



THE VETERINARY ASSOCIATION OF ZAMBIA

(Established by Act No. 45 of 2010)

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COMPLAINT HANDLING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

FINAL VERSION 1.0

Internal document name	VAZ Complaint Handling Policy and Procedure	Version	1.0 (Final)
Custodian	Secretary / Secretariat	Copy number	Master
Approved by	Executive Committee	Effective date	12th September 2026
Supersedes	None (new policy)	Next review date	Three (3) years from effective date

1. PURPOSE

This Policy and Procedure sets out how the Veterinary Association of Zambia (VAZ) receives, records, investigates, resolves and reports on complaints from members, applicants and other stakeholders about its services, including the delayed issuance and non-receipt of membership certificates, membership cards and professional registration documents. It is issued under the VAZ Executive Committee Charter (2026) and implements the VAZ Strategic Plan 2026–2030, Priority 1 (Governance and Leadership), Strategic Objective 1: to strengthen governance and leadership coordination for the Association. It gives effect to the Association’s digital transformation agenda delivered through the VAZ Corporate Website and Secure Members Portal, launched 27 July 2026 (Ref: VAZ/CIRC/2026/03).

2. SCOPE

2.1 Applies to a complaint by a member, an applicant for membership or professional registration, an associate partner, a corporate member, a student member, or a member of the public, about a VAZ or VCZ service, including: delayed or non-issuance of a membership certificate, membership card or membership number; delayed or non-issuance of a professional registration certificate, licence or practising permit; an error in the details on an issued certificate or card; delay in processing an application, renewal or subscription; a Members Portal or website access or service fault; and the conduct of a VAZ or VCZ officer or member of staff in delivering a service.

2.2 Does not apply to: a request for a refund, which is handled under the VAZ Refund Policy; an allegation of professional misconduct against a registered veterinary or veterinary para-professional, which is handled under Part VII of the Act and referred to the Disciplinary Committee; a declared conflict of interest, which is handled under the VAZ Conflict of Interest Policy; and an internal grievance by a member of Secretariat staff about their own employment, which is handled under the officer’s contract of service.

2.3 A complaint about the exercise of the Veterinary Council of Zambia’s statutory registration and licensing functions (Act No. 45 of 2010, Part IV) is logged and acknowledged under this Policy in the same way as any other complaint, and is then routed to the CEO & Registrar for determination.

3. DEFINITIONS

“Complaint” means an expression of dissatisfaction, made through any channel in Section 5, about a service that VAZ has provided or failed to provide, including a delay against a standard set in Section 9. “Complainant” means the person who lodges the complaint. “Business day” means Monday to Friday, excluding Zambian public holidays. “Date received” means the date the complaint is date-stamped by the Secretariat or logged through the Members Portal; a complaint received after 17:00 hours or on a non-business day is treated as received on the next business day. “Tier” means the level at which a complaint is handled, as set out in Section 8. “Complaints Register” means the record maintained under Section 12.

4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

4.1 Accessibility. A complaint may be lodged through any channel listed in Section 5, at no cost to the complainant.

4.2 Fairness and impartiality. A complaint is handled objectively and on its facts. An officer with a personal, family or business interest in a complaint declares it and takes no part in handling it, consistent with the VAZ Conflict of Interest Policy.

- 4.3 Timeliness.** Every complaint is acknowledged and resolved within the standards set out in Section 9.
- 4.4 Transparency.** The complainant is kept informed of progress and is given the reasons for the outcome in writing.
- 4.5 Confidentiality.** A complaint, and the information gathered in handling it, is shared only with the officers who need it to resolve the complaint or to report on it under Section 12.
- 4.6 Non-retaliation.** A complainant who lodges a complaint in good faith suffers no disadvantage in their membership, registration or standing with the Association.
- 4.7 Continuous improvement.** Complaint data is reviewed under Section 12 to correct recurring causes of complaint, including in the ongoing development of the Members Portal, consistent with the Strategic Plan's Technology and Innovation priority.

5. HOW TO LODGE A COMPLAINT

5.1 A complaint may be lodged through any of the channels below. The channel used does not affect how the complaint is handled.

