

# Charter of Consumer Rights and Statement of Consumer Responsibilities

**Introduction:**

Sohar International Bank SAOG (“Sohar International”) believes that protection of Consumers of Financial Services and Products is an integral aspect of financial inclusion. This charter of Consumer Rights and Responsibilities was put in place by the Board of Sohar International to comply with applicable regulations, *including without limitation the Financial Consumer Protection Regulatory Framework issued by the Central Bank of Oman (“CBO”) pursuant to its circular BM 1184 dated the 30<sup>th</sup> of December 2021*, and reflects the Board’s commitment to financial inclusion in general and to consumer protection in particular. Further, the charter aims to specify, not only the rights of consumers of financial services and products, but also their responsibilities. The Charter applies to all products and services offered by the bank to consumers.

**Definition:**

For the purpose of this charter, the term ‘*Consumer of Financial Services and Products*’ and/or ‘Consumer’ is used to refer to a natural person, other than traders, who purchases financial services and products for their own private use and/or consumption.

**Consumer Rights:**

”Consumers’ as defined above, shall have the following rights:

➤ **Right to Fair Treatment:**

Sohar International believes that the consumer should not be unfairly discriminated against, on any grounds such as gender, age, religion, family name or physical ability when offering and delivering financial products and services.

Therefore; Sohar International:

1. Ensures that all consumer products and services offered are compliant with applicable laws and regulations.
2. Adopts and promotes sound and fair banking practices;  
Adopts and promotes transparency in all consumer transactions, including without limitation, by way of providing sufficient information to Consumers about products and services before their purchase by Consumers.
3. Highlights and explains key features of products and/or services to consumers in manner sufficient to enable such consumers make an informed decision as to whether they should buy the products/services or not.
4. Uses appropriate and practical communication tools to convey information about offered consumer products and services, including by written, oral and visual means of communication, where appropriate and practical.
5. Aims to advise Consumers about its basic service standards and provide them with sufficient advice to address their needs.
6. Promotes, and endeavours to maintain, a fair and equitable relationship with the Consumer.

Trains staff attending to Consumers, adequately and appropriately, so that such staff members attend to Consumers and their needs promptly and courteously.

Treats all Consumers fairly and not discriminate against any Consumer on grounds such as gender, age, religion, family name, literacy, economic status physical ability, etc. However; Sohar International may provide special Services, products or schemes,

specifically tailored for members of a specific category or group of consumers, with clear guidelines and rationales.

7. Encourages (a) consumers to raise any complaints they may have; (b) the management to timely respond to and aim to resolve genuine issues; and (c) monitors actions taken for response/resolution. Such complaints may be filed via email to the following email address: customerservice@soharinternational.com.

**Right to Transparency, Fair and Honest Dealing:**

Sohar International is committed to ensure that terms and conditions governing consumer transactions, including prices and charges, are documented in a transparent manner, plain, simple and concise language and are well communicated.

Therefore; Sohar International:

Is keen to ensure that the Consumer understands the relevant products/services, their terms and conditions and their expectations are fairly set with respect to the bank's products and services. To do so, Sohar International provides consumers, in advance and endeavours to explain to them, the terms and conditions and the key fact statement of Consumer Products and services.

This will be ensured at the time of applying for Consumer services and products.

- ✓ Communicates the schedule of service charges and other important Information regarding any charges and changes relating to Consumer products or services. This information is displayed through the bank's website and other modes of communication.
- ✓ Ensures that dealings with the Consumers are carried out in an ethical and transparent manner.
- ✓ Makes Consumers aware of key risks associated with Consumer products and services. Examples of the key risks are:
  - i. Possibility of revision of interest/profit/rental rates.
  - ii. Possibility of charging penal interest, late payment fee/late payment charity charges, other applicable charges for delayed payment of dues on account loans/Islamic financing/ credit card and other credit facilities.
  - iii. Applicability of service charges for Consumer products/services.
  - iv. Account Maintenance charges.
  - v. Surrender Charges for Insurance products features that may especially be of a disadvantage to the Consumer, including:
    - Terms and conditions to be satisfied for availing special features/services.
    - Applicability of some of the features may not be to all types of sub-products .i.e. Certain features may apply to one type of sub-product but not to other sub product type.

The above list is not an exhaustive list of all possible risks that would be associated to products/services provided by Sohar International. The detailed Risk and Features relating to the products/services are mentioned in the respective product/related documents and Key Fact Statements.

- ✓ Sohar International informs the Consumers of any change in the terms and conditions through appropriate means of communication well in advance of

such revised terms and conditions becoming effective or as may be agreed with the Consumer.

- ✓ Sohar International makes every effort to ensure that staff dealing in a particular products and services are properly trained to provide relevant information to Consumers in a correct, accurate, transparent and honest manner.
- ✓ Sohar International ensures to communicate to applicant Consumers within a reasonable period of time whether their application submitted for availing a products/services.
- ✓ The bank provides clear and conscious communication in cases of:
  - I. Suspension or discontinuation of products/services.
  - II. Relocation of branches.
  - III. Change in working hours.
  - IV. Change in bank's contact details.
  - V. Closure of a bank office or branch, with requisite advance notices.
  - VI. uses appropriate channels of communication, including the banks website, to ensure that relevant information on all changes are made known to the Consumer in advance;
- ✓ The bank advises the Consumer, about their rights and obligations (as required under applicable laws and regulations) at the time of selling the product/service, including the requirement to report critical incidents that Consumers may face, suspect or discover.
- ✓ The bank assists Consumers in managing their accounts in various ways, including by providing regular account statements, alerts, timely information about the product's performance, maturities...etc.

