

Office Complaints Procedure of ‘BVDV B.V.’

Article 1 – Definitions

The following definitions apply in this office complaints procedure:

- Complaint: any written expression of dissatisfaction by or on behalf of the client directed at the lawyer or persons working under their responsibility regarding the formation and execution of an engagement agreement, the quality of the service, or the amount of the invoice, not being a complaint as referred to in paragraph 4 of the Dutch Lawyers Act (*Advocatenwet*);
- Complainant: the client or their representative who submits a complaint;
- Complaints officer: the person designated by BVDV B.V. (‘BVDV’) to handle the complaint.

Article 2 – Scope

1. This office complaints procedure applies to every engagement agreement between BVDV and the client.
2. Every lawyer at BVDV is responsible for handling complaints in accordance with this office complaints procedure.

Article 3 – Objectives

The objectives of this office complaints procedure are:

- a. to establish a procedure to handle client complaints constructively within a reasonable period;
- b. to establish a procedure for identifying the causes of client complaints;
- c. to preserve and improve existing relationships through effective complaint handling;
- d. to train employees to respond in a client-focused manner to complaints;
- e. to improve the quality of services through complaint handling and analysis.

Article 4 – Information at the Start of Services

1. Prior to entering into an engagement agreement, the lawyer informs the client that the firm uses an office complaints procedure, and that this procedure applies to the service provided.
2. BVDV includes in the engagement agreement which independent body or authority unresolved complaints can be submitted to for a binding decision, and this is communicated in the engagement confirmation.
3. Complaints as defined in Article 1 that are not resolved will be submitted to the competent civil court.

Article 5 – Submission of Complaints

1. The complainant must submit the complaint within one month after becoming aware, or reasonably could have become aware, of the act or omission by the lawyer that gave rise to the complaint. If submitted after this period, the complaints officer may decide not to handle the complaint. The complainant will be notified in writing as soon as possible whether the complaint will be handled.
2. The complaint must be submitted in writing to the complaints officer and must include:
 - (a) the name and address of the complainant;
 - (b) the name of the lawyer to whom the complaint pertains;
 - (c) a description of the act or omission that led to the complaint, or the invoice in question;
 - (d) the case file number;
 - (e) a statement that the complaint is to be handled under the office complaints procedure;
 - (f) the date of submission;
 - (g) signature.
3. If the complaint is not submitted in writing or lacks any of the above information, the complaints officer will inform the complainant and offer the opportunity to provide the missing details. If this is not done, the complaint will not be handled. The complainant will be notified in writing of this decision.
4. Upon receipt of the complaint, the complaints officer assesses whether the complaint is admissible. If not, the complainant will be notified as soon as possible.
5. Once a complete complaint has been received, the complaints officer sends an acknowledgment of receipt and provides the complainant with contact details and information about the procedure.
6. The complainant may only submit a complaint once regarding the same facts and/or circumstances.

Article 6 – Internal Complaints Procedure

1. If a client contacts the firm with a complaint, it is forwarded to R.W. Karskens, who will act as the complaints officer. In the case of a complaint involving Karskens, Mr. M. van Eldik will act as complaints officer.
2. The complaints officer informs the relevant person against whom the complaint is made and gives both parties the opportunity to provide further explanation. Additional information may be requested.
3. If deemed necessary by the complaints officer, or upon request by either party, both parties will be invited to a meeting at a time and place determined by the complaints officer.

BVDV ADVOCATEN &FISCALISTEN

4. The relevant person against whom the complaint is made will attempt to reach a solution together with the complainant, with or without the intervention of the complaints officer. Both parties may be asked to propose a solution. Based on all information, the complaints officer will submit a proposal for resolution.
5. Both parties must respond in writing to the proposed solution. Failure to do so will be considered acceptance of the proposal.
6. The complaints officer aims to resolve the complaint within four weeks of receipt. If this is not possible, the complainant will be notified with reasons thereof, and with the new expected date for resolution.
7. The complaints officer will inform both the complainant and the relevant person concerned in writing of the decision on the validity of the complaint, potentially with recommendations.
8. If the complaint is resolved satisfactorily, the complainant, the complaints officer, and the relevant person concerned will sign the final decision.

Article 7 – Confidentiality

1. The complaints officer and the relevant person involved shall treat the complaint confidentially.

Article 8 – No Cost for Complaint Handling

1. The complainant is not required to pay any fees for the handling of the complaint.

Article 9 – Responsibilities

1. The complaints officer is responsible for timely handling of the complaint.
2. The relevant person involved keeps the complaints officer informed of any contact and potential resolutions.
3. The complaints officer keeps the complainant informed of the progress.
4. The complaints officer maintains the complaint file.

Article 10 – Complaint Registration

1. The complaints officer records the complaint along with the subject matter.
2. A complaint may be classified under multiple matters.
3. The complaints officer reports periodically on the complaint handling and makes recommendations for the prevention of new complaints, as well as for improvement of procedures.
4. At least once per year, the reports and recommendations are discussed within the firm and submitted for decision-making.

Complaints can be submitted by email (karskens@bvdv.nl) addressed to the complaints officer.