

PUBLIC COMPLAINTS COMMISSION

(NIGERIA'S OMBUDSMAN)

NORTH EAST GEOPOLITICAL ZONE

COMPREHENSIVE WORKSHOP TRAINING MANUAL

**Professional Complaint Handling and Effective Case Management for the
Commission's Staff**

An Eight (8) Module Capacity-Building Programme

Designed in Alignment with the Mandate, Vision, Mission and Core Values of the Public Complaints Commission

Venue: North East Zonal Training Centre
Covering: Adamawa • Bauchi • Borno • Gombe • Taraba • Yobe States
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FOREWORD

The Public Complaints Commission (PCC) remains Nigeria's foremost machinery for the control of administrative excesses — that is, non-adherence to procedures or the abuse of law by Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), private companies, and other bodies. As the nation's Ombudsman, the Commission exists to restore the dignity of man through the enthronement of the rule of law and the protection of citizens' rights against maladministration.

The North East geopolitical zone — comprising Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe States — presents a distinct operating environment for the Commission's officers. Years of insurgency, internal displacement, and post-conflict recovery have generated a peculiar volume and character of complaints, ranging from pension and gratuity disputes among displaced retirees, to grievances over humanitarian intervention programmes, land and community disputes, and administrative failures within MDAs serving the zone. Staff of the Commission operating in this zone must therefore combine the Commission's standard professional competencies with heightened sensitivity to the security, humanitarian and socio-cultural realities of the North East.

This Workshop Training Manual has been developed to strengthen the capacity of the Commission's staff serving the North East Zone in the core skills of professional complaint handling and effective case management. It translates the Commission's constitutional mandate, core values — Social Justice, Efficient Service Delivery, Integrity, Accountability, Efficiency and Diligence — and statutory functions into practical, module-based training content that can be delivered over a structured workshop programme.

It is our hope that every participant will leave this workshop better equipped to serve the Nigerian public with professionalism, empathy and unwavering integrity.

INTRODUCTION TO THE MANUAL

1. Background and Rationale

Complaint handling is the core statutory business of the Public Complaints Commission. The quality, speed and fairness with which a complaint is received, investigated and resolved directly determines public confidence in the Commission and, by extension, in government generally. Weaknesses in complaint reception, poor documentation, inconsistent investigation methods, and delays in case resolution undermine the Commission's constitutional mandate and expose it to reputational and legal risk.

This training responds to the peculiar operational demands faced by staff in the North East Zone, where large caseloads relating to pension, humanitarian intervention, community relations and MDA administrative failures require staff who are not only procedurally competent but also emotionally intelligent, ethically grounded, and skilled in conflict resolution.

2. Target Audience

This manual is designed for:

- Investigation Officers (Public Sector and Private Sector Divisions)
- Complaint Reception and Registry Officers
- Zonal and State Office Coordinators within the North East Zone
- Community Relations and Public Enlightenment Officers
- Newly recruited and mid-level staff requiring refresher training

3. Workshop Goal

To equip the Commission's staff in the North East Zone with the knowledge, skills and ethical grounding required to receive, investigate, manage and resolve public complaints professionally, promptly, and in strict alignment with the Commission's mandate.

4. Overall Workshop Objectives

At the end of this workshop, participants should be able to:

1. Articulate the legal mandate, mission, vision and core values of the Public Complaints Commission and relate these to their daily duties.
2. Correctly classify complaints according to jurisdiction (Public Sector and Private Sector) and applicable procedure.
3. Apply professional standards in receiving, registering and documenting complaints.
4. Communicate effectively and empathetically with complainants, respondents and colleagues.
5. Apply sound investigation techniques and evidence-gathering methods appropriate to MDA, pension, educational, community and financial institution cases.
6. Manage case files efficiently using standardised tracking, timelines and reporting tools.
7. Apply mediation, negotiation and alternative dispute resolution (ADR) techniques to resolve complaints amicably where appropriate.

8. Uphold the ethical standards, confidentiality obligations and accountability mechanisms expected of the Commission's officers.

5. Training Methodology

The workshop adopts an adult-learning, participatory methodology combining:

- Facilitator-led presentations and lectures
- Case scenarios and simulated complaint files drawn from North East operational realities
- Role-play (complainant – officer – respondent simulations)
- Group work and syndicate discussions
- Practical exercises using the Commission's actual complaint intake and case tracking templates
- Plenary feedback, Q&A and daily recap sessions

6. Structure of the Manual

The manual is organised into eight (8) modules, each with stated learning objectives, a session outline, facilitator activities/case scenarios, and key takeaways. A set of appendices at the end of the manual provides ready-to-use templates, a glossary of terms, and a workshop evaluation form.

ABOUT THE PUBLIC COMPLAINTS COMMISSION

Our Vision

To restore the dignity of man through the enthronement of the rule of law and the protection of the rights of citizens against maladministration.

Our Mission

To promote an effective and efficient service that is responsible and responsive to the needs of the Nigerian public in the resolution of complaints against government and private institutions.

Core Values

- Social Justice
- Efficient Service Delivery
- Integrity
- Accountability
- Efficiency
- Diligence

The Commission's Mandate

- To investigate and conduct research into the affairs of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), private companies and officials of these bodies.
- To investigate the administrative procedures of courts of law in Nigeria.
- To report crimes discovered in the course of, or after, an investigation.
- To report any erring officer for disciplinary action.
- To interpret government policies and advise government and companies accordingly.
- To make public reports after investigations.
- To have access to all relevant information required for investigation.
- To make recommendations, particularly following pro-active investigation.

Structure of Investigation Activities

The Commission's investigation function is organised under two broad departments:

Public Sector Investigation Department

- Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs)
- Pension (Old and New Schemes)
- Educational Institutions

Private Sector Investigation Department

- Private Companies
- Banking and Financial Institutions

- Communities

Guiding Principles of Service

- The Commission is independent of government bureaucracy, with statutory powers of confidentiality and access to information, including the power to compel the production of documents.
- Investigation of complaints is provided free of charge to both complainant and respondent, whether citizen or non-citizen resident in Nigeria.
- All complaints are treated with the confidentiality they deserve and are to be handled speedily.

WORKSHOP OVERVIEW AT A GLANCE

The table below summarises the eight modules that make up this training programme.

No.	Module Title	Duration	Core Focus
1	Overview of the Public Complaints Commission: Mandate, Mission and Legal Framework	2 hrs	Institutional grounding
2	Understanding Public Complaints: Nature, Categories and Jurisdiction	2 hrs	Classification & procedure
3	Professional Complaint Reception, Intake and Documentation	2.5 hrs	Front-line service
4	Effective Communication and Complainant Relations	2.5 hrs	Interpersonal skills
5	Investigation Techniques, Evidence Gathering and Analysis	3 hrs	Technical investigation
6	Case Management: Tracking, Timelines and File Administration	2.5 hrs	Administrative efficiency
7	Alternative Dispute Resolution, Mediation and Negotiation	2.5 hrs	Amicable resolution
8	Professional Ethics, Confidentiality, Reporting and Accountability	2 hrs	Integrity & compliance

Total contact hours: approximately 19.5 hours, deliverable over a 3–4 day residential or zonal workshop, inclusive of opening/closing ceremonies, group work, role-play and daily evaluation.

MODULE 1

Overview of the Public Complaints Commission: Mandate, Mission and Legal Framework

Duration	2 hours
Target Group	All staff cadres
Expected Outcome	Participants demonstrate a firm grasp of the Commission's legal basis, mandate and core values, and can explain these to complainants and stakeholders.

Lecture Note Overview

Every officer of the Public Complaints Commission is, first and foremost, a custodian of a constitutional promise: that no citizen or resident of Nigeria should suffer silently under the weight of administrative excess, abuse of office, or institutional indifference. This opening lecture lays the institutional foundation on which every other module in this manual rests. Before an officer can competently receive, investigate or resolve a complaint, he or she must first understand, in clear and confident terms, who the Commission is, where its authority comes from, and what it exists to achieve. This lecture therefore takes participants systematically through the history, legal mandate, guiding philosophy and organisational architecture of the Commission, before situating all of this within the peculiar realities of service delivery in the North East geopolitical zone.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lecture/module, participants will be able to:

Trace the historical background and establishment of the Public Complaints Commission.

State accurately the Commission's constitutional and statutory mandate.

Explain the Commission's vision, mission and core values.

Describe the organisational structure, including the Public Sector and Private Sector Investigation Departments.

Relate the Commission's mandate to the specific operational context of the North East Zone.

1.1 Historical Background

The Public Complaints Commission occupies a unique place in Nigeria's public institutional history as the country's Ombudsman — an office whose entire reason for being is to stand between the ordinary citizen and the machinery of government or big private institutions whenever that machinery fails, delays, or acts unjustly. Ombudsman institutions of this kind emerged globally out of a recognition that citizens, acting alone, rarely have the resources, the access, or the standing to compel a Ministry, a bank, or a large company to correct a wrong done to them. Nigeria's response to this global challenge was the establishment of the Public Complaints Commission, given constitutional recognition and a dedicated enabling Act that grants it powers unusual for an administrative body — including the power to investigate, to compel production of documents, and to report findings publicly.

Over the decades since its establishment, the Commission has grown from a small central office into a nationwide network with a Headquarters in Abuja, Federal Commissioners representing every state of the Federation, and State and Zonal Offices bringing its services closer to the people it exists to protect. Facilitators should use this

section to instil pride of ownership in participants: they are not merely civil servants processing files, they are officers of a constitutionally recognised institution of justice.

1.2 Legal and Constitutional Mandate

The Commission derives its powers from its enabling Act and is recognised in plain terms as ‘the machinery for the control of administrative excesses’ — meaning non-adherence to procedures or abuse of law by government bodies and private institutions alike. This single phrase is worth dwelling on at length in the lecture, because it defines the entire scope of the Commission's work: wherever a public or private institution has departed from the correct procedure, or has abused the powers entrusted to it, the Commission has a legitimate basis to investigate. This is a broader and more flexible mandate than most citizens — and indeed many officers — initially appreciate.

