



SOP for Handling Appeal & Complaints -QA-P-OP-03

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 QACS is open to receiving appeals against any decision or complaints from any sources against the quality of the services provided, personnel involved in certification process, certified client, etc. All the complaints received, through any means like letters, e-mails, faxes, telephones (to be followed by written complaints), are given due considerations. Reports appearing in media may also be investigated, if relevant. All appeal and complaints are treated as confidential unless desired otherwise by the Government or by law.

2. PURPOSE

2.1 The document describes the procedure for dealing with appeals and/ or complaints received from various sources.

3. SCOPE

3.1 Any applicant and /or certified client of QACS can make appeal against any/all decision of QACS including decision of application reviewer, audit team and/ or decision maker.

3.2 This procedure includes handling of all complaints received by customer - against the quality of the services provided, personnel involved in certification process, certified clients, or any other by any means or even relevant reference appearing in print media.

3.3 The QACS shall be responsible for collecting and verifying all necessary information to validate the appeals or complaint.

3.4 The top management of QACS ensures that there will not be any discriminatory action against the appellant and/or complainant on submission, investigation and decision on appeal and complaint.

4. RESPONSIBILITY

4.1 Operation manager is responsible to receive the appeals and/or complaint and forward the information to certification manager.

4.2 Certification Manager is responsible for monitoring of appeals and/or complaints and CMD is responsible for final decision on closure of the complaint.

5. REFERENCES

5.1 Quality Manual **QACS-M-00**

Definitions:-

Complaints:- Client, third party or in house problems.

6. PROCEDURE

6.1:- Appeals:-

6.1.1 Appeals are recorded in 'complaint form qa-mkt-09' by certification manager and discussed with the CMD to take the necessary action.

6.1.2 The appellant is informed about the QACS response taking into account the result of previous similar appeals.

6.1.3 If the appellant is not satisfied with the response from the certification manager CMD constitutes Complaint and appeal committee. All member of such team are those who have not involved in any certification activities of client.

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- 6.1.4 The appellant has the right to challenge the composition of the appeals committee. After approval of committee composition by appellant the appeal committee convey its meeting.
- 6.1.5 The appeal committee will gather and verify all information to validate the appeal.
- 6.1.6 The decision of appeal committee is conveyed to the appellant with in 30days.
- 6.1.7 The un satisfied appellant may decide to take the appeal to AB and agrees that this is the final action that can be taken.
- 6.1.8 Through the whole steps for handling appeal and complaints the appellant can formally present its case.
- 6.1.9 The appellant is provided with the progress reports and outcome including the reasons thereof.
- 6.1.10 The decision is communicated to the appellant made by or reviewed and approved by individuals not previously involved in the subject of the appeal with the formal notice of the end of the appeal handling process

6.2 Receipt of Complaints

- 6.2.1 All complaints received in shall be channelled to the Complaints & Appeals Officer (Director operation) who maintains record pertaining to all complaints including important dates like date of receipt, date of acknowledgement, date of closure or final disposal in **QA-MKT-09**
- 6.2.2 Immediately on its receipt the same shall be acknowledged with the assurance that QACS will be investigating the complaint and informing the complainant of the outcome at the earliest. Anonymous complaints shall also be registered if prima-facie they appear to be valid and having some substance.
- 6.2.3 QACS will be responsible for all decisions at all level of complaint handling process.
- 6.2.4 All complaints shall undergo initial scrutiny by the Complaints & Appeals Officer to determine whether they fall within the ambit of QACS activities and whether they are valid, based on which any of the following action shall be taken.
- a) If a complaint is outside the ambit of QACS activities, the complainant shall be informed accordingly and the complaint shall be treated as closed.
- b) If information provided in the complaint is inadequate for any meaningful follow-up and the complainant is not able to provide minimum required information such complaints shall also be treated as closed and the complainant shall be informed accordingly.
- c) If the complaint clearly falls within the ambit of QACS activities and appears to be valid, the initial information provided is sufficient for initial investigation the same shall be taken up for further action.

6.3 Investigation of Complaints

Complaints received by persons broadly fall in three categories:

- a) Complaints against clients,
- b) Complaints against Certification Committee Members and Assessors, and
- c) Complaints against QACS Officials.