Channel	Use for	Contact
In person	Any complaint	VAZ Secretariat, Kwacha House, Room 13, Cairo Road, Lusaka
Telephone	Urgent matters and Members Portal access difficulties	+260 211 238720 / +260 954170130
registrar@vaz.org.zm/registrarvcz@gmail.com	Delayed or non-received membership or registration certificate, card or number; registration and renewal	Office of the Registrar
secretary@vaz.org.zm	General administrative complaints and membership records	Office of the Secretary
admin@vaz.org.zm	Members Portal or website access and technical faults	Website Management / Technical Communications
treasurer@vaz.org.zm	Subscription and payment-related complaints	Office of the Treasurer
info@vaz.org.zm	General enquiries, or where the right office is not known	General Enquiries
Regional Representative	Members without e-mail or Members Portal access, and matters specific to a region	The Regional Representative for the member's region (Executive Committee Charter, Section 8.11)
Written letter	Formal complaints and appeals	The President, VAZ, P.O. Box 32117, Lusaka

5.2 Section 11 sets out the Members Portal's present and planned role in lodging and tracking a complaint.

6. CATEGORIES OF COMPLAINT

6.1 Every complaint is logged under one of the categories below, which sets its default owner under Section 10.

Category	Examples	Default Owner
Certificate or card issuance	Delayed issuance, non-receipt, or wrong or misspelt details on a VAZ membership certificate, card or number	Registry Clerk
Professional registration	Delayed issuance or non-receipt of a VCZ professional registration certificate, licence or practising permit	Registration and Licensing Officer
Application or renewal processing	Delay in processing a new application, a renewal or a subscription	Registry Clerk / Administrative Assistant
Digital platform	Members Portal or website activation, access or technical fault	Website Management (admin@vaz.org.zm) / Public Relations Officer
Payment or subscription	Payment not reflecting, or invoice not issued, where no refund is sought	Treasurer
Staff or officer conduct	Conduct of a VAZ or VCZ officer or staff member in delivering a service	Secretary
Other	Any other complaint about a VAZ or VCZ service	Secretariat (info@vaz.org.zm)

7. COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCEDURE

7.1 Step 1 - Receipt and logging. Whoever receives the complaint logs it in the Complaints Register with a unique reference number on the day it is received, or the next business day.

7.2 Step 2 - Acknowledgement. The Secretariat acknowledges the complaint in writing within 3 business days, stating the reference number, the category assigned, and the expected date of response.

7.3 Step 3 - Triage and assignment. The Secretary assigns the complaint to its default owner under Section 6 and confirms its tier under Section 8, within 1 business day of acknowledgement.

7.4 Step 4 - Investigation. The assigned owner verifies the facts against the relevant record: the VAZ membership register, the VCZ professional register, the receipt book, the cash book, or the Members Portal log, as applicable.

7.5 Step 5 - Resolution and response. The assigned owner issues a written outcome, with reasons, within the timeframe set for the complaint's tier in Section 9.

7.6 Step 6 - Closure and recording. The Secretariat updates the Complaints Register with the outcome and the date resolved. A complaint not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction proceeds to escalation under Section 8.

8. TIERS, ESCALATION AND SERVICE STANDARDS

8.1 Tiers of handling.

Tier	Handled by	Typical complaint
Tier 1	Office Assistant, Registry Clerk or Administrative Assistant	Certificate not yet dispatched; Members Portal login difficulty; a general enquiry
Tier 2	Secretary or Public Relations Officer	A missing or incorrect certificate requiring verification or re-issue; a complaint not resolved at Tier 1; a complaint about staff conduct
Tier 3	President and Executive Committee	A disputed registration or membership decision; a complaint not resolved at Tier 2; a request for an exception to this Policy

8.2 Service standards.

Tier	Acknowledge	Resolve or respond by
Tier 1	3 business days	5 business days from the date received
Tier 2	3 business days	10 business days from the date received
Tier 3	3 business days	The next scheduled Executive Committee meeting, or 30 days from the date received, whichever is earlier

8.3 Escalation. A complainant dissatisfied with the outcome at Tier 1 or Tier 2 may request escalation to the next tier in writing, within 14 days of the notice of outcome, stating the grounds.

8.4 Appeal. A complainant dissatisfied with a Tier 3 outcome may appeal in writing to the President within 14 days of the notice of outcome. The Executive Committee determines the appeal at its next scheduled meeting, and that decision is final.

