in a manner that meets the needs and expectations of the customer.

#### **A-4 Suitability**

The organization should ensure that the complaint handling system is appropriate for the type of transaction involved and any interface that the customer may be using, taking into consideration such factors as the characteristics of the customer, the type of product or service and the nature of any complaint or concern, as applicable.

NOTE - Examples of interfaces include mobile browsers, web browsers and apps.

#### **A-5 Information integrity**

An organization should ensure that its complaint handling system and the information about it are accurate, not misleading and verifiable, and that data collected are relevant, correct, complete, meaningful and useful.

#### **A-6 Transparency**

Adequate information about the organization's complaint handling system should be disclosed to customers, personnel and other interested parties, and this information should be easily available and clear.

NOTE - Examples of information can include the application of artificial intelligence, date of expiry, date of manufacturing, product origin and other terms and condition.

#### **A-7 Choice**

An organization should offer customers a choice of comparable and realistic options in the application of its complaint handling system, where possible.

NOTE - Examples of a choice include providing more than one way of contacting the organization, such as email, telephone and online chat, and offering alternative payment options.

#### **A-8 Accessibility**

An organization's complaint handling process and the relevant information about it should be easy to find, understand and use. The complaint handling process should be made available in whatever language or formats that the product/service/process were offered or provided including alternative formats such as large prints, braille or audio tape so that no complainant is disadvantaged. The complaint handling system should be planned, designed, developed, implemented, maintained and improved to take into account the needs of different customers, including those who can be at greater risk of detriment due to customer vulnerability, and those with specific accessibility requirements.

NOTE - ISO 22458 provides further guidance on identifying and responding to customer vulnerability.

#### **A-9 Responsiveness**

An organization should respond to the needs and expectations of customers and the expectations of other relevant interested parties with respect to complaint handling.

#### **A-10 Timeliness**

The organization's responses to customers and other relevant interested parties, including responses to any queries or complaints, should be provided quickly and efficiently, given the nature of complaint and the process involved.

#### **A-11 Consent**

An organization should ensure that whenever customer consent is required in a complaint handling system, it is given intentionally and based on full information.

#### **A-12 Accountability**

An organization should establish and maintain accountability for, and report on, the decisions and actions with respect to its complaint handling system.

#### **A-13 Legality**

An organization should proactively monitor the relevant legislative environment. It should make clear to the customer which jurisdictions cover complaint handling system, where purchases are carried out across borders.

#### **A-14 Privacy**

Personally identifiable information concerning the complainant should be avoided where needed, but information about the customer gathered by an organization in the application of

its complaint handling system should be kept confidential and protected. Disclosure should take place only if it is essential for completion of the complaint handling system and consent for disclosure is obtained from the customer or disclosure is required by the law.

NOTE - Personally identifiable information is information that when associated with an individual can be used to identify them, and is retrievable by the individual's name, address, email address, telephone number or similarly specific identifier. The precise meaning of the term can differ around the world.

#### **A-15 Data protection**

The organization should preserve the integrity of customer data in the complaint handling system. This should include implementing security safeguards appropriate to the sensitivity of the information, applying generally accepted best practices to protect against unauthorized access, obtaining necessary consent for the use of customer data, and taking account of the applicable statutory and regulatory requirements imposed in the jurisdiction of the purchaser.

#### **A-16 Sustainability**

An organization's complaint handling system should be established and operated in a way that ensures sustainability by considering environmental impacts, social configurations and governance requirements.

NOTE - Examples of ensuring sustainability can include treating workers, such as delivery drivers and warehouse staff, fairly and considering environmental impacts, such as in packaging, delivery and complaint handling process.

#### **A-17 Integration**

An organization's complaint handling system should be integrated with the organization's quality and other management systems, where appropriate. This should include online complaint handling system and conventional face- to-face or distance selling marketplace interactions, where applicable, in a way that is consistent and comprehensible to all customers.

#### **A-18 Customer-focused approach**

The organization should adopt a customer-focused approach with respect to the complaint handling system and should be open to feedback.

NOTE - Reference to ISO 23592 (Service excellence — Principles and model) may be drawn for enhancing service excellence. (To be decided by panel to add as annex)

#### **A-19 Improvement**

Increased effectiveness and efficiency of the complaint handling system should be a permanent objective of the organization.

#### **A-20 Charges**

Access to the complaint handling process should be free of charge to the complainant.

#### **A-21 Objectivity**

Each complaint should be addressed in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner throughout the complaint handling process.

## **Annex B**

### **Guidance on Products related complaint management system**

(Based on ISO 10002)

This document is designed for organizations of all sizes. However, it is recognized that many smaller businesses will have limited resources to dedicate to setting up and maintaining a complaints-handling process. This annex highlights key areas where they can focus their attention to achieve maximum effectiveness and efficiency from a simple process.

The steps below identify key areas, with suggestions for action in each.

- Be open to complaints: have a simple sign on show, or a paragraph on company invoices, saying (see 7.1), for example: “Your satisfaction is important to us, please tell us if you are not satisfied, we'd like to put it right”.
- Collect and record complaints (see Table 1).
- Acknowledge your receipt of the complaint to the complainant if it is not received in person (a phone call or email is sufficient) (see 7.2, 7.4).
- Assess the complaint for validity, possible impact and who is the best person to deal with it (see 7.5).
- Resolve as soon as is practically possible, or further investigate the complaint and then make a decision about what to do about it and act promptly (see 7.5).
- Give information to the customer about what you intend to do about the complaint, and evaluate the customer's response. Is it likely that the action will satisfy the customer? If yes, then move rapidly to take the action the customer reasonably expects, bearing in mind the best practices within your industry (see 7.6).
- When all possible actions have been done in your view to resolve the complaint, tell the customer and record the outcome. If the complaint is still not resolved to the customer's satisfaction, explain your decision and offer any possible alternative actions (see 7.8).
- Review complaints regularly: a brief periodical review and a more intensive annual review to establish if there are any trends, or obvious things you could change or put right to stop complaints occurring, improve customer service, or make customers more satisfied (see 8.2).

The above guidance is designed for easy implementation. It can be valuable to visit other similar businesses, perhaps not doing exactly the same, and see how they deal with customers' complaints. Valuable tips and techniques to apply can often be found.