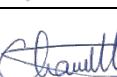




**STANDARDIZED COMPLAINTS HANDLING GUIDELINES
FOR THE ELECTRICITY SUPPLY INDUSTRY**
2021

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1	2016-04-01	Dorothy Waniala	Initial release
1.1	2021-3-12	Dorothy Waniala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Added Document control page ✓ Modified font-style from 'Calibri' to 'Candara' ✓ Replaced the old ERA logo with the new ERA logo ✓ Included the year to edition ✓ Made changes to section 2.0: replaced year 2016 with 2021 and the effective period from April 2016 to April 2021 ✓ Made changes to section 3.0: replaced Regulation 13 of the Electricity Quality of Service Code Regulations 2003 with Regulation 14 of the Electricity Quality of Service Code Regulations 2020

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Removed section 10 and 11.0: Reporting to ERA- Licensees must provide monthly Complaints reports to ERA. These reports must be in a format stipulated by ERA in the form attached under Annex 2. ✓ Removed: Annex 2 - proposed complaint classification system ✓ Made general grammatical corrections
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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Rationale

The Complaints Handling Guidelines are designed to set a standard for Licensees to handle complaints in relation to their obligations under the Electricity Act and relevant Regulations. These Guidelines provide for best practice in complaints handling among Licensees.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of these Guidelines is to standardize complaints handling mechanisms across all Licensees. The Guidelines streamline complaints handling mechanisms to ensure efficiency, effectiveness, objectivity, fairness, consistency and transparency.

These Guidelines will enable Licensees to:

- a) Deliver customer satisfaction;
- b) Improve complaints handling with emphasis on efficiency, effectiveness, objectivity, fairness, consistency and transparency; and,
- c) Continuously review and evaluate their complaints handling processes with the aim of improving customer satisfaction.

The Guidelines will also enable ERA to:

- a) Establish a standardized Complaints Management System across all Licensees.
- b) Monitor the trend of Complaints registered with Licensees, with the aim of enforcing consumer protection.

1.3 Legal Framework

These Guidelines are developed pursuant to section 10 (i) of the Electricity Act 1999, Cap 145, which mandates ERA to develop and enforce performance standards for

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the generation, transmission and distribution of electricity, and Section 10 (j) of the Act which requires ERA to develop uniform Electricity Industry standards and codes of conduct. Additionally, Section 10(q) authorizes ERA to approve codes of conduct in respect of the operation of transmission and distribution systems. ERA has therefore developed these Guidelines to set uniform standards for Licensees in complaints handling.

2.0 Citation, Commencement and Extent

These Guidelines may be cited as the 'Standardized Complaints Handling Guidelines for the Electricity Supply Industry 2021, and shall come into force in April 2021 and apply to all Licensed Electricity Distribution Companies in accordance with the Electricity Act.

3.0 Interpretation

In these Guidelines:

"Applicant" means a consumer requiring to be supplied with electricity;

"The Act" means "The Electricity Act, 1999, Chapter 145 of the Laws of Uganda;

"The Authority" means the Electricity Regulatory Authority established under Section 4 of the Electricity Act, 1999, Chapter 145 of the Laws of Uganda;

"Channels of Communication" means various forms/media through which Complaints may be submitted to Licensees.

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“Complaint” means a written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction about an action, proposed action, or failure to act by a Licensee or retail seller, its employees or contractors;

“Complainant” means a person making a Complaint;

“Complaints Handling Procedure” means a system which complies with Regulation 21.1 of the Electricity (Primary Grid Code) Regulations, 2003 and Regulation 14 of the Electricity (Quality of Service Code) Regulations, 2020;

“Complaints report” means the report prepared and published in accordance with Guideline 11 of these Guidelines;

“Consumer” means any person supplied or entitled to be supplied with electrical energy for personal, industrial and commercial use but does not include a person supplied with electrical energy for delivery to another person;

“ERA” means the Electricity Regulatory Authority;

“License” means a License issued under the Electricity Act, 1999, Chapter 145 of the Laws of Uganda;

“Licensee” means the holder of a Licence under the Electricity Act, 1999, Chapter 145 of the Laws of Uganda;

“Redress scheme” means a redress channel in accordance with Regulation 21.1 of the Electricity (Primary Grid Code) Regulations, 2003;

“Resolved complaint” means a Complaint in respect of which there remains no outstanding action to be taken by the Licensee and which has been resolved to the satisfaction of the Complainant or on whose behalf that Complaint was made;

“Tribunal” means the Electricity Disputes Tribunal established under section 93 of the Electricity Act, 1999, Chapter 145 of the Laws of Uganda;

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“Unresolved complaint” means a Complaint which has been received by a Licensee and whose details have been or should have been recorded by that Licensee;

“Vulnerable Consumer” means a person in need of special care, support, or protection;

“Business day” means a day, other than a Saturday, Sunday, or public holiday;

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4.0 Licensees' Complaints Handling Procedures

- 4.1 A Licensee must have in place at all times a Complaints Handling Procedures approved by the Authority.
- 4.2 Each Licensee must comply with its Complaints Handling Procedures in relation to each Complaint received.
- 4.3 Each Licensee's Complaints Handling Procedures must:
- a) Be in plain and understandable language;
 - b) Allow for Complaints to be made through various Channels of Communication;
 - c) Allow for Complaints to be progressed through each stage of the Complaints Handling Process orally (by telephone or in person at the Licensee's business premises), SMS or in writing (email, letters and social media);
 - d) Describe the steps which the Licensee will take with a view to investigate and resolve a complaint and the likely timescales for each of those steps. These timescales must be in accordance with the Electricity Act and supporting regulations.
 - e) Provide for an internal review of an unresolved Complaint where a Complainant is dissatisfied with the handling of that Complaint.
 - f) Describe the Complainant's right to refer a Complaint to an alternative redress scheme if they are dissatisfied with the resolution:
 - i. On and from the point at which the Licensee receives a Complaint; and,
 - ii. After the Licensee has resolved the Complaint.