The specific mandate items set out in the Commission's Act should be explained one by one, with the facilitator drawing out the practical meaning of each: the power to investigate and conduct research into the affairs of Ministries, Departments and Agencies, private companies and their officials; the power to investigate the administrative procedures of courts of law in Nigeria (distinct from questioning the merits of a judicial decision); the duty to report crimes discovered in the course of, or after, an investigation; the duty to report any erring officer for disciplinary action; the function of interpreting government policy and advising government and companies accordingly; the power to make public reports after investigations; the statutory right of access to all relevant information, including the power to compel production of documents; and the power to make recommendations, particularly following pro-active (self-initiated) investigation.

It is important for the facilitator to stress that this mandate carries with it a corresponding weight of responsibility. Because the Commission can compel information and publish findings, its officers must exercise these powers with scrupulous fairness. Authority without restraint becomes abuse; restraint without authority becomes irrelevance. The Commission is designed to hold both in balance.

1.3 Vision, Mission and Core Values

The Commission's Vision — to restore the dignity of man through the enthronement of the rule of law and the protection of the rights of citizens against maladministration — is not ceremonial language. It is a working standard against which every officer's conduct should be measured. To ‘restore dignity’ means recognising that a complainant standing before an officer, however poor, however uneducated, however distressed, is a person whose rights matter as much as those of the most powerful respondent institution the Commission might investigate.

The Mission — to promote an effective and efficient service that is responsible and responsive to the needs of the Nigerian public in the resolution of complaints against government and private institutions — translates the Vision into an operational commitment: speed, responsiveness and responsibility in service delivery.

The Core Values — Social Justice, Efficient Service Delivery, Integrity, Accountability, Efficiency and Diligence — should each be unpacked by the facilitator with a concrete behavioural example relevant to North East operations. Social Justice, for instance, is demonstrated when an officer takes as much care over the complaint of an illiterate, displaced pensioner in a remote local government as over a complaint from a well-connected businessman in the state capital. Integrity is demonstrated when an officer discloses a personal connection to a respondent rather than quietly handling the case anyway. Diligence is demonstrated in the officer who follows up a lost pension file across multiple agencies rather than closing the case as unresolvable at the first obstacle.

1.4 Organisational Structure and Departments

The Commission's investigation function is organised for administrative convenience and specialisation into two broad departments. The Public Sector Investigation Department handles complaints concerning Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), Pension matters under both the old and new pension schemes, and Educational Institutions. The Private Sector Investigation Department handles complaints against Private Companies, Banking and Financial Institutions, and Community-related matters.

This division exists because each category of complaint tends to require a different body of specialist knowledge — a pension complaint calls for familiarity with pension law and payroll administration, while a banking complaint calls for familiarity with financial regulation and banking practice. Officers should understand not only which department they belong to, but how the two departments interact at the zonal level, where a single State or Zonal Office may handle both categories of complaint due to staff strength, with cases still ultimately reported and coordinated through the appropriate departmental structure at Headquarters.

1.5 The North East Zone Operating Context

No lecture on the Commission's mandate would be complete without situating it within the lived reality of the North East geopolitical zone — Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe States. Over more than a decade, insurgency, displacement, and post-conflict recovery have reshaped the volume and character of complaints received in this zone. Facilitators should walk participants through the following recurring patterns, drawing on the general knowledge and field experience of the group: pension and gratuity claims complicated by the loss of personnel and payment records when local government secretariats were affected by insurgent activity; grievances arising from humanitarian and resettlement interventions, including disputes over the fairness or completeness of compensation and relief distribution; community and land disputes connected with the return of displaced populations to ancestral land now occupied or altered; and administrative failures within MDAs specifically tasked with serving internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities.

Officers serving this zone are, in effect, discharging the Commission's ordinary mandate under extraordinary conditions. The remaining seven modules of this manual will repeatedly return to this operating context, because it changes not the substance of what the Commission does, but the sensitivity, patience and creativity with which its officers must do it.

1.6 Relationship with Other Accountability and Oversight Institutions

Participants frequently ask how the Commission's work relates to that of other accountability bodies, and this question deserves a clear, considered answer rather than a passing remark. The Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) exist principally to investigate and prosecute criminal corruption and financial crime; the Public Complaints Commission, by contrast, exists to correct maladministration and abuse of process, which may or may not amount to a crime. Where an officer's investigation uncovers evidence suggesting criminal conduct — outright bribery, embezzlement, or forgery, for example — the correct response is not for the Commission's officer to attempt a criminal investigation of their own, but to document the evidence carefully and refer the matter, consistent with the Commission's mandate to report crimes discovered in the course of an investigation.

Similarly, the National Human Rights Commission addresses violations of fundamental human rights, the Code of Conduct Bureau addresses breaches of the Code of Conduct for public officers, and the regular courts remain the ultimate forum for disputes requiring a binding judicial determination. The Public Complaints Commission's own

procedures are administrative rather than judicial: it investigates, mediates, and recommends, but it does not sit as a court, does not impose fines, and does not send anyone to prison. Officers must be able to explain this distinction confidently to complainants who sometimes arrive expecting the Commission to act as a court, and must know when a matter is more appropriately referred, in whole or in part, to one of these sister institutions.

1.7 Common Misconceptions About the Commission's Powers

Left unaddressed, a handful of recurring misconceptions can quietly damage the Commission's credibility and generate unrealistic expectations among complainants. The first is the belief that the Commission charges a fee for its services: it does not — investigation of complaints is provided free of charge to both complainant and respondent. The second is the belief that the Commission can overturn a court judgment or reopen a matter already decided on its merits by a competent court: it cannot, though it may still examine whether the administrative procedure surrounding a court process was properly followed. The third is the belief that a recommendation from the Commission is the end of the matter regardless of whether the respondent complies: in practice, compliance monitoring and, where necessary, escalation and follow-up are essential parts of an officer's job, not an afterthought.

Facilitators should invite participants to share other misconceptions they have personally encountered from complainants or respondents in their own duty stations, and to practise, in pairs, a short, respectful explanation correcting each one. An officer who can gently and accurately correct a misconception at first contact saves the Commission significant wasted effort and spares the complainant needless disappointment later in the process.

Facilitator Activity / Case Scenario

- In groups, list three ways your day-to-day duties give practical effect to the Commission's core value of 'Social Justice' in the North East context.
- Discuss: a complainant asks why the Commission can investigate a private bank. Using the mandate, explain the correct answer to the group.
- Case Scenario: During an investigation into an MDA's delayed pension payments, an officer discovers what appears to be a forged payment voucher. In groups, agree on the correct next step, and identify which sister institution, if any, the matter should be referred to.

Self-Assessment Questions

1. In your own words, what does it mean for the Commission to be 'the machinery for the control of administrative excesses'?
2. List four items contained in the Commission's statutory mandate.
3. Which department of the Commission would handle a complaint against a privately owned secondary school, and which would handle a complaint against a federal ministry?
4. Give one example, from your own duty station, of a decision that reflects the core value of Integrity.
5. If an investigation uncovers evidence of a criminal offence, what is the Commission's officer required to do, and to whom might the matter be referred?
6. Name two misconceptions about the Commission's powers that you have personally encountered, and explain how you would correct each one.

Key Takeaways / Lecture Summary

- The Commission's authority to investigate is broad, covering MDAs, courts' administrative procedures, private companies, banks and communities.
- Core values are not slogans — they must be visible in how every complaint is received and handled.
- The North East Zone's caseload has unique features that officers must factor into their approach.
- The Commission is administrative, not judicial — it investigates, mediates and recommends, and refers matters requiring criminal prosecution or a binding judicial determination to the appropriate body.
- Correcting common misconceptions early, courteously and accurately protects both the complainant's expectations and the Commission's credibility.

MODULE 2

Understanding Public Complaints: Nature, Categories and Jurisdiction

Duration	2 hours
Target Group	Investigation and Reception Officers
Expected Outcome	Participants can correctly classify an incoming complaint, determine jurisdiction, and route it to the appropriate department without delay.

Lecture Note Overview

Having established in Module 1 who the Commission is and what authority it wields, this lecture turns to a question that every officer must answer correctly, and quickly, at the very first point of contact: is this actually a complaint the Commission can handle, and if so, which part of the Commission should handle it? Getting this wrong wastes the complainant's time, wastes the officer's time, and can quietly damage public confidence in the Commission when a matter is mishandled, misrouted, or wrongly rejected. This lecture equips participants with a clear, working framework for defining, categorising and testing the admissibility of any complaint that comes before them.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lecture/module, participants will be able to:

Define what constitutes a valid complaint under the Commission's mandate.

Distinguish between Public Sector and Private Sector complaints.

Identify complaints that fall outside the Commission's jurisdiction and know the correct referral procedure.

Apply the Commission's admissibility criteria to sample complaints.

2.1 What Constitutes a Complaint

In the working language of the Commission, a complaint is a grievance brought by a citizen or resident of Nigeria — whether an individual, a group, or an organisation — alleging maladministration, undue delay, abuse of office, denial of a lawful entitlement, or unfair treatment at the hands of an MDA, a court's administrative process, a private company, a bank, or a community-level authority. Four elements are worth separating out clearly for participants. First, there must be an identifiable grievance — a specific act, omission, or delay, not a vague sense of dissatisfaction. Second, there must be an identifiable respondent — a specific institution or official whose conduct is being complained of. Third, the grievance must relate to administration or procedure — how a decision was made or executed — rather than simply to disagreement with a lawful decision correctly made. Fourth, the complainant must generally have some direct interest in the matter, although the Commission may also act on its own initiative through pro-active investigation.

Facilitators should stress that the Commission's definition of a complaint is intentionally broad and citizen-friendly. Officers are not expected to apply a lawyer's precision at the point of reception; rather, they should listen for the presence of these four elements in whatever form the complainant is able to express them, however informally.

