

Policy

A11 Complaints handling

Purpose

This policy outlines the principles for managing complaints received by QAO in relation to business operations, administrative decisions, and the conduct of its workforce. The policy ensures that complaint management is responsive, fair and outcome-driven, focusing on continuous improvement and customer satisfaction.

Application

This policy applies to all QAO employees, including permanent, temporary, casual, and contracted employees. It also applies to consultants and audit service providers.

This policy applies to any external complaints received directly or otherwise identified by QAO about our services, actions or staff from various sources including elected members, public sector entities, integrity agencies, contractors, media, or the public.

This policy **does not cover** the following matters which are managed under separate QAO policies:

- requests for audit related to financial mismanagement and/or waste of public funds in other Queensland public sector entities
- public interest disclosures made in accordance with the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010*
- complaints/grievances raised by QAO employees
- complaints against QAO staff including the Auditor-General, involving corrupt conduct
- information and data breaches
- appeals against RTI and IP decisions.

Legislative context

This policy aims to promote and ensure QAO's compliance with the [Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service](#). The policy also seeks to ensure that our complaints management system is consistent with the requirements of the [Public Sector Act 2022](#) (s.264).

Other relevant legislation includes:

- [Anti-Discrimination Act 1991](#)
- [Auditor-General Act 2009](#)
- [Crime and Corruption Act 2001](#)
- [Human Rights Act 2019](#)
- [Public Sector Ethics Act 1994](#)
- [Information Privacy Act 2009](#)
- [Right to Information Act 2009](#)

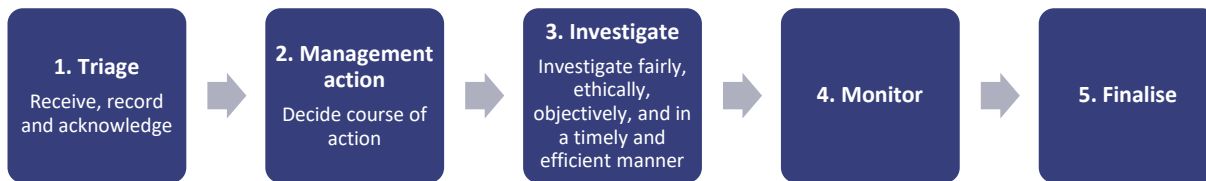
Definitions/glossary of terms

Term	Definition
Complaint	A complaint refers to the expression of dissatisfaction, orally or in writing, about: • business operations, staffing and administrative decisions • technical and professional mistakes, including compliance with professional standards, regulatory and legal requirements except where they are detected through our normal quality assurance process • unsatisfactory staff service or behaviour (including that from our Audit Service Providers) • human rights issues • our system of quality control. A complaint does not include: • requests for information • general feedback or suggestions • negative feedback received from clients via client surveys, unless the client advises they are making a complaint • appeals against decisions made in accordance with statutory requirements (these are covered by official review procedures) • data breaches • matters directly related to the objectives and/or content of legislation or government policy • reasonable negotiation or feedback on audit fees, unless the client advises they are making a complaint
External complaint	Complaint made by another entity or a person not employed by QAO.
Procedural fairness	Means a fair process based on the following principles: • Right to be heard – we will provide relevant parties with a reasonable opportunity to present their case to the decision-maker. • Absence of bias – our decisions on complaints will be balanced and unbiased. This includes assessing information received with an open mind and without prejudgement and appropriate inquiry of matters referred to QAO. • Appropriate evidence – decisions on complaints will be supported by evidence or information that is relevant in the circumstances to the complaint.
Public Interest Disclosure (PID)	Disclosure about wrongdoing in the public sector that serves the public interest. For an allegation to be considered a PID under the <i>Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010</i> it must be: • public interest information about serious wrongdoing or danger • an appropriate disclosure • made to a proper authority.
Request for audit	Disclosure of information about the financial management and accountability of a public sector entity excluding QAO. A request for audit may include a public interest disclosure made to QAO as the appropriate authority for a disclosure which relates to waste of public funds.
Vexatious complaint	A vexatious complaint can be, but is not limited to, a groundless complaint that causes distress, detriment or harassment to the subject of the complaint; or a complaint that is unduly repetitive, burdensome, or unwarranted when compared to its merits.

Policy statement

- QAO is committed to effective complaints management. This involves the active interest and support of the executive leadership team (ELT), effective policy and procedures and ensuring adequate resources and training are available to staff at all levels within the organisation.
- QAO will document and assess all complaints received to determine whether an investigation is warranted.

- QAO adopts a 5-step model of complaint management:



- Where possible, QAO will take all reasonable steps to protect the identity of complainants, and the subjects of investigations, from any persons not directly involved.
- Once received, a complaint cannot be withdrawn.
- QAO will take all reasonable steps to prevent reprisal against a complainant, or person proposing to make a complaint.
- QAO will always observe the principles of procedural fairness.
- QAO will consider an individual's human rights when receiving and investigating complaints, in accordance with the *Human Rights Act 2019*.
- Any resulting disciplinary action(s) will be managed:
 - for QAO employees—in accordance with QAO policy
 - for consultants, contracted employees, and audit service providers—in accordance with their contracts.
- The Auditor-General may declare a complainant as vexatious if the complainant:
 - continues to pursue a complaint that has already been addressed and provides no new information that warrants further action; or
 - after reasonable efforts, fails to furnish additional information which would be likely to be available, relevant to, and supportive of, the issues raised in the complaint; or
 - lies or gives misleading information to the QAO; or
 - portrays behaviour outside of the QAO's guidelines of acceptable behaviour.

This is not an exhaustive list.

- Once classified as vexatious the complaint will not be progressed further. The complainant will be advised and added to QAO's vexatious register.

Supporting documents

- [QAO Factsheet – Complaints](#)
- [Complaints management - Queensland Ombudsman](#)
- [Queensland Public Service Customer Complaint Management Framework and Guideline](#)
 - [Customer Complaint Management Guideline](#)
 - [Policy and procedure guide - Queensland Ombudsman](#)
- [Queensland Ombudsman – what complaints can be referred](#)

Review statement

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years from the last approval date, or when there is a significant change in the intent of the policy.

Approved by:	Deputy Auditor-General	Date:	17/09/2026
--------------	------------------------	-------	------------