



National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL)

Procedure for Dealing with Complaints

AMENDMENT SHEET

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1. PURPOSE

The document describes the procedure for dealing with complaints received from various sources.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1 This procedure deals with all complaints received by NABL from any source including information from regulators / government department - against the quality of the services provided, personnel involved in accreditation process, Accredited / Applicant Conformity Assessment Bodies (Testing including Medical Laboratories / Calibration Laboratories / Proficiency Testing Providers – PTP / Reference Material Producers – RMP).
- 2.2 This procedure covers complaints received vide any of the means like letters, e-mails, faxes, telephones (to be followed by written complaints), even relevant references appearing in print media.
- 2.3 All complaints are treated as confidential unless desired otherwise by the Government or by law.

3. RESPONSIBILITY

- 3.1 Primary responsibility for handling of complaints rests with the Complaints Manager, NABL. The Complaints Manager shall evaluate and investigate the complaint and if necessary adverse decision as per NABL 216 shall be recommended.
- 3.2 CEO, NABL is responsible for monitoring of complaints.
- 3.3 Any complaint against NABL shall be dealt by the sub-committee of NABL Board for Complaints & appeals.
- 3.4 Complaints Manager is responsible for dealing the complaints against CAB.
- 3.5 After registering the complaint; the Complaints Manager shall devise the mode of investigation of the said complaint. At this stage the dealing officer of the concerned CAB may be asked to provide further inputs.
- 3.6 Designated sub-committee of NABL Board for complaints & Appeals, dealing with complaints against NABL, consists of one of the members of the NABL Board as Chairman; expert(s) co-opted by the Chairman as member(s); and CEO, NABL as the member secretary

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4. PROCEDURE

4.1 Receipt of Complaints

4.1.1 All complaints shall undergo initial scrutiny by the Complaints Manager to determine whether they fall within the ambit of NABL activities and whether they are valid, based on which any of the following action shall be taken.

- a) If a complaint is outside the ambit of NABL 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 NABL activities and appears to be valid, the initial information provided is sufficient for initial investigation the same shall be taken up for further action.
- d) If the complaint is against NABL, the same shall be registered however, further investigations and proceedings shall be done by the designated sub-committee of NABL Board for complaints & Appeals.

4.1.2 All complaints received in NABL shall be channeled to the Complaints Manager who maintains record pertaining to all complaints including important dates like date of receipt, date of acknowledgement, date of closure or final disposal in form 26A.

4.1.3 On receipt, the complaint shall be acknowledged with the assurance that NABL will investigate the complaint and inform the complainant of the outcome at the earliest. Anonymous complaints shall also be registered if *prima-facie* they appear to be valid and having some substance with supporting evidence.

5. Investigation of Complaints

Complaints received by NABL broadly fall in three categories:

- a) Complaints against CABs,
- b) Complaints against Accreditation Committee Members and Assessors, and

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c) Complaints against NABL.

Procedure for dealing with each category of complaints is given below:

5.1. Procedure for Dealing with Complaints against CABs

- 5.1.1. The Complaints Manager where appropriate shall give opportunity to the CAB to address the complaint. When this is not appropriate, the officer may seek clarifications from the CAB and if required may depute NABL representative or an assessor or an expert with the approval of CEO,, NABL to the CAB to investigate the matter. All expenses related to investigation shall be borne by NABL.
- 5.1.2 The Complaint Manager shall analyze the findings of the investigation. If the investigations reveal serious concerns with respect to wrong representation of scope of accreditation, willful and/ or repeated misuse of NABL symbol etc. or in case of non-cooperation with the investigation process, the adverse decision shall be taken as per NABL 216.
- 5.1.3 Complaint Manager shall proceed further for implementation of the adverse decision as per NABL 216 through the Core Accreditation Committee. If the CAB is suspended/ debarred, the procedure as per NABL 216 shall be followed for the re-enrollment by dealing officer in close coordination with Complaints Manager.
- 5.1.4 The complainant shall be informed about the action taken by NABL.
- 5.1.5 If the complaint is found invalid, the complainant as well as the CAB shall be informed accordingly.
- 5.1.6 The concerned dealing officer of the CAB shall also be informed about the decision / action taken.

5.2. Procedure for Dealing with Complaints against Accreditation Committee Members and Assessors

- 5.2.1 Complaints Manager shall investigate the complaint in case of complaint against assessor. Complaints Manager may seek clarification from CAB, assessors or other persons who may have knowledge about the matter contained in the complaint. In case of complaint against Accreditation Committee member; Convener of concerned Accreditation Committee may be asked to provide inputs.

- 5.2.2 The Complaint Manager shall submit the findings to CEO, NABL for approval for placing the case in Core Accreditation Committee.
- 5.2.3 In case of valid complaints, action taken by NABL may involve feedback for corrective action followed by monitoring, warning against future recurrence and in extreme case, deletion of the assessor from the empanelled list or removal of Accreditation Committee member from the committee.
- 5.2.4 The outcome of the investigation shall be informed to the complainant.
- 5.2.5 A brief summary of nature of the complaint, outcome of the investigation and action taken shall be given to the assessor monitoring cell for information and records.

5.3 Procedure for Dealing with Complaints against NABL

- 5.3.1 When the complaint is against NABL, the same shall be dealt by the designated sub-committee of NABL Board for complaints & Appeals.
- 5.3.2 The Complaints Manager shall propose independent expert(s) in consultation with the Member Secretary of sub-committee of NABL Board for complaints & Appeals to the Chairman of the Committee for approval. The committee may seek clarification from the person(s) concerned. If an investigation is required, the Committee may include expert (s) as members to help the Committee.
- 5.3.3 If the investigation proves NABL's fault with adequate evidences/ proof of any officer's intentional involvement; the committee may place a report & propose adverse decision against the concerned to NABL Board. In such cases, QCI Conduct Rule shall be followed.
- 5.3.4 The complainant shall be informed about the outcome of the complaint and action taken by NABL (if any).

5.4 Reporting on Complaints and other Related Actions

- 5.4.1 As an outcome of investigation of complaint and root cause analysis (if any) and corrective action is felt necessary; the Complaints Manager shall inform the Quality Cell and corrective action shall be initiated by Quality Cell in line with the requirements of Procedure for Control of Non-Conformities and Corrective Action (NABL 012).
- 5.4.2 All records pertaining to complaints shall be maintained up to date by the Complaints Manager. The status of complaints shall be reported to the CEO, NABL, who is responsible for monitoring of complaints.

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5.4.3 The Complaints Manager shall analyze all the complaints and their outcome for possible trends. The complaints received, their handling and the corrective actions taken shall be discussed as one of the agenda items before NABL Board during Management Review.

6. RECORDS

6.1 Complaints record shall be maintained in Form 26A.

6.2 Complaints file is maintained by Complaints Manager, where all correspondence in respect of complaints received, decisions, and any other relevant documents are filed date-wise.

NABL COMPLAINTS REGISTER

Sl.	Date Received	Name and address of Complainant	Nature of Complaint (brief)	Classification of complaint	Date of Acknow.	Outcome	Date Signed off

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