2.2 Categories of Complaints Entertained

The Commission organises the complaints it entertains into two broad sectors, reflecting the two departments discussed in Module 1.

Public Sector Complaints

Complaints against Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) cover the full range of government administrative failures — delayed approvals, wrongful denial of licences or permits, unfair termination of appointment, failure to act on a lawful request, and similar matters. Pension and gratuity complaints, whether arising under the old defined-benefit scheme or the new Contributory Pension Scheme, form one of the single largest categories of complaint the Commission receives nationally, and overwhelmingly so in the North East Zone given the age profile and displacement history of many retirees there. Complaints from students and staff of educational institutions cover matters such as wrongful withholding of results or certificates, unfair disciplinary action, and administrative failures in the management of institutions.

Private Sector Complaints

Complaints against private companies and employers cover matters such as wrongful dismissal, non-payment of entitlements, and unfair treatment of employees or customers. Complaints against banks and other financial institutions cover matters such as unauthorised deductions, mishandled transactions, and failure to resolve customer disputes. Community relations complaints cover a broad category particularly significant in the North East, including disputes over land use, compensation for land or property affected by development or resettlement projects, and administrative grievances at the interface between communities and companies or public bodies operating within them.

2.3 Admissibility and Jurisdictional Limits

Not every grievance that reaches an officer's desk is, in law and in practice, admissible before the Commission. This is one of the more delicate judgment calls an officer must make, because declaring a matter inadmissible must never be experienced by the complainant as a second injustice layered on top of the first. Facilitators should work through the following categories of exclusion with the group: matters already substantively before a court of competent jurisdiction, where the court, not the Commission, is the appropriate forum to determine the merits; purely political disputes, such as internal party matters, which fall outside the Commission's administrative mandate; and matters that, properly understood, call for a change in the law itself (a legislative remedy) rather than a correction of maladministration in applying an existing law.

The correct approach when a matter appears inadmissible is never simply to turn the complainant away. The officer should explain, clearly and respectfully, why the matter falls outside the Commission's jurisdiction, and, wherever possible, should direct the complainant to the appropriate alternative forum — whether that is a court, a different regulatory agency, or another dispute resolution mechanism.

2.4 Offences and Penalties

Because the Commission's power to investigate is backed by statute, its enabling Act also provides for offences and penalties connected with obstruction of the Commission's work. These include the refusal or failure of a respondent institution or official to produce documents or information lawfully requested, obstruction of an officer in the course of investigation, and victimisation of a complainant or witness because they lodged or supported a complaint. Officers should be familiar with these provisions well enough to explain them, calmly and

without threat, to a respondent organisation that is being slow or unhelpful — the aim is always to secure cooperation, with the offences and penalties provisions serving as a backstop rather than a first resort.

2.5 North East Zone Complaint Patterns

Drawing together the categories discussed above, facilitators should lead a structured review of the complaint patterns most commonly reported from Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe States. These include delayed or entirely stalled pension payments to retirees displaced from their original stations of service; non-remittance of pension or provident fund contributions by employers, both public and private; disputes over the adequacy or fairness of compensation and resettlement packages following displacement; and grievances directed at agencies responsible for managing humanitarian interventions, ranging from allegations of exclusion from a relief programme to disputes over the administration of livelihood support schemes. Recognising these patterns in advance allows an officer to classify an incoming complaint quickly and to anticipate, even before formal investigation begins, the kind of evidence that is likely to be available or, just as importantly, unavailable due to the security and displacement context.

2.6 A Preview of the Complaint Lifecycle

Before moving into the detailed modules on reception, investigation and case management that follow, it is useful for participants to see, in outline, the full journey a complaint takes from the moment it is classified to the moment it is closed: registration and acknowledgement, classification and assignment (the subject of this lecture), preliminary review of admissibility, investigation and evidence gathering, analysis and recommendation, communication of outcome, monitoring of compliance, and finally closure and archiving. Understanding this full arc early helps an officer appreciate that classification is not a bureaucratic formality performed in isolation — it is the decision that determines which department, which procedure, and ultimately which timeline will govern everything that follows.

2.7 Documenting the Jurisdictional Decision

Whatever classification decision an officer reaches — admissible under the Public Sector division, admissible under the Private Sector division, or inadmissible — that decision must itself be documented on the case file, with a brief, specific reason. A one-line note such as ‘admissible: MDA pension complaint, assigned to Public Sector Investigation’ or ‘inadmissible: subject matter already decided on its merits by the High Court, complainant advised accordingly on [date]’ protects both the officer and the complainant, allows a supervisor to review the decision quickly if questioned, and builds an institutional record of how similar cases have been classified in the past. Facilitators should stress that an undocumented classification decision is, for practical purposes, an unaccountable one.

Facilitator Activity / Case Scenario

- Case Scenario: A retired local government worker in Borno State has not received her pension for eleven years because her records were lost during displacement. Which department handles this? What is the correct classification?
- Case Scenario: A community group in Taraba State complains that a private telecommunications company demolished farmland without compensation. Classify and justify jurisdiction.
- Group Exercise: Working from a mixed batch of ten one-line complaint summaries provided by the

Self-Assessment Questions

1. State, in your own words, the four elements that make up a valid complaint.
2. Name the three divisions under the Public Sector Investigation Department and the three under the Private Sector Investigation Department.
3. Describe the correct procedure when a complaint brought to you is already before a court on its merits.
4. Why is it important to explain, rather than simply state, a finding of inadmissibility to a complainant?
5. List the eight stages of the complaint lifecycle in the correct order.
6. Why should a jurisdictional decision always be documented, even when the complaint is straightforward?

Key Takeaways / Lecture Summary

- Correct classification at intake prevents delay and misdirection of case files.
- Not every grievance is within the Commission's jurisdiction — officers must know the limits and communicate them respectfully.
- The North East Zone shows a distinctive concentration of pension, resettlement and community-related complaints.
- Classification is the first link in the full complaint lifecycle, and errors made here carry forward into every later stage.
- Every jurisdictional decision, admissible or not, must be documented with a specific, reviewable reason.

MODULE 3

Professional Complaint Reception, Intake and Documentation

Duration	2.5 hours
Target Group	Reception, Registry and Front-line Officers
Expected Outcome	Participants receive and document complaints accurately, completely and courteously at first point of contact.

Lecture Note Overview

If Modules 1 and 2 gave participants the institutional knowledge to understand what the Commission does and what falls within its jurisdiction, this lecture moves to the single most consequential moment in the entire life of a complaint: the moment of first contact. Research and long institutional experience across Ombudsman bodies everywhere point to the same conclusion — complainants form their lasting impression of an institution's fairness and competence within the first few minutes of being received, largely irrespective of how their case is eventually decided. A complainant who is received with courtesy, listened to fully, and given a clear, documented next step will trust the process even if the eventual outcome disappoints them. A complainant who is received carelessly will distrust the process even if the eventual outcome favours them. This lecture therefore treats complaint reception and intake as a professional discipline in its own right, deserving the same rigour as investigation itself.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lecture/module, participants will be able to:

Apply the Commission's standard procedure for lodging and receiving complaints.

Complete a Complaint Intake Form correctly and completely.

Identify and collect the minimum information and supporting documents required for each complaint category.

Demonstrate courteous, dignified reception of complainants, including vulnerable persons.

3.1 Channels for Lodging Complaints

The Commission receives complaints through several channels, and officers must be equally competent in handling each. A complainant may walk in physically at Headquarters or at a State or Zonal Office — by far the most common channel in the North East Zone, given lower levels of internet access in many affected communities. A complainant may write by post, submit by telephone (which must always be followed up in writing to create a documentary record), send an email to the Commission's dedicated complaint addresses, or lodge a complaint through the Commission's online portal. Whichever channel is used, the standard of care in recording the complaint, and the documentation ultimately produced, must be identical — a complaint received by telephone is no less deserving of a complete, accurate written record than one received by a complainant standing in front of the officer.

3.2 The Complaint Intake Process

A professional intake process follows a consistent sequence regardless of the channel through which the complaint arrives, and facilitators should walk through each stage in turn, explaining not just what to do but why it matters. The process begins with greeting and identifying the complainant courteously, in a manner that immediately signals respect for their dignity — this is not a minor pleasantry but the foundation on which the complainant's cooperation and trust are built. The officer then listens actively to the complainant's full account of the grievance before attempting to interrupt, classify, or summarise it; premature classification is one of the most common causes of intake errors, because officers who jump to conclusions often miss details that later prove decisive.

Once the full account has been heard, the officer records the complainant's identifying details, contact information and address, followed by the identity of the respondent — the specific MDA, company, bank, or official whose conduct is being complained of. The officer then captures a clear, dated statement of the grievance, wherever possible in the complainant's own words, since this preserves the authenticity of the account and avoids the risk of the officer unconsciously reshaping the complaint. All supporting documents submitted at this stage must be collected and listed individually, not simply bundled together. Every complaint received must be assigned a unique case or file reference number at the point of first registration, and the complainant must be issued a written acknowledgement slip or receipt confirming that the complaint has been received and recorded, together with the reference number for future correspondence.

3.3 Minimum Documentation Standards

Different categories of complaint call for different supporting documents, and officers should be able to advise complainants, at the point of intake, on what will typically be required to move their case forward efficiently. For pension complaints, this typically includes letters of appointment and retirement, evidence of service length, and any prior correspondence with the pension-paying agency. For complaints against MDAs or educational institutions, relevant admission, employment, or enrolment letters and any official correspondence relating to the grievance are important. For banking complaints, account statements and correspondence with the bank are essential. Across all categories, evidence of any prior effort by the complainant to resolve the matter directly with the respondent — letters written, visits made, responses (or non-responses) received — significantly strengthens a case file and should always be requested, though its absence should never be treated as a bar to registering the complaint.

