

Office Complaints Procedure
Legal Practice
2024

Houthoff aims to provide excellent service. In the unlikely event that you are dissatisfied with the work performed by any of our lawyers or with an invoice you have received from us, please inform us of your complaint. We will handle your complaint and strive to resolve it within a reasonable period in accordance with the procedure laid down in this Office Complaints Procedure – Legal Practice.

1. Definitions

Lawyer	The lawyer associated with Houthoff or the person working under the responsibility of the lawyer in question;
Client	The recipient, whether or not represented, of Houthoff's services;
Houthoff	Houthoff Coöperatief U.A., Houthoff België B.V., Houthoff London LLP and Houthoff New York B.V.;
Office Complaints Procedure	The present complaints procedure setting out the procedure for handling Houthoff Clients' Complaints as referred to in the Legal Profession Bye-law (<i>Verordening op de advocatuur</i>), as well as the procedure for handling Debtors' Complaints within the meaning of the Wki;
Complaint	Every written expression of dissatisfaction from or on behalf of a Complainant to the Lawyer regarding (i) the formation and/or performance of a services agreement, (ii) the quality of services provided, (iii) the invoice amount and/or (iv) the performance or provision of extrajudicial debt collection services, other than a complaint as referred to in Section 4 of the Lawyers Act (<i>Advocatenwet</i>).
Complaints Officer	K.J.L. Verschoor, the lawyer currently designated by Houthoff to handle Complaints;
Complainant	Client or Debtor;
Debtor	A natural person residing in the Netherlands or a sole proprietorship or general partnership with its corporate seat in the Netherlands, regarding whom or which a Lawyer has performed extrajudicial debt collection services as referred to in the Wki;
Wki	The Payment Collection Services (Quality) Act (<i>Wet kwaliteit incassodienstverlening</i>), which entered into force on 1 April 2024.

2. Scope

- 2.1. This Office Complaints Procedure applies to every engagement letter between Houthoff and a Client as well as to all extrajudicial debt collection services performed by a Lawyer regarding a Debtor.
- 2.2. This Office Complaints Procedure does not apply to disputes about the merits of a debt collected or to be collected extrajudicially from a Debtor or about the conduct of a Houthoff Client.

3. Purposes

The purposes of this Office Complaints Procedure are as follows:

- 3.1. To lay down a procedure to resolve Complaints in a constructive manner within a reasonable period.
- 3.2. To lay down a procedure to identify the causes of the Complaints.
- 3.3. To improve the quality of Houthoff's services by means of complaints handling and complaints analysis.

4. Filing a Complaint

- 4.1. Complainants must file their Complaint within three months of the date that they became aware, or reasonably could have become aware, of the Lawyer's acts or omissions that gives rise to the Complaint.
- 4.2. If a Complaint is filed after the end of the aforementioned three-month period, the Complaints Officer can decide not to handle the Complaint.
- 4.3. In that case, the Complaints Officer will inform the Complainant as soon as possible after receiving the Complaint whether or not the Complaint will be handled.
- 4.4. Complainants must submit their Complaint to Houthoff in writing, for the attention of K.J.L. Verschoor, Complaints Officer, by sending an email to **kantoorklachtenregeling@houthoff.com**. Please include at least the following information in the Complaint:
 - (i) the Complainant's full first name and surname;
 - (ii) the Complainant's contact details (including email address, telephone number, address and, if applicable, Chamber of Commerce number);
 - (iii) the name of the Lawyer who is the subject of the Complaint;
 - (iv) a full description of the Lawyer's acts or omissions or the invoice that gave rise to the Complaint, if necessary including relevant documents or evidence;
 - (v) the Houthoff file number to which the Complaint relates;
 - (vi) the information that the Complaint should be handled in accordance with the Office Complaints Procedure; and
 - (vii) the date that the Complaint was filed and a signature.

- 4.5. If the Complaint does not meet the requirements stated in Article 4.3, the Complaints Officer will inform the Complainant accordingly after receiving the Complaint. In that case, the Complainant will be given an opportunity to supply the missing information, failing which the Complaints Officer will not handle the Complaint. In the latter case, the Complaints Officer will inform the Complainant in writing that the Complaint will not be handled.

5. Confirmation of receipt of the Complaint

- 5.1. The Complaints Officer will send the Complainant, within a reasonable period of receiving a complete Complaint – within two working days in the case of a Debtor – a confirmation of receipt of the Complaint. In addition, the Complainant will be provided with the Complaints Officer's contact details and information on the further course of the procedure in accordance with the Office Complaints Procedure.

6. Handling of the Complaint

- 6.1. The Complaints Officer will notify the Lawyer who is the subject of the Complaint in writing as soon as possible and give the Lawyer an opportunity to respond to the Complaint in writing.
- 6.2. The Complaints Officer will collect the information required for a proper, unbiased handling and assessment of the Complaint. The Complaints Officer will give the Complainant and the Lawyer an opportunity to give a further explanation and may request additional information.
- 6.3. If considered necessary by the Complaints Officer, or if one or both parties so wish, the parties will be invited to discuss the matter together at a location, day and time to be determined by the Complaints Officer.
- 6.4. The Complaints Officer can ask the two parties to give suggestions on how to resolve the Complaint. Based on all information collected, the Complaints Officer will present a proposal for a solution to the Complaint to both parties.
- 6.5. The two parties must respond in writing to the proposal for a solution to the Complaint, failing which the party in question will be considered to agree to the Complaints Officer's proposal for resolving the Complaint.
- 6.6. The decision on the Complaint will be notified to both parties in writing by the Complaints Officer.
- 6.7. Complaints will be handled with the utmost care and confidentiality.

7. Processing time

- 7.1. The Complaints Officer aims to resolve a Complaint to the Complainant's satisfaction within a month of receiving the complete Complaint. If a Complaint cannot be resolved within a month, the parties will be informed in writing of the reason for the delay and the period in which a decision will be given on the merits of the Complaint.

8. Complaints registration

- 8.1. All Complaints and their handling will be internally registered.

9. Dispute resolution

- 9.1. If a Complaint has not been resolved to the Complainant's satisfaction, the Complainant can submit it to the [Legal Practice Complaints Board \(Corporate\)](#) (*Geschillencommissie Advocatuur (Zakelijk)*, website in Dutch) or to the competent court in Amsterdam.
- 9.2. In deviation from the procedure laid down in this Office Complaints Procedure, the Complainant and Houthoff can jointly decide at any time not to pursue the handling of a Complaint, in which case the Complainant can submit it to the [Legal Practice Complaints Board \(Corporate\)](#) (*Geschillencommissie Advocatuur (Zakelijk)*, website in Dutch) or to the competent court in Amsterdam.

10. Miscellaneous

- 10.1. The Complainant does not owe Houthoff any compensation for the cost of handling the Complaint in accordance with this Office Complaints Procedure.
- 10.2. The Complaints Officer and the people involved will treat the Complaint filed and related information in confidence and will observe secrecy when handling the Complaint.