



NQAAP complaints policy

Title	NQAAP complaints policy
Policy number	WS11201
Authors	EQA Quality Improvement Workstream 1 Lead author: Liam Whitby Co-author: Chris Jelley
Approved by	EQA Oversight Board
Issued date	September 2023
Review date	September 2028



Contents

1. Defined terms	3
2. Introduction and scope	3
3. Responsibilities.....	3
4. Procedures	3



1. Defined terms

See Glossary of EQA terms (WS20202) for details of all defined terms within this document.

2. Introduction and scope

This policy is to ensure that any complaints are dealt with in a consistent, timely manner. Where resolution is not initially possible this policy outlines the process to be followed to escalate the complaint and ensure closure.

3. Responsibilities

The chair of the relevant National Quality Assurance Advisory Panel (NQAAP) is responsible for resolving any complaints received. Where resolution is not possible the issue will be escalated to the chair of the Quality Assurance in Pathology Committee (QAPC) and they will then take on the responsibility for resolution.

4. Procedures

When a complaint is lodged, by any communication route, it is expected that the participant states in the communication that they wish to complain, although notifications of dissatisfaction with service by the NQAAP, unresolved issues with an external quality assessment (EQA) provider or other professional body, should be dealt with as complaints. However, the NQAAP reserve the right to review all communications received and to classify any issues as complaints, irrespective of the initial communication. Conversely, where a 'complaint' is judged to have been raised incorrectly e.g. a misunderstanding of the complaints process, then such 'complaints' may be downgraded at the discretion of the NQAAP.

Service users or laboratories with cause for complaint about any aspect of the service from the NQAAP, unresolved issues with an EQA provider or other professional body, will communicate their concerns to the chair of the panel, in writing or email. All complaints will



be logged in the minutes of the next NQAAP meeting, along with the actions taken and resolutions if applicable.

Complaints to the NQAAP may include topics such as (but are not limited to):

- actions undertaken by NQAAP
- support provided by NQAAP (to both laboratories and EQA providers)
- communications issued by NQAAP
- referrals by EQA providers to NQAAP
- conduct of a member of the NQAAP (in this case the individual should be recused from any role in the subsequent review)
- issues with EQA provision that have not been resolved following contact with the EQA provider.

All complaints received to the NQAAP are passed to the chair of the relevant NQAAP, who will make best efforts to acknowledge receipt within 5 working days.

Following receipt of a complaint, a review will be undertaken by the NQAAP chair (or delegated NQAAP member). This will also include recommendations for actions to share learning and to mitigate recurrence of the issue. If the review takes longer than this time, then updates will be provided to the complainant at 30-day intervals.

A 'stop the clock' system can be used in a situation where input from a third party is required. If this situation occurs, the complainant must be informed of the additional time added to their expected response date.

On completion of the review, the findings will be documented and a concluding letter provided to the complainant. The letter will include any actions taken to share learning and mitigate recurrence where appropriate. The letter will be provided by the relevant NQAAP chair to the complainant ideally within 30 days of initial receipt to the NQAAP.

The concluding letter will be shared with relevant stakeholders involved in the NQAAP and the QAPC.



If after generation of the letter the complaint remains unresolved (e.g. continued dissatisfaction from the complainant), then it will be referred to the chair of the QAPC. At this time the QAPC may choose to further investigate the complaint, refer the matter to the next QAPC meeting or to close the complaint if they feel the initial report fully addressed the issues raised. If a complaint is passed to the QAPC then, as the NQAAP panel chair is a QAPC member, they will be excluded from any decision-making process. In any of these situations the findings of the QAPC will be final.