3.4 Receiving Vulnerable and Distressed Complainants

The North East Zone presents a complainant population with a higher-than-average proportion of individuals who require additional patience and adapted communication at the point of reception — elderly retirees, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons who may have lost personal documentation, and individuals who are illiterate or unfamiliar with formal bureaucratic procedure. Officers must resist any temptation to rush such complainants or to treat their difficulty in articulating a grievance as a weakness in the complaint itself. Best practice includes using simple, jargon-free language; reading back and explaining any form the complainant is asked to sign; and, where a complainant cannot read or write, assisting them to complete the Intake Form while carefully confirming, in the complainant's own words, that the record accurately reflects what they intended to say before it is finalised.

3.5 Confidentiality at the Point of Reception

Confidentiality is not a matter that begins once a file reaches the investigation stage — it begins the instant a complaint is received. Complaint details must never be discussed within earshot of other complainants or visitors in an open reception area, and must never be shared with unauthorised persons, including colleagues who have no role in the case. Once a complaint is registered, both the physical file and any electronic record must be secured promptly, consistent with the standards set out in Module 8 of this manual.

3.6 Handling Repeat, Multiple and Group Complainants

Reception officers in the North East Zone frequently encounter complainants who are not lodging a single, isolated grievance: a group of retirees from the same local government may arrive together over an identical pension issue, or one complainant may return repeatedly to add new information or to press for an update. Group complaints of this kind should generally be registered as a single lead case with each affected individual listed as a co-complainant, rather than as separate, duplicate files, so that the investigation can proceed once against a common set of facts. Repeat visits by an existing complainant should be logged as an addendum to the existing file rather than treated as a new complaint, and the officer should always check the registry for an existing file before opening a new one, to avoid the wasted effort and confusion of parallel, duplicate case numbers.

3.7 Common Intake Errors and How to Avoid Them

Even experienced officers can fall into a small number of recurring intake errors, and naming them plainly is the fastest way to prevent them. These include: recording a vague summary of the grievance instead of the complainant's specific, dated account; failing to list every document actually submitted, which later causes disputes about what was or was not provided; omitting a working contact address or phone number, which makes it impossible to reach the complainant with updates; assigning a case number without cross-checking the registry for a duplicate; and failing to issue a written or verbal acknowledgement before the complainant leaves the office. Facilitators should treat this list as a practical checklist to be reviewed by every reception officer at the end of each intake, not merely as a one-time lecture point.

Facilitator Activity / Case Scenario

- Role-play: One participant plays an elderly, distressed pensioner from a displaced community reporting a lost pension file; another plays the reception officer. Observers assess courtesy, completeness of intake, and adherence to the Intake Form.
- Individually complete a specimen Complaint Intake Form (see Appendix A) using a case scenario provided by the facilitator.
- Group Exercise: Review five completed (deliberately flawed) sample intake forms and identify which of the common intake errors from Section 3.7 each one contains.

Self-Assessment Questions

1. List, in the correct order, the eight steps of a professional complaint intake process.
2. Why should an officer avoid classifying a complaint before hearing the complainant's full account?
3. What special considerations apply when receiving a complaint from an elderly, illiterate, or displaced complainant?

4. At what point does an officer's confidentiality obligation towards a complaint begin?
5. How should a reception officer handle a group of ten complainants presenting an identical grievance?
6. Name three common intake errors and explain how each can be prevented.

Key Takeaways / Lecture Summary

- First contact shapes the complainant's trust in the entire process — courtesy and completeness at intake are non-negotiable.
- Every complaint must be registered with a unique reference number and acknowledged in writing.
- Confidentiality obligations begin the moment a complaint is received.
- Group and repeat complaints should be consolidated under a single, well-managed file rather than duplicated.
- A short, disciplined self-check at the end of each intake catches most common recording errors before they cause problems later.

MODULE 4

Effective Communication and Complainant Relations

Duration	2.5 hours
Target Group	All staff cadres
Expected Outcome	Participants communicate clearly, empathetically and assertively with complainants, respondents and colleagues throughout the case lifecycle.

Lecture Note Overview

Communication is the thread that runs through every stage of a complaint's life — from the first anxious sentence a complainant offers at the reception desk, to the final letter informing them of the Commission's findings months later. An officer may be diligent, technically competent and perfectly impartial, and still fail the complainant if that competence is never clearly communicated. This lecture treats communication not as a soft or secondary skill but as a core professional competency, deserving of the same deliberate practice that an officer would give to investigation technique or file management. We will examine how officers should listen, how they should speak and write to complainants, how they should correspond formally with powerful respondent institutions, and how they should manage the emotional dimension of complaint handling — particularly in a zone where many complainants carry the weight of displacement, loss and prolonged hardship into every interaction with the Commission.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lecture/module, participants will be able to:

Apply active listening techniques during complaint interviews.

Distinguish between assertive, aggressive and passive communication, and consistently apply assertive communication.

Manage difficult, angry or emotionally distressed complainants professionally.

Communicate case updates and outcomes clearly, in writing and verbally.

4.1 Principles of Effective Communication

Five pillars underpin every communication an officer of the Commission makes, whether spoken or written, to a complainant, a respondent, or a colleague: clarity, empathy, respect, timeliness and accuracy. Clarity means using language the recipient can actually understand — avoiding legalistic or bureaucratic jargon when speaking with a complainant who has no formal education, while remaining precise and professional when corresponding with a respondent institution's legal or administrative department. Empathy means recognising and acknowledging the human impact of a grievance, without allowing that acknowledgement to compromise impartiality. Respect means treating every party — complainant and respondent alike — with dignity regardless of their status or conduct. Timeliness means responding within a reasonable period and never leaving a complainant or respondent wondering whether their correspondence has been received at all. Accuracy means never overstating what has been established, what has been promised, or what stage a case has reached.

4.2 Active Listening Skills

Active listening is the specific discipline of listening not merely to respond, but to understand fully before responding at all. Facilitators should demonstrate and have participants practise the following behaviours during complaint interviews: giving the complainant full, undivided attention and resisting the urge to interrupt before they have finished; using verbal and non-verbal acknowledgement such as nodding and brief affirming words to signal that the officer is following the account; paraphrasing and summarising what has been said periodically, to confirm that the officer's understanding matches what the complainant intended to convey; asking open-ended, clarifying questions rather than closed questions that can be answered with a single word; and, throughout, avoiding any premature judgement about the merits of the complaint before all relevant facts have been gathered. An officer who masters active listening will, almost as a by-product, produce more accurate and complete case documentation, because the details captured at intake and during subsequent interviews will more faithfully reflect what actually happened.

4.3 Assertive, Aggressive and Passive Communication

Officers should be able to distinguish clearly between three communication styles and to recognise which one their own default tendency leans toward. Aggressive communication disregards the other party's feelings or position and seeks to dominate the exchange — this is never appropriate for an officer of the Commission, even when dealing with an obstructive or hostile respondent. Passive communication avoids conflict at the cost of clearly stating what is required or expected — this is equally unhelpful, because it allows respondents to delay indefinitely and leaves complainants uncertain about where they stand. Assertive communication, the standard the Commission expects of its officers, states facts, requirements and positions clearly, firmly and respectfully, without either aggression or evasiveness. An assertive officer, for example, tells a slow-moving respondent MDA plainly that a response is required by a specific date, and that failure to respond will be escalated, without raising their voice or making personal remarks about the individual official concerned.

4.4 Managing Difficult and Distressed Complainants

Complainants who arrive angry, tearful, or otherwise emotionally distressed require a particular set of de-escalation skills. The officer should remain calm and keep their own voice tone low and steady, since an escalated tone from the officer will almost always escalate the complainant further in return. Acknowledging the complainant's feelings — for instance, recognising aloud that a long delay in receiving a pension is genuinely distressing — does not require the officer to concede any disputed fact about the case, and this distinction should be practised until it becomes natural. Offering a realistic timeline for what happens next, rather than a vague reassurance, helps convert distress into a manageable expectation. Where a complainant's distress escalates beyond what the officer can appropriately manage alone, a supervisor should be involved promptly rather than allowing the situation to deteriorate.

Particular care is required with complainants presenting trauma-related distress connected to displacement, loss of family members, or loss of livelihood — a pattern that officers in the North East Zone will encounter more often than colleagues elsewhere. Officers must recognise the limits of their own competence in such situations: their role is to receive and process the complaint professionally and compassionately, not to provide psychological counselling. Where a complainant's distress appears to go beyond what the complaint-handling process itself can address, the officer should, with sensitivity, encourage the complainant to seek appropriate support through the relevant welfare or humanitarian agencies, while continuing to process the complaint on its merits.

4.5 Communicating with Respondent Organisations

Official correspondence to MDAs, private companies and banks must be uniformly professional in tone, precise in content, and firm in expectation. A well-constructed letter to a respondent states the specific allegation under investigation, identifies precisely what documents or written response are required, and sets a clear, reasonable deadline for compliance, consistent with the Commission's statutory power to compel the production of information. Vague requests ('please respond regarding the complaint against you') invite vague or delayed responses; specific requests ('please provide the complainant's full pension file, including contribution records from 2010 to date, within fourteen working days') invite specific, timely compliance.

4.6 Reporting Outcomes to Complainants

Every complainant is entitled, as a matter of the Commission's own professional standard, to a clear and timely communication of the status and outcome of their case — whether that outcome is a resolution in their favour, a resolution against their position, a referral to another body, or a finding that the complaint is inadmissible. In every case, the communication must include reasons, expressed in language the complainant can understand. Silence, or protracted delay in informing a complainant of progress or outcome, is itself a form of the very maladministration the Commission exists to correct, and officers must never allow their own workload pressures to translate into unexplained silence toward the people they serve.

4.7 Cross-Cultural and Multilingual Communication in the North East

The North East Zone is home to a wide range of languages and dialects — including Hausa, Kanuri, Fulfulde, Bura, Marghi, Tangale and many others — and officers cannot assume that every complainant is equally comfortable communicating in English. Where an officer shares a common local language with a complainant, using it can significantly ease the complainant's distress and improve the accuracy of the account recorded; where no common language exists, the officer should identify a trusted interpreter, ideally another member of staff rather than an unrelated third party who may compromise confidentiality, and should record on the file that an interpreter was used and by whom. Facilitators should also caution against a specific and common error: assuming that a complainant's difficulty with English reflects a lack of understanding of their own case, when in fact it usually reflects nothing more than a language barrier that professional practice can and should bridge.