### **Right to Privacy Consumers:**

The Bank is committed to confidentiality of customer information and applies robust measures to ensure it complies with its legal and regulatory obligations with respect to confidentiality of customer information. Personal information given to the Bank are kept confidential and dealt with in line with applicable laws and regulations.

Consumers have the right to privacy, in line with applicable laws.

Therefore:

The bank treats Consumers' personal and financial information as private and confidential. Such information will not be disclosed unless the Consumer has authorized such disclosure or the disclosure is required by applicable laws or regulations and as instructed by the Central Bank of Oman, or if the customer gave a general consent to use of bank's advisements related to banking business.

### **Right to Suitability:**

In line with Sohar International's strategy and values, Consumer products and services are offered and designed based on the needs of the Consumers, post assessment and understanding of the Consumer's financial circumstances and needs in this ever changing world.

To ensure suitability of Consumer Products/service:

- a. The bank ensures that it has required approvals for Consumer product programs and policies for assessing suitability of products/services to Consumers.

- b. The bank endeavours to ensure that Consumer products or services respond to the Consumer's needs, financial standing and understanding based on the assessment made. The bank ensures that the Sales Staff are trained and authorised to sell Consumer products and services.
- c. The bank does not oblige Consumers to avail or purchase third-party products as a precondition for availing any services from the bank.
- d. The bank ensures that Consumer products or service, are in accordance with applicable laws and regulations; and
- e. The bank informs Consumers about their responsibility to promptly and accurately provide all relevant and information as may be required by the bank to determine suitability of Consumer products/services.

**Right to Consumer Complaints:**

The bank endeavours to put in place and facilitate easy and simple means of Consumer complaints against the Bank for early resolution. The complaint's process is prescribed in the website of the bank: [www.soharinternational.com](http://www.soharinternational.com).

Therefore; the bank:

- a. Deals sympathetically and expeditiously with all genuine complaints.
- b. Takes proactive measures to avoid and corrects errors and mistakes promptly.
- c. Cancels any charges levied or applied by mistake.
- d. Has a **Complaints Handling Mechanism** with clear escalation matrix. The mechanism:
  - i. Explains how to make a complaint, to whom complaints should be addressed, when to expect a reply and what to do if the Consumer is not satisfied with the reply or the action taken.
  - a. Displays name and other contact details of the complaint's focal points within the bank.
  - b. Displays at its branches, website and digital platforms, the escalation process.

**Consumer Responsibilities:**

Likewise, the bank expects Consumers to behave honestly and courteously in all their dealings with the bank. The responsibilities of Consumers shall include the following:

- ✓ To be honest with the information provided to the bank

Consumers shall always give complete and accurate information to the bank. Information given by the Consumer to the bank shall not be factually incorrect, incomplete or misleading in any sense. Accuracy is key.

- ✓ To carefully read all information provided

When a Consumer submits an application to the bank, they should ensure that they receive full details about the matter in question (be it a service or product), their obligations as reflected in the terms and conditions, the terms and conditions themselves ...etc. They shall ask all questions they need to clarify any ambiguity. Consumers should ensure that they read and understood their obligations and that they can comply with such obligations.

Use the products or services in line with their terms and conditions

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Consumers must not use the products or services, other than in accordance with the terms and conditions associated with these products and services, and after making sure that they completely understand such products/services, terms and conditions.

### Ensure you are aware of how to make a complaint

Consumers are encouraged to be proactive in using the Complaint service and to know how to escalate unresolved issue to higher levels, if appropriate.

### Ask questions

It is critical to ask questions to the bank staff about anything the Consumer may find to be vague or ambiguous. The Bank's staff are ready to answer any questions in a professional manner to help Consumers make informed decisions.

### Matching products/services with Consumer needs and financial situation:

When making a request for a product or service, Consumers should make sure that is the products/services suits the Consumer's needs and financial situation. The Consumer should disclose all financial obligations with all parties to ensure the decision is based on their ability to meet additional obligations after contracting for the product or service.

### Risk awareness

Consumers shall not purchase a products or services where risks associated with these products and services do not suit the Consumer's financial position or situation. Consumers need to be aware of risks associated with products and services and the bank's staff will be more than happy to explain to each Consumer all risks associated with each of the products and services.

### Report unauthorised transactions to the bank

Consumers should immediately report to the bank any and all unauthorized transactions discovered in their accounts.

### Contact the bank in case of financial difficulties

By talking to a branch representative or customer service representative, Consumers can be guided to the best alternatives solutions to ensure repayment arrangements that will enable them discharge their responsibilities.

### Do not disclose your banking information

Consumers shall, under no circumstances, provide any bank account details or other sensitive personal or financial information to any other person.

### Updating personal and contact information/identification documents

Consumers should update their personal and contact information with the bank. Failure to provide all relevant updated information and identification documents will have consequences, including suspension of products/services and discontinuation of the banking relationship.

### Powers of Attorney

Consumers should exercise care when dealing through a 'Power of Attorney'. They should know what information they give access to and to whom they give such information/authority.

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### Review all documents

Consumers must read and review all documents before signing them to ensure no errors are made therein. Signature signifies an approval and consent to the content of the document.

### Do not sign uncompleted forms

Consumers shall ensure that all the required fields and numbers are completed in forms or other documents presented to them for signature. They shall not sign empty or partially completed forms or documents.

### Keep copies of documents

Consumers must keep copies of all documents provided by the bank pertaining to their dealings in a safe place.