Procedure for dealing with each category of complaints is given below:

6.3.1 Complaint against client

If a complaint is received against a certified client the content of complaint is noted and severity of complaints is analysed.

If complaint is from any regulatory body then client is immediately sent notice for corrective action and if complaint is for ISO 14001, 18001, 22000 and 45001 then special short visit audit is planned to review effectiveness of certified management system.

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The client is inform of all complaints received against it if prima facia evidence required corrective action QACS take prior approval from client and complainant for making complaint and its resolution publically accessible.

6.3.2 Procedure for Dealing with Complaints against Certification Committee Members and Assessors

6.3.2.1 An ad-hoc Committee consisting of Complaints & Appeals Officer and the Training Officer shall investigate the complaint in case of complaint against assessor. In case of complaint against Certification Committee member, the ad-hoc Committee shall consist of the Complaints & Appeals Officer and the Convener of concerned Certification Committee. The committee may seek clarification from client, assessors or other persons who may have knowledge about the matter contained in the complaint.

6.3.2.2 The committee shall submit their findings to Technical Operations Manger, QACS for his decision. The Technical Operations Manager, QACS if necessary may consult the Director, QACS or the appropriate Certification Committee and take decision.

6.3.2.3 In case of valid complaints action taken by QACS may involve feedback for corrective action followed by monitoring, warning against future recurrence and in extreme case, deletion of the assessor from the empanelled list or removal of Certification Committee member from the committee.

6.3.2.4 The outcome of the investigation shall be informed to the complainant.

6.3.2.5 A brief summery of nature of the complaint, outcome of the investigation and action taken shall be added to the monitoring information regarding the concerned Assessors or Certification Committee member.

6.3.3 Procedure for Dealing with Complaints against QACS Officials

6.3.3.1 When the complaint is against a QACS Officer, he / she will not be involved in investigation process either directly or indirectly.

6.3.3.2 All such complaints will be brought to the notice of Director / CEO, QACS. Director/CEO shall seek clarification from the person concerned. If an investigation is required, he may delegate it to an ad-hoc committee consisting of one or more suitable persons. The findings of the committee shall be placed before the Director, QACS for his decision.

6.3.3.3 If the complaint is found to be valid, Director/CEO, QACS shall ask the concerned staff to take required corrective action. This information shall also be filed in performance review record of the concerned staff. In extreme case the decision may involve a punishment including a dismissal of the concerned staff in which case QACS Staff Rules and Bye –laws shall be followed.

6.3.3.4 The complainant will be informed about the outcome of the complaint and action taken by QACS if any.

6.3.4 If the complaint is against the Director QACS or Technical Operations Manager, QACS the matter will be brought to the notice of the CMD, QACS.

6.4 Reporting on Complaints and Other Related Actions

6.4.1 As an outcome of investigation of complaint and root cause analysis if any corrective action is felt necessary the Complaints & Appeals Officer shall inform the concern department and corrective action shall be initiated by department in line with the requirements of Procedure for Control of Non-Conformities and Corrective Action **QA-P-SYS-08 AND QA-P-SYS-09**

6.4.2 All records pertaining complaints shall be maintained up to date by the Complaints & Appeals Officer. The status of complaints shall be reported to the Certification Manager, QACS, who is responsible for monitoring of complaints.

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6.4.3 The Complaints & Appeals Officer shall analyse all the complaints and their outcome for possible trends. The complaints received, their handling and the corrective actions taken shall be discussed as one of the agenda items in the internal analysis and review meeting under the chairpersonship of Director, QACS. The analysis of complaints then shall be placed before QACS Governing Body for management review.

6.4.4 Any complaint pending for more than 90day shall be transferred to Accreditation board along all documents original complaint, Record of review, Response to complainant and with detail of action taken by QACS till date.

7. RECORDS

7.1 Customer complaint **record: QA-MKT-09**

7.2 Appeals & Complaints file is maintained by Complaints & Appeals Officer, where all correspondence in respect of complaints received, the Director's / CEO decisions, and any other relevant documents are filed date-wise.

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