4.8 Written Communication Standards

Every letter, memo or report an officer produces is, in effect, the Commission speaking on the page, and should meet a consistent standard regardless of who wrote it. Written communication should open by identifying the file reference and the subject matter clearly; state facts and requests in plain, unambiguous language, avoiding both unnecessary jargon and excessive informality; separate factual statements from the officer's own analysis or recommendation, so that the reader can distinguish between the two; and close with a clear statement of what is expected of the recipient and by what date. Facilitators should have participants critique sample letters — one overly technical and confusing, one overly casual and unprofessional — and jointly redraft each into a version that meets the standard described here.

Facilitator Activity / Case Scenario

- Role-play: A respondent MDA official becomes defensive and evasive when contacted about a complaint.

Practise assertive, professional follow-up without escalating conflict.

- Group discussion: Draft the opening two sentences of a letter to a complainant informing them their complaint has been resolved in their favour, and a second letter informing them the complaint is not admissible.
- Pair Exercise: One participant plays a complainant who is far more comfortable in a local language than in English; the other plays an officer who must ensure accurate, respectful communication, including arranging interpretation where needed.

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Explain, with an example, the difference between assertive and aggressive communication.
2. List three specific active listening behaviours an officer should demonstrate during a complaint interview.
3. How should an officer acknowledge a distressed complainant's feelings without conceding disputed facts?
4. What four things should a well-constructed letter to a respondent institution contain?
5. Why should an interpreter, where used, always be recorded on the case file?
6. Identify one common weakness in written communication and explain how to correct it.

Key Takeaways / Lecture Summary

- Assertive, respectful communication protects both the complainant's dignity and the Commission's authority.
- Active listening is the foundation of accurate case documentation.
- Silence or delay in communicating with complainants damages public trust in the Commission.
- Language barriers are a practical issue to be professionally bridged, not a reflection of a complainant's understanding of their own case.
- Every piece of written communication should separate fact from analysis and close with a clear, dated expectation of the recipient.

MODULE 5

Investigation Techniques, Evidence Gathering and Analysis

Duration	3 hours
Target Group	Investigation Officers (Public and Private Sector)
Expected Outcome	Participants plan and conduct a thorough, impartial investigation, gather admissible evidence, and arrive at a well-supported finding.

Lecture Note Overview

We now arrive at the technical heart of the Commission's work. Investigation is the process by which an officer moves from a bare allegation — what the complainant says happened — to an evidence-based finding of fact that can support a firm, defensible recommendation. This is the module in which the Commission's statutory powers, discussed in Module 1, become operational tools rather than abstract legal provisions. It is also the module in which the greatest technical demands are placed on the investigating officer, since a poorly planned or carelessly conducted investigation can produce a wrong finding just as easily as bias can. This lecture will take participants through the full arc of an investigation: planning, exercising statutory powers of access, gathering different categories of evidence, verifying and preserving what is gathered, and finally analysing the evidence to produce a sound, well-reasoned report — with particular attention to the specific evidentiary difficulties that arise when investigating cases in the North East Zone.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lecture/module, participants will be able to:

Develop a basic investigation plan for a registered complaint.

Apply the Commission's statutory powers of access to information and document production.

Gather, verify and preserve documentary and testimonial evidence.

Analyse findings impartially and draft a sound investigation report.

5.1 Principles of Impartial Investigation

The single most important discipline an investigating officer must master is impartiality. An investigation is impartial when it is conducted, and its findings are reached, without bias toward either the complainant or the respondent, and without any preconceived conclusion the officer is merely seeking to justify. This distinction matters enormously in practice: the officer's role is that of a neutral fact-finder, not an advocate for the complainant who brought the case, however sympathetic the complainant's circumstances may be, and not a defender of the respondent institution, however senior or well-regarded its officials may be. Facilitators should stress that impartiality is not the same as detachment or coldness — an officer can be compassionate toward a distressed complainant while still holding the evidence to a consistent, neutral standard.

5.2 Planning the Investigation

No investigation should begin without a clear, if brief, plan. The first step is to review the complaint file thoroughly and reduce the grievance to one or more precise, testable allegations — a vague sense that ‘the ministry treated me unfairly’ must be converted into a specific, checkable proposition, such as ‘the ministry failed to process the complainant’s retirement benefits within the statutory or customary period, without lawful justification.’ The second step is to identify the specific respondent office or individual, and, critically, the custodian of the records or information relevant to the allegation — in a large MDA, this may not be the most senior official but a records or personnel officer with direct custody of the relevant file. The third step is to determine, in advance, what documents will be needed, which witnesses (if any) should be interviewed, and whether a site visit is required, particularly for community, land, or resettlement-related complaints. The fourth step is to set a realistic investigation timeline, consistent with the case management standards discussed in Module 6, so that the investigation does not drift indefinitely.

5.3 Exercising Statutory Powers of Access

The Commission’s investigative authority would be of little practical use if it depended entirely on the voluntary cooperation of respondents. For this reason, the Commission’s Act grants its officers the power to access information and to compel the production of documents from MDAs, private companies and banks. In practice, this power should be exercised through a formal, written request that specifies precisely what is required and sets a clear, reasonable deadline for compliance — consistent with the standards for respondent correspondence discussed in Module 4. Where a respondent fails to comply within the stated deadline, the officer should escalate through a firm follow-up communication, and, where non-compliance persists or is deliberately obstructive, should consider invoking the offences and penalties provisions discussed in Module 2, including reporting an individually obstructive officer for disciplinary action where this is warranted.

5.4 Evidence Gathering Techniques

Investigation draws on three broad categories of evidence, each requiring a different gathering technique.

Documentary Evidence

Documentary evidence includes official letters, internal memos, circulars and policy documents that establish what procedure ought to have been followed; personnel, pension and payroll records that establish what actually happened to a particular individual’s entitlement; bank statements, transaction records and account correspondence in financial complaints; and land, resettlement and compensation records in community-related complaints. Officers should always request original or certified documents where possible, and should note carefully where only copies or secondary evidence are available, and why.

Testimonial Evidence

Testimonial evidence is gathered through structured interviews with the complainant, the respondent, and any relevant witnesses, following the active listening and interview techniques discussed in Module 4. Every material statement obtained should be reduced to writing, dated, and signed by the person giving it, so that the account cannot later be disputed or altered.

Site Verification

Where the nature of the complaint warrants it — particularly in community, land, and resettlement-related complaints common in the North East Zone — a physical inspection of the relevant premises, land, or project site

can provide evidence that no document or interview can substitute for. Site visits should be planned in advance, conducted with appropriate security awareness, and documented with notes and, where feasible and appropriate, photographs.

5.5 Verifying and Preserving Evidence

Evidence is only as useful as the confidence that can be placed in its authenticity and integrity. Every item of evidence gathered must be dated, clearly referenced to the case file it belongs to, and stored securely, whether in physical or electronic form. Officers must maintain a clear record of the chain of custody for original documents — who obtained the document, from whom, and when — and must never alter, annotate over, or otherwise compromise the integrity of any original record obtained in the course of investigation.

5.6 Analysis and Report Writing

Once the relevant evidence has been gathered, the officer's task shifts from fact-finding to analysis. A sound investigation report follows a consistent structure: it states the allegation precisely, sets out the evidence considered (both documentary and testimonial), presents the findings of fact that the officer draws from that evidence, offers the officer's analysis connecting the evidence to the allegation, and concludes with a clear, justified recommendation. Throughout, the report must remain strictly factual and concise, avoiding speculation, editorialising, or conclusions that outrun what the evidence actually supports. A well-written report should be capable of persuading a reader who was not present for any part of the investigation that the officer's conclusion is the only reasonable one available on the evidence gathered.

5.7 Investigation Challenges Specific to the North East

Investigating officers in the North East Zone must be prepared to encounter evidentiary conditions rarely faced elsewhere in the country. Records may have been lost or destroyed where local government secretariats or institutional archives were affected by insurgent activity. Witnesses who could otherwise corroborate a complainant's account may have relocated, sometimes across state or even national borders, and may be difficult to trace. Physical access to a site relevant to a complaint may be constrained by prevailing security conditions. Facilitators should discuss adaptive strategies for these conditions: reliance on secondary evidence such as sworn affidavits, corroborating testimony from community or religious leaders, salary or contribution records held by third parties such as banks, and, where appropriate, coordination with security agencies to facilitate safe access. None of these adaptations lower the standard of evidence the Commission requires — they simply require greater investigative persistence and creativity in reaching that standard.

5.8 Interviewing Techniques in Depth

A structured interview is one of the investigating officer's most valuable tools, and it is a skill that improves markedly with deliberate practice. An effective interview typically opens by putting the interviewee at ease and explaining the purpose and process of the discussion; proceeds through open-ended questions that allow the interviewee to give their account in their own words before narrowing to specific, clarifying questions; avoids leading questions that suggest the answer the officer expects to hear; and closes by summarising back what has been said, giving the interviewee an opportunity to correct or add to the record before it is finalised and signed. Officers should interview the complainant, the respondent, and any relevant witnesses separately wherever practicable, to avoid one account being influenced by another, and should take contemporaneous notes rather than relying on memory to reconstruct the interview afterward.

5.9 Common Investigation Pitfalls

Certain errors recur often enough across investigations to merit explicit attention. These include confirmation bias, in which an officer forms an early view of what happened and then unconsciously gathers only the evidence that supports it while overlooking evidence that contradicts it; over-reliance on a single source of evidence, such as accepting a respondent's written explanation without seeking any independent corroboration; scope creep, in which an investigation drifts into unrelated matters not actually raised in the complaint; and simple delay, in which an investigation that could reasonably be concluded within the set timeline is allowed to drift for lack of active follow-up. Facilitators should ask participants to share, anonymously if preferred, an investigation pitfall they have personally observed or experienced, as a basis for frank group discussion.

