



## APPEALS & COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE



# Appeals & Complaints Procedure

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## 1. SCOPE

This procedure outlines how CQAL (certification body) deals with appeals and complaints.

## 2. APPEALS

CQAL shall be responsible for all decisions and at all levels of appeal-handling process. Operations Manager of CQAL shall register and acknowledge appeals against CQAL certification decisions. Operations Manager shall review the appeal & nominate a person(s) for investigation. The person(s) appointed shall not be previously involved in the subject of the appeal.

The appointed person(s) shall gather and verify all necessary information to validate the appeal. The decision made shall be in line with decisions made in respect of previous similar appeals. The appointed person(s) shall review and approve the decision made. Documentation shall be maintained in respect of all aspects of appeals handling process including any corrections and corrective actions taken. Operations manager shall provide the appellant with progress reports and result of the appeal.

Submission, investigation and decisions on appeals shall not result in any discriminatory actions against the appellant. Operations manager shall give formal notice to the appellant of the end of the appeals-handling process.

This procedure is in accordance with ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015.

## 3. COMPLAINTS

Upon receipt of complaint, operations manager shall confirm whether the complaint relates to certification activities that it is responsible for and so shall deal with it. If the complaint is relates to a certified client, then examination of complaint shall consider the effectiveness of certified management system.

Operations Manager of CQAL will register and acknowledge complaints. Operations Manager shall review the admissibility of the complaint & nominate a person(s) for investigation. The person appointed shall not be involved in the audit or the certification decision making process.

Following the registration of a complaint, the respective nominee(s) shall initiate related actions. These include:

- Ensuring that the complainant has lodged the complaint in writing to the certification body
- Ensuring whether the complainant would like his/her name to be disclosed

For valid complaints related to certified clients, the complaint shall be referred to the client at an appropriate time. After the initial actions, the respective nominee(s) shall investigate the complaint and make a judgment whether additional visit to the certified client is required. If required, then the client is contacted to arrange a visit within a timeframe of two weeks at mutually convenient date.

The time-frame for completion of action and closure of complaint shall be

- 15 working days from receipt to closure, if no client visit is required
- 30 working days from receipt to closure, if a client visit is required

In case the above time lines are exceeded, then an interim reply will be sent to the complainant, explaining:

- Reasons for prolonged time frame
- Forecast the possible completion time

On completion of the investigation, the nominee(s) shall

- Inform the complainant about the conclusions of the investigation
- Formal communication of resolution and closure of complaint

Further the nominee(s) shall ensure that an appropriate brief is provided for any further auditing of the client during next assessment visit, besides identifying any internal corrective action. Since the issue of confidentiality is involved, it is not advisable to convey anything that is not publicly known.

It is, suggested to use the following options while sending a confirmation letter to the complainant:

- a) If CQAL Certification Services believes that the complaint is not justified, then the suggested reply could be “we are satisfied that the company has followed its procedure for customer complaints/corrective actions and the routines complying with the requirements of applicable standards”.
- b) If CQAL Certification Services believes that the complaint against certified clients is justified, the suggested reply could be “we are satisfied that the

required corrective actions have been taken/initiated under the clients system and the same will be monitored during the normal schedule of surveillance visits”.

For complaints related to CQAL Certification Services, the nominee(s) shall write a confirmation letter to the complainant along with a copy to the Certification Committee for information. Further where necessary all corrective actions are initiated to prevent recurrence. If the complaint is against audit conducted by any person associated with the committee, that person will be excluded automatically while discussing that complaint.

On completions of all actions as identified above, the registered complaints are deemed to have been satisfactorily resolved. Further information on all complaints and related actions shall be duly reported to Senior Management. Senior Management has the overall responsibility to ensure adequacy/appropriateness of the actions and satisfactory resolution.

Certification body shall be responsible for all decisions at all levels of complaints-handling process. Submission, investigation and decisions on appeals shall not result in any discriminatory actions against the appellant.

This procedure is in accordance with ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015.