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- g) Inform Complainants of the names and contact details of the Electricity Regulatory Authority and / or the Tribunal in cases where Complainants are dissatisfied with the solution arrived at by the Licensee; and,
- h) Offer the Complainant:
 - i. An apology where necessary;
 - ii. An explanation;
 - iii. The appropriate remedial action to be taken by the Licensee; and,
 - iv. The award of compensation in accordance with the Electricity Act and relevant Regulations.

4.4 Licensees must include in their Complaints Handling Procedures, as a remedy, the award of compensation to Consumers, in appropriate cases, where a Consumer has been adversely affected by a failure of that Licensee to comply with its obligations under the Electricity Act, 1999, relevant Regulations, Quality of Service Standards and the License.

5.0 Recording complaints upon receipt

Upon receipt of a Complaint a Licensee must record with the following details:

- a) The date that the Complaint was received;
- b) The channel of communication used to lodge the Complaint;
- c) The identity and contact details of the Complainant or on whose behalf the Complaint is lodged;
- d) The area of residence of the Complainant;
- e) A summary of the Complaint;
- f) A summary of any advice given or action taken or agreed upon in relation to the Complaint;

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- g) Whether the Complaint has been resolved and the basis for resolution.
- h) In cases of unresolved Complaints, the Licensee must record the steps taken to handle the Complaint and upon resolution, the time taken to resolve the Complaint and the solution offered; and,
- i) A copy of the record must be given to the Complainant.

6.0 Referring Consumers to the redress scheme

- 6.1 The Licensee must send a Complainant a written notice informing them of the matters addressed in Guideline 5.0.
- 6.2 A notice sent in accordance with Guideline 6.1 must notify the Complainant:
 - (a) Of their right to refer the Complaint to available redress schemes;
 - (b) That the redress scheme process is independent of the Licensee;
 - (c) That the redress scheme process is free of charge to the Complainant; and,
 - (d) That the Complainant may refer their Complaint to the Authority or the Electricity Disputes Tribunal.

7.0 Allocation and maintenance of adequate resources for complaints handling

Each Licensee must:

- (a) Receive, handle and process Complaints in an efficient and timely manner; and,
- (b) Allocate and maintain such level of resources as may reasonably be required to enable that Licensee to receive, handle and process Complaints in an efficient and timely manner and in accordance with these Guidelines.

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8.0 Information to be provided to consumers

- 8.1 Each Licensee must ensure that its Complaints Handling Procedures are displayed at a clear and prominent location on all premises that interface with Consumers and the website.
- 8.2 Each Licensee must, at least once in every twelve-month period, inform all its Consumers of the existence of its Complaints Handling Procedures and how a Complainant may obtain a copy of it.

9.0 Follow up

- 9.1 Where a Complainant claims to have lodged a Complaint in respect of a matter but it is not possible to identify the Complaint, the Licensee must record the fact that it is unable to trace the Complaint.
- 9.2 Where a Licensee has recorded that a Complaint is resolved but subsequent contact from a Complainant in relation to that Complaint indicates that it is not resolved, the Licensee:
 - a) Must record details of this change in the complaint's status in its recording system;
 - b) Must as soon as reasonably practical after becoming aware of the fact that the Complaint is not resolved:
 - i. Direct the Complainant to the Complaints Handling Procedures for redress; and,
 - ii. Offer to provide a copy of the Complaints Handling Procedures to the Complainant.

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- c) Must take account of that Complaint in any report which it is obliged to prepare and publish in accordance with Guideline 11; and,
- d) Shall not otherwise be entitled to treat that Complaint as a resolved Complaint for the purposes of these Guidelines until that complaint is demonstrably resolved.

10.0 Publication of information on Complaints

11.1 Licensees who hold a License under the Act must:

- a) Publish quarterly Complaints Reports at a prominent location on their website;

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ANNEX 1 - EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Guidelines)

These Guidelines prescribe standards for the handling of Complaints by Licensees and for the supply of electricity to Consumers about the prescribed standards and levels of compliance with those standards.

The Guidelines came into force in January 2016 and were revised in 2021.

Guideline 1; provides for the Rationale, Purpose and Legal Framework of these Guidelines.

Guideline 2; provides for the Citation, Commencement and Extent of these Guidelines.

Guideline 3; provides for Complaints Handling Procedures.

Guideline 4; specifies the information about Complaints that must be recorded by Licensees upon receipt of such Complaints.

Guideline 5; specifies the information that must be recorded by Licensees about Complaints that have not been resolved.

Guideline 6 requires Licensees to inform Consumers in writing of the Consumer's right to refer the Complaint to the redress scheme:

- a) When the Licensee realizes that the Complaint cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the Consumer; or,
- b) The expiry of the time period that the Licensee has to resolve the Complaint.

Guideline 7; sets out how Licensees should deal with Complaints and requires that they allocate sufficient resources to enable them to do so.

Guideline 8; describes information that should be provided to Consumers.

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Guideline 9; requires Licensees who hold Supply Licences to prepare and publish a quarterly report concerning their Complaints Handling Procedures, mentioning the existence of the Complaints Handling systems at the company and at ERA.