Facilitator Activity / Case Scenario

- Case Scenario: Pension records for a retired teacher in Yobe State were destroyed when the local government secretariat was affected by insurgent activity. As lead investigator, outline your evidence-gathering plan using secondary sources.
- Group exercise: Draft a one-page investigation report structure for a complaint against a bank for unauthorised account deductions.
- Role-play: Conduct a short structured interview with a respondent official who is reluctant to answer directly, applying the technique in Section 5.8 without becoming confrontational.

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Explain the difference between impartiality and detachment in the context of investigation.
2. List the four steps involved in planning an investigation.
3. Name the three broad categories of evidence an investigating officer may gather, with one example of each.
4. What adaptive strategies can an officer use when original records have been lost due to displacement or conflict?
5. Why should complainants, respondents and witnesses generally be interviewed separately?
6. Describe confirmation bias and explain one practical step an officer can take to guard against it.

Key Takeaways / Lecture Summary

- Impartiality is the foundation of the Commission's credibility as Ombudsman.
- Statutory powers of access must be exercised formally, firmly and within reasonable timelines.
- Investigation methods must adapt to the evidentiary challenges peculiar to the North East, without compromising rigour.
- A well-structured interview, conducted separately with each party, produces more reliable evidence than an unplanned conversation.
- Confirmation bias, single-source reliance, scope creep and drift are avoidable pitfalls, not inevitable features of investigation.

MODULE 6

Case Management: Tracking, Timelines and File Administration

Duration	2.5 hours
Target Group	Investigation, Registry and Zonal Coordination Officers
Expected Outcome	Participants manage case files efficiently from registration to closure, meeting set timelines and reporting standards.

Lecture Note Overview

A brilliant investigation can still fail the complainant if the case in which it sits is poorly managed — lost in a backlog, left untracked for months, or closed without proper record of what was done and why. Case management is the administrative discipline that holds together everything covered in the preceding modules: it is what ensures that a complaint received professionally at intake, and investigated rigorously, actually reaches a timely, documented, and monitored conclusion. This lecture presents case management as a lifecycle with defined stages, each with its own standards, and introduces the practical tools — timelines, tracking sheets, and reporting formats — that officers and zonal coordinators use to keep that lifecycle moving.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lecture/module, participants will be able to:

Apply the Commission's case lifecycle stages from intake to closure.

Use standardised case tracking and file administration tools.

Set and monitor realistic timelines for each stage of a case.

Prepare periodic case status and statistical reports.

6.1 The Case Lifecycle

Every complaint that enters the Commission's system passes, in principle, through the same sequence of stages, and understanding this lifecycle is the starting point for effective case management. The sequence begins with registration and acknowledgement, covered in detail in Module 3, followed by classification and assignment to an investigating officer, consistent with the categories discussed in Module 2. A preliminary review then determines admissibility — whether the matter properly falls within the Commission's jurisdiction. Once admitted, the case proceeds to investigation and evidence gathering, as detailed in Module 5, followed by analysis, findings and recommendation. The outcome is then communicated to both the complainant and the respondent, following the standards set out in Module 4. Where the outcome requires action by the respondent, the Commission monitors compliance with its recommendations before the case can properly be closed. Finally, the case file is formally closed and archived. Facilitators should stress that skipping or rushing any one of these stages — for example, closing a case without confirming that a recommended pension payment was actually made — undermines the value of every stage that preceded it.

6.2 File Administration Standards

Every case handled by the Commission must be represented by a single, complete file — whether maintained physically, electronically, or both — containing the original complaint, all correspondence sent and received, all evidence gathered during investigation, internal memos and notes, the investigation report, and the record of case closure. A file that is scattered across loose papers, unfiled correspondence, and an officer's personal memory is not a properly administered file, however diligent that officer's actual work may have been. Files must be indexed in a manner that allows any authorised officer, not only the one who originally handled the case, to reconstruct the full history of the matter, and must be stored securely, accessible only to officers with a legitimate need to consult them.

6.3 Setting and Monitoring Timelines

Timelines exist to ensure that the Commission's stated commitment to speedy resolution is not merely aspirational. Facilitators should present indicative timelines for each stage of the case lifecycle — for instance, acknowledgement of a complaint within a small, fixed number of working days of receipt; issuance of the first formal request for information to a respondent within a similarly short period; and a target overall duration distinguishing straightforward cases (where documents and facts are readily available) from complex cases (such as those requiring extensive investigation, multiple respondents, or site visits). The Case Status Tracking Sheet provided as Appendix B to this manual is the principal tool for monitoring these timelines in practice, allowing an officer or coordinator to see, at a glance, which cases in a given caseload are approaching or have exceeded their target timeline, and therefore require urgent attention.

6.4 Managing Caseload and Prioritisation

In practice, no officer or zonal office has unlimited capacity, and prioritisation decisions must be made honestly and transparently rather than by default or convenience. Facilitators should guide participants through a prioritisation framework that gives appropriate weight to cases involving particularly vulnerable complainants — elderly pensioners, persons with disability, and displaced persons whose hardship is often compounded by delay — alongside cases that are objectively urgent in nature and cases already at risk of exceeding their set timeline. Prioritising some cases must never mean abandoning others; every case in the caseload remains entitled to eventual, fair attention, and prioritisation is a matter of sequencing effort, not of selective justice.

6.5 Reporting and Statistics

Officers and zonal coordinators are required to maintain accurate, up-to-date statistics of complaints received, resolved, pending and referred within their area of responsibility. These statistics feed into the Commission's broader practice of publishing complaint statistics as part of its transparency and public accountability obligations, and must therefore be accurate rather than merely convenient. Periodic reports — typically monthly or as directed — must be submitted to Headquarters summarising caseload movement, ageing cases, and any systemic issues observed (for example, a pattern of non-compliance by a particular MDA, which may itself warrant a pro-active investigation).

6.6 Digital and Physical Recordkeeping

Good case management requires disciplined recordkeeping practices for both physical case files and any electronic case management system in use. Physical files should be stored in a manner that protects them from loss, damage, or unauthorised access. Electronic records should be backed up regularly, with particular attention to safeguarding

against loss of data given the security conditions prevailing in parts of the North East Zone, where an office relocation or disruption could otherwise result in the permanent loss of case history if adequate backup practices are not followed.

6.7 Escalation Procedures for Non-Compliant Respondents

Case management is not complete once a recommendation is issued — an officer must actively monitor whether the respondent complies within the stated timeline. Where a respondent fails to comply or fails even to respond, a structured escalation sequence should be followed rather than allowing the file to stall indefinitely: a formal written reminder restating the original request and a fresh, firm deadline; escalation to the respondent's supervising authority or head of institution where the initial contact proves unresponsive; and, where non-compliance persists, formal escalation within the Commission for consideration of the offences and penalties provisions discussed in Module 2, or publication of the matter consistent with the Commission's mandate to make public reports. Each step of this sequence, and the date it was taken, must be recorded on the case file.

6.8 Quality Assurance and Periodic File Review

Beyond the handling of any single file, a well-run office builds in periodic, independent review of its overall caseload. A supervisor or Zonal Coordinator should sample-review a portion of closed and open files regularly to confirm that intake forms are complete, that timelines are being respected, that correspondence is professional and properly filed, and that closed files contain a documented outcome and, where applicable, evidence of compliance monitoring. This kind of quality assurance is not a search for fault but a routine safeguard, in the same way a pilot runs a pre-flight checklist regardless of experience — its purpose is to catch small inconsistencies before they become systemic weaknesses.

Facilitator Activity / Case Scenario

- Using the Case Status Tracking Sheet template (Appendix B), participants update a simulated caseload of ten (10) files at different stages and identify which cases are at risk of exceeding timelines.
- Group discussion: How should a Zonal Coordinator prioritise a caseload that includes 40 pension complaints, 5 urgent community land disputes, and 12 banking complaints, with limited investigating officers?
- Exercise: A respondent MDA has not replied to two written reminders regarding a recommendation issued ten weeks ago. As the assigned officer, draft the next step in the escalation sequence.

Self-Assessment Questions

1. List, in sequence, the eight stages of the case lifecycle.
2. Why must a case never be closed without confirming compliance with the Commission's recommendation?
3. Name three factors that should inform how a coordinator prioritises a large caseload.
4. Why is reliable backup of electronic case records especially important in the North East Zone?
5. Outline the escalation sequence to be followed when a respondent fails to comply with a recommendation.
6. What is the purpose of periodic, independent file review, and who should ordinarily carry it out?

Key Takeaways / Lecture Summary

- A well-managed case file is the Commission's institutional memory and its defence in the event of scrutiny.
- Timelines must be realistic but firmly monitored — delay is itself a form of injustice to the complainant.
- Accurate statistics support the Commission's transparency and public reporting obligations.
- Non-compliance by a respondent should trigger a structured, documented escalation sequence, not an indefinitely stalled file.
- Periodic, independent file review catches small inconsistencies before they harden into systemic weaknesses.

MODULE 7

Alternative Dispute Resolution, Mediation and Negotiation

Duration	2.5 hours
Target Group	Investigation and Community Relations Officers
Expected Outcome	Participants apply mediation and negotiation techniques to achieve amicable, timely resolution of complaints where appropriate.

Lecture Note Overview

Not every complaint that reaches the Commission needs to travel the full, formal path of investigation, findings and recommendation described in Module 5. Many grievances — particularly those involving an ongoing relationship between the parties, such as a community and a company operating in its midst, or a customer and a bank they continue to use — are resolved more quickly, more durably, and with less residual bitterness through facilitated dialogue than through a formal adversarial process. This lecture introduces Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), and specifically mediation and negotiation, as a complementary tool available to the Commission's officers, to be used with judgment about when it is, and is not, the appropriate approach.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lecture/module, participants will be able to:

Distinguish between investigation-based resolution and mediated/negotiated resolution.