9. STANDARDS FOR CERTIFICATE, CARD AND LICENCE ISSUANCE

9.1 A VAZ membership certificate, card and membership number are issued within 10 business days of an application's final approval and confirmation of full payment.

9.2 A VCZ professional registration certificate, licence or practising permit is issued within 15 business days of Council approval, subject to any statutory timeline under the Act.

9.3 A renewal certificate or licence is issued within 10 business days of confirmation of the renewal payment.

9.4 The Registry Clerk (for a VAZ document) or the Registration and Licensing Officer (for a VCZ document) notifies the applicant in writing, by e-mail or SMS, within 2 business days of issuance, stating how and where the document will be collected or dispatched, and records the date of issuance and notification in the relevant register.

9.5 Where a document cannot be issued within these standards, the Registry Clerk or the Registration and Licensing Officer notifies the applicant of the reason and the revised date before the standard lapses, without waiting for a complaint to be lodged.

10. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Office	Complaint-handling responsibility	Source
President	Determines a Tier 3 complaint and an appeal, with the Executive Committee; ensures the Secretariat is resourced to meet the standards in this Policy	Executive Committee Charter, Section 8.1
Secretary	Supervises Secretariat staff handling complaints; assigns and confirms the tier of each complaint; compiles the quarterly report under Section 12	Executive Committee Charter, Section 8.3
Public Relations Officer	Handles a complaint received by social or broadcast media; co-owns digital-platform complaints with Website Management	Executive Committee Charter, Section 8.6
Treasurer	Handles a payment or subscription complaint that is not a refund request	Executive Committee Charter, Section 8.5

Office	Complaint-handling responsibility	Source
Registry Clerk (VAZ)	Prepares and issues VAZ membership certificates, cards and numbers; is the default owner of a VAZ certificate or card complaint	Admin Staff Job-Aid, Section 3
Registration and Licensing Officer (VCZ)	Issues VCZ registration certificates, licences and practising permits; is the default owner of a professional registration complaint	Admin Staff Job-Aid, Section 3
Regional Representative	First point of contact for a member without e-mail or Members Portal access; forwards a complaint received in the region to the Secretariat	Executive Committee Charter, Section 8.11
Executive Committee	Determines a Tier 3 complaint and every appeal; receives the quarterly complaints report	Executive Committee Charter, Section 4.3(b)

11. DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND THE MEMBERS PORTAL

11.1 The Members Portal (member.vaz.org.zm) presently supports online subscription renewal, verification of practising status, and CPD credit records, as notified to members on 27 July 2026 (Ref: VAZ/CIRC/2026/03). A complaint is lodged through the channels in Section 5 until the function in 11.2 is activated.

11.2 An online complaint submission and tracking function is planned for a later phase of the Members Portal, consistent with the Strategic Plan's Priority 6 (Technology and Innovation) objective to support digital tracking and practice management systems. Its scope and target date are confirmed through the VAZ/VCZ Digital Platform Developer Action Plan.

11.3 Until that function is activated, the Complaints Register maintained under Section 12 is the Association's authoritative record of every complaint, regardless of the channel through which it was lodged.

12. RECORDS, REPORTING AND REVIEW

12.1 The Secretariat maintains a Complaints Register recording, for each complaint: the reference number, date received, complainant, category, channel, tier, assigned owner, target date, date resolved, outcome, and any escalation or appeal.

12.2 The Secretary compiles a quarterly report to the Executive Committee summarising the number of complaints received, by category; the average time taken to resolve them against the standards in Section 9; and any escalation or appeal, consistent with the reporting mechanism the Strategic Plan requires of Association governance instruments.

12.3 Complaint records are retained as records of the Association and are not destroyed except under the Association's records management practice.

12.4 This Policy is reviewed every three (3) years, or earlier as directed by the Executive Committee or the Annual General Meeting. It is approved by the Executive Committee and takes effect on the date of its adoption.

Approved and adopted for and on behalf of the Veterinary Association of Zambia:

Signature: 

Dr. Eugene C. Bwalya

President - Veterinary Association of Zambia

Date: 12/09/2026

Signature: 

Dr. Catherine Mutale-Katampi

Secretary - Veterinary Association of Zambia

Date: 12/09/2026