Apply core mediation skills to bring complainant and respondent to an agreed resolution.

Draft a clear, enforceable terms-of-settlement record.

Recognise cases unsuitable for mediation and requiring full investigation instead.

7.1 The Role of ADR in the Commission's Work

The Commission's core statutory power is investigative, and nothing in this lecture displaces that. However, experience across Ombudsman institutions worldwide, and within the Commission itself, shows that a significant proportion of complaints — particularly community relations matters, minor banking disputes, and employment-related grievances — can be resolved efficiently through facilitated dialogue between the complainant and the respondent, without the need for a full, adversarial-style investigation. Where the underlying facts are not seriously in dispute, and where the parties have an interest in an ongoing relationship (a community that will continue to host a company's operations, or a customer who will continue to bank with an institution), a mediated resolution can be reached faster, at lower cost, and with a stronger sense of ownership by both parties over the outcome than a formal investigative finding could achieve.

7.2 Principles of Mediation

Mediation, properly understood, rests on five interlocking principles that facilitators should explain carefully, since misunderstanding any one of them undermines the entire process. Voluntariness means that both parties must agree to participate in mediation; no party can be compelled into a mediated settlement against their will, though

an officer may certainly invite and encourage both parties to attempt it. Neutrality means that the officer conducting the mediation must not favour either party, and must be, and be seen to be, without any personal stake in the outcome. Confidentiality means that what is said during mediation discussions is not later used against a party should mediation fail and the matter proceed to formal investigation. A focus on interests, rather than rigid positions, means that the mediating officer helps the parties look beyond their stated demands to the underlying needs those demands are meant to satisfy — a community demanding a specific cash sum, for example, may have an underlying interest in restored access to farmland that could be satisfied in more than one way. Finally, self-determination means that it is the parties themselves, not the mediating officer, who decide the terms of any resolution; the officer facilitates agreement but does not impose it.

7.3 Stages of a Mediation Session

A well-conducted mediation session follows a predictable structure, and facilitators should take participants through each stage with a worked example. The session opens with the officer setting ground rules and explaining the process to both parties, so that neither is left uncertain about what is about to happen or why. Each party is then given an uninterrupted opportunity to state the issues from their own perspective. The officer then works to identify common ground and the underlying interests beneath each party's stated position — often revealing that the parties want more of the same outcome than their initial demands suggested. Options for resolution are then generated and evaluated jointly, with the officer encouraging creative solutions rather than simply splitting differences. Once agreement is reached, its terms are carefully documented in a written record. Finally, the officer follows up after an appropriate interval to confirm that the agreed terms have actually been complied with — an agreement that is never implemented is no resolution at all.

7.4 Negotiation Skills for Officers

Even outside a formal mediation session, officers regularly negotiate on behalf of the process itself — for instance, when persuading a respondent MDA, bank or company to agree to a particular remedy. The basic principles of what is sometimes called principled negotiation are useful here: separate the people from the problem, so that personal friction with a difficult official does not derail progress on the substantive issue; focus on interests rather than fixed positions, seeking to understand what each side actually needs rather than simply what they initially demand; generate options that could produce mutual gain rather than assuming the dispute is a zero-sum contest; and, wherever possible, ground the negotiation in objective criteria — the applicable pension regulation, the terms of an existing contract, or established industry practice — rather than in raw bargaining power.

7.5 Community-Level Dispute Resolution in the North East

Community relations complaints in the North East Zone frequently intersect with existing traditional and community leadership structures, which often already command significant trust and authority among the parties involved. Facilitators should discuss how officers can engage such structures respectfully and constructively — for example, inviting a respected traditional or religious leader to be present during a community mediation session, where this is welcomed by the parties — while being careful never to allow such engagement to displace the Commission's own statutory authority and independence, or to be used by either party as a means of pressuring the other outside the fair process the Commission is meant to guarantee.

7.6 Recognising the Limits of Mediation

Mediation is a powerful tool, but it is not universally appropriate, and part of an officer's professional judgment lies in recognising when it should not be attempted, or should be abandoned in favour of formal investigation. Cases

involving suspected criminal conduct, gross and deliberate abuse of office, or a respondent's demonstrated refusal to engage in the mediation process in good faith should be escalated promptly to full investigation rather than allowed to linger in an unproductive mediation attempt. An officer who insists on pursuing mediation in such circumstances, out of a desire to avoid a more demanding investigation, is failing the complainant just as surely as one who investigates a case that could have been resolved amicably in a single facilitated session.

7.7 Managing Power Imbalances in Mediation

A genuine, durable settlement is unlikely where one party dominates the process and the other feels unable to speak freely — a common risk when mediating between, for example, an individual complainant and a large employer, or a small community group and a well-resourced company. The mediating officer has a responsibility to actively manage this imbalance: ensuring both parties have equal, uninterrupted time to state their position; gently but firmly checking any attempt by one party to intimidate, talk over, or dismiss the other; and, where a complainant appears unable to represent their own interests effectively, permitting them to be accompanied by a trusted family member or community representative. Neutrality does not mean passivity — an officer who allows a power imbalance to distort the process has, in effect, taken a side.

7.8 Documenting and Enforcing Settlement Agreements

A mediated agreement that exists only as a verbal understanding is of little practical value once the parties leave the room. Every successful mediation must conclude with a written Terms of Settlement record, specifying exactly what each party has agreed to do, by what date, and how compliance will be verified. Both parties should sign the record, and a copy should be retained on the case file. The mediating officer's responsibility does not end at signature: the file must be diarised for a follow-up check on the agreed compliance date, and if a party fails to honour the agreement, the matter should generally revert to formal investigation, since a broken settlement is itself evidence relevant to the underlying complaint.

Facilitator Activity / Case Scenario

- Role-play: Mediate a dispute between a community group and a private company over unpaid compensation for land used for a development project, with participants rotating through the roles of mediator, complainant representative and respondent representative.
- Draft a one-page Terms of Settlement record for the mediated case above.
- Group discussion: In the role-play above, the company representative repeatedly interrupts and speaks over the community representative. As mediator, how do you intervene without appearing to take sides?

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Name and briefly explain the five principles underlying mediation.
2. Describe the six stages of a well-conducted mediation session in order.
3. Give one example of how an officer might uncover a party's underlying interest behind a fixed demand.
4. Identify two categories of case that should be escalated to full investigation rather than pursued through mediation.

5. Describe two practical steps a mediating officer can take to manage a power imbalance between the parties.
6. What must a Terms of Settlement record contain, and what should happen if a party fails to honour it?

Key Takeaways / Lecture Summary

- Mediation is a tool for efficient resolution, not a substitute for investigation where the facts require it.
- The officer's neutrality is the single most important asset in any mediated process.
- Community-sensitive engagement strengthens the Commission's legitimacy in the North East.
- Actively managing power imbalances between parties is part of neutrality, not a departure from it.
- A settlement is only as strong as its written record and the follow-up that confirms it was honoured.

MODULE 8

Professional Ethics, Confidentiality, Reporting and Accountability

Duration	2 hours
Target Group	All staff cadres
Expected Outcome	Participants internalise and consistently apply the ethical standards, confidentiality obligations and accountability mechanisms expected of the Commission's officers.

Lecture Note Overview

We close this workshop where every genuine professional formation must ultimately arrive: at the question of character. Every technical skill covered in the preceding seven modules — correct classification, professional intake, effective communication, rigorous investigation, disciplined case management, and skilled mediation — can be undermined in a single moment by a lapse of integrity: a leaked file, an undisclosed conflict of interest, a bribe quietly accepted, a victimised complainant left unprotected. The Commission's authority as Nigeria's Ombudsman is not backed by an army or a police force; it is backed almost entirely by public trust in the personal integrity of its officers. This final lecture is therefore, in a sense, the most important one in the manual, because without it, everything else taught this week rests on an unstable foundation.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lecture/module, participants will be able to:

Explain the ethical obligations of an officer of the Commission.

Apply confidentiality rules to complaint files and information at all stages.

Identify and appropriately manage conflicts of interest.

Describe the internal reporting and disciplinary mechanisms applicable to erring officers.

8.1 The Ethical Foundation of the Commission's Work

As Ombudsman, the Commission's moral authority rests entirely on the integrity of its officers, individually and collectively. Every one of the Commission's core values — Social Justice, Efficient Service Delivery, Integrity, Accountability, Efficiency and Diligence — is, at its heart, an ethical commitment rather than a mere operational target. An officer who processes cases quickly but carelessly has failed Efficiency in its true sense; an officer who is diligent in pursuing cases that interest them but neglectful of others has failed Diligence and Social Justice together. Facilitators should emphasise that ethics, in this sense, is not a separate topic bolted onto the end of the workshop — it is the thread that has run through every module already covered, now made explicit.

8.2 Confidentiality Obligations

Confidentiality is both a statutory obligation and an ethical one. Complaint files, the evidence gathered during investigation, and the very identity of a complainant must be protected from unauthorised disclosure at every stage of the case lifecycle — reception, investigation, mediation, and final reporting alike. This obligation is absolute in its application to unauthorised third parties: officers must never discuss an ongoing case with family

members, friends, or the media, however innocuous the conversation may seem, and however much social or professional pressure exists to share information about a high-profile or locally well-known case. Facilitators should discuss realistic scenarios in which this pressure is likely to arise — for instance, being asked informally by a community elder about the status of a neighbour's pension complaint — and rehearse firm, polite ways of declining to disclose such information while still treating the person asking with respect.

8.3 Impartiality and Conflict of Interest

An officer must never handle a matter in which they have a personal, family, financial, or community interest without first disclosing that interest to a supervisor and, where appropriate, being reassigned away from the case. Officers must similarly never accept gifts, favours, or inducements of any kind from a complainant or a respondent, regardless of how the gesture is framed by the giver — as gratitude, as customary courtesy, or as a small token of no real value. Facilitators should give particular and honest attention to the heightened risk of undisclosed conflicts of interest in the North East Zone, where officers frequently share close community, ethnic, or kinship ties with parties to a dispute they may be assigned to investigate. This is not a hypothetical risk to be mentioned in passing; it is one of the most realistic ethical challenges officers in this zone will actually face, and the correct response — immediate, voluntary disclosure, however inconvenient — must be practised until it becomes an automatic reflex rather than a difficult decision made under pressure.

8.4 Protection from Victimisation

The Commission's Act protects complainants and witnesses from victimisation for the simple act of having lodged, or cooperated with, a complaint. This protection matters little on paper if officers are not alert, in practice, to signs that a respondent institution or individual is retaliating against a complainant — for example, through unwarranted disciplinary action against a complaining employee, or subtle social or economic pressure against a complaining community member. Officers must treat any credible indication of victimisation as a serious matter in its own right, to be promptly reported and, where necessary, investigated alongside the original complaint, rather than dismissed as a separate and lesser concern.

8.5 Reporting Erring Officers and Internal Accountability

Just as the Commission's mandate includes the duty to report erring officers of respondent institutions for disciplinary action, the Commission holds its own officers to no lesser a standard. Facilitators should outline clearly the internal channels available for reporting suspected misconduct by a colleague — whether that misconduct involves a breach of confidentiality, an undisclosed conflict of interest, solicitation of a bribe, or neglect of duty — and the standard of evidence expected when making such a report: specific, factual, and free of personal animus or unsubstantiated rumour. An institution that vigorously investigates the conduct of others while shielding its own erring staff from scrutiny quickly loses the moral authority on which its entire mandate depends.

8.6 Professional Conduct in Public-Facing Duties

Every officer represents the Commission's institutional credibility at all times, not only when formally on duty behind a desk. Standards of dress, punctuality, courtesy, and general conduct during community sensitisation events, site visits, and public engagements all form part of the impression the public forms of the Commission as a whole. An officer who arrives late to a community sensitisation meeting, or who is dismissive of questions from community members during a site visit, does measurable damage to public confidence that no amount of good work back at the office can fully repair.

8.7 Workshop Close-Out and Commitment

This final session of the workshop is deliberately reflective rather than purely instructional. Having covered the Commission's mandate, the nature and jurisdiction of complaints, professional reception and intake, effective communication, investigation technique, case management, and alternative dispute resolution, participants are now asked to translate this learning into specific, personal commitments they will carry back to their respective duty stations across the North East Zone. Facilitators should guide this closing reflection carefully, ensuring that commitments made are concrete and capable of being followed up, rather than vague statements of good intention.

8.8 Protection for Officers Who Report Wrongdoing

An officer who, in good faith, reports suspected misconduct by a colleague or a respondent official is exercising precisely the accountability the Commission's mandate demands, and should never suffer professional disadvantage for doing so. Management at every level — Headquarters, Zonal and State Office — has a corresponding responsibility to protect the identity of an officer who makes such a report wherever possible, to investigate the substance of the report rather than the motives of the person who raised it, and to guard against any form of retaliation, whether overt or subtle, against the reporting officer. Facilitators should reassure participants that raising a genuine concern through the correct internal channel is an act of professionalism, not disloyalty.

8.9 Building a Personal Code of Conduct

Institutional codes of ethics matter, but they become real only when an individual officer translates them into a personal, working code of conduct — a small set of self-imposed rules that guide behaviour even when no one else is watching. Facilitators should invite each participant to draft, in their own words, four or five personal conduct commitments specific to their own role and duty station: for example, a commitment to disclose any personal connection to a case within a stated number of days of assignment, or a commitment to never discuss a case outside the office regardless of who is asking. A personal code of conduct, written in the officer's own hand and revisited periodically, tends to be far more durable than a generic institutional rule read once and forgotten.

Facilitator Activity / Case Scenario

- Ethical Dilemma Discussion: An investigating officer discovers that the respondent in a pension case is a close relative of the complainant's community leader. What is the correct course of action?
- Individual Exercise: Each participant writes down three personal commitments to be reviewed by their Zonal Coordinator thirty (30) days after the workshop.
- Group Discussion: A junior officer confides that a senior colleague appears to be favouring a particular respondent company. What internal channel should they use, and what protection should they expect?

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Explain why confidentiality is described in this lecture as both a statutory and an ethical obligation.
2. What is the correct first step an officer should take upon discovering a personal or community connection to a case assigned to them?

3. What standard of evidence is expected when reporting suspected misconduct by a colleague?
4. Give one example of how an officer's public-facing conduct, outside formal case work, affects the Commission's credibility.
5. What protection should an officer who reports wrongdoing in good faith be able to expect from management?
6. Draft two personal conduct commitments you would include in your own working code of conduct.

Key Takeaways / Lecture Summary

- Confidentiality and impartiality are not optional courtesies — they are statutory and ethical obligations.
- Conflicts of interest must be disclosed and managed proactively, especially given close community ties in the North East.
- The Commission's credibility as Ombudsman depends on every officer's personal integrity, every day.
- An officer who reports genuine wrongdoing in good faith must be protected, not penalised.
- A personal, written code of conduct helps translate institutional ethics into consistent, everyday behaviour.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Complaint Intake Form (Specimen)

File/Case Reference No.	
Date Received	
Channel (Walk-in / Post / Email / Phone / Online Portal)	
Complainant Full Name	
Complainant Contact Address / Phone / Email	
Respondent Name / Organisation	
Category (MDA / Pension / Education / Private Company / Bank / Community)	
Summary of Complaint	
Supporting Documents Attached	
Receiving Officer Name & Signature	
Assigned Investigating Officer	
Acknowledgement Issued to Complainant (Y/N, Date)	

Appendix B: Case Status Tracking Sheet (Specimen)

S/N	File Ref.	Complainant	Category	Date Registered	Officer Assigned	Status	Target Closure Date

Appendix C: Sample Investigation Report Outline

1. Case Reference and Date of Report
2. Summary of Complaint / Allegation
3. Parties Involved (Complainant and Respondent)
4. Methodology of Investigation
5. Evidence Considered (Documentary and Testimonial)
6. Findings of Fact
7. Analysis
8. Recommendation
9. Officer's Name, Signature and Date

Appendix D: Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Definition
Complainant	The person or body lodging a grievance with the Commission.
Respondent	The MDA, company, bank, community body or individual against whom a complaint is made.
Maladministration	Improper, inefficient, or unjust administrative conduct or decision-making by a public or private body.
Admissibility	Whether a complaint falls within the Commission's mandate and jurisdiction.
Mediation	A voluntary, facilitated process in which a neutral officer helps parties reach a mutually acceptable resolution.
Case Closure	The formal conclusion of a case file following resolution, referral, or a determination of inadmissibility.
ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution — methods of resolving disputes outside formal investigation, including mediation and negotiation.

Appendix E: Workshop Evaluation Form (Specimen)

Participants should rate each item on a scale of 1 (Poor) to 5 (Excellent) and provide comments where indicated.

- Relevance of workshop content to my daily duties
- Clarity of facilitation and presentation
- Usefulness of case scenarios and role-play exercises
- Quality of workshop materials (manual, templates, handouts)
- Adequacy of time allocated to each module
- Overall satisfaction with the workshop

Additional comments / suggestions for future training:

Appendix F: Commission Contact Information

Headquarters: 25 Aguiyi Ironsi Street, Maitama, Abuja, Nigeria

Telephone: +234 807 010 0580 / +234 209 700 0099

Email: complaint@pcc.gov.ng / info@pcc.gov.ng

Working Hours: Monday – Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

For a full list of State Office contacts across Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe, participants should consult the Commission's State Offices Contacts directory available at the Zonal Office.

Appendix G: Suggested Facilitator's Timetable (3-Day Format)

The schedule below is a suggested sequencing of the eight modules across a three-day workshop. Facilitators may adjust timing to suit local logistics, provided each module retains its full allotted contact hours.

Time	Activity
Day 1, 8:00 – 9:00	Registration, Opening Ceremony and Welcome Remarks
Day 1, 9:00 – 11:00	Module 1: Overview of the Commission — Mandate, Mission and Legal Framework
Day 1, 11:00 – 11:15	Tea Break
Day 1, 11:15 – 13:15	Module 2: Understanding Public Complaints — Nature, Categories and Jurisdiction
Day 1, 13:15 – 14:00	Lunch
Day 1, 14:00 – 16:30	Module 3: Professional Complaint Reception, Intake and Documentation
Day 1, 16:30 – 17:00	Daily Recap and Q&A
Day 2, 9:00 – 11:30	Module 4: Effective Communication and Complainant Relations
Day 2, 11:30 – 11:45	Tea Break
Day 2, 11:45 – 14:45	Module 5: Investigation Techniques, Evidence Gathering and Analysis
Day 2, 14:45 – 15:30	Lunch
Day 2, 15:30 – 17:00	Module 5 (continued): Practical Investigation Exercise
Day 3, 9:00 – 11:30	Module 6: Case Management — Tracking, Timelines and File Administration
Day 3, 11:30 – 11:45	Tea Break
Day 3, 11:45 – 14:15	Module 7: Alternative Dispute Resolution, Mediation and Negotiation
Day 3, 14:15 – 15:00	Lunch
Day 3, 15:00 – 17:00	Module 8: Professional Ethics, Confidentiality, Reporting and Accountability
Day 3, 17:00 – 17:30	Workshop Evaluation and Closing Ceremony

Appendix H: Recommended Reference Materials

Facilitators and participants seeking to deepen their understanding of the topics covered in this manual may wish to consult:

- The Public Complaints Commission Act and subsidiary regulations
- The Commission's published Annual Reports and complaint statistics
- The Freedom of Information Act, 2011, where relevant to requests for information from MDAs
- The Pension Reform Act, for cases involving pension and gratuity complaints
- Basic texts on Alternative Dispute Resolution and mediation practice
- The Commission's internal Standard Operating Procedures and case management guidelines, available from the Zonal Office

