

1 Terms and definitions

Appeal: request by the provider of the object of conformity assessment to the conformity assessment body for reconsideration by that body of a decision it has made relating to that object.

Complaint: expression of dissatisfaction, other than appeal, by any person or organization to a conformity assessment body, relating to the activities of that body, where a response is expected.

2 Receive complaints, appeals

Customer Service Department (CSD) is a key point for daily communicating with clients in relation to customer feedback. Whenever complaints or appeals come, CSD personnel or any other **BVQA** personnel must receive it in a professional way and do next steps as per the **BVQA** procedures.

It will not always be obvious that a piece of incoming correspondence is considered a complaint or an appeal that must be treated following this procedure as well as need to maintain related records of subsequent actions. An item of incoming mail/correspondence will only be classified as a complaint or appeal by the certification manager (CM) and Head of Certification (HoC) when the correspondence refers to **BVQA** or to a certified client, and that all attempts have been made to resolve the issue at the lowest/appropriate level does not make the complainants/appellants satisfied. The complainants/appellants want to receive the answers from the superior levels.

3 Acknowledgment of complaints, appeals

BVQA personnel who receive the complaints/appeals must confirm with the complainants/appellants immediately for acknowledgment of the complaints/appeals by telephone, e-mail or fax or by courier. **The confirmation with the complainants/appellants must be done within one week** after receiving the complaints/appeals. Simultaneously, personnel who received the complaints/appeals must **forward them to the authorised action officer without delay**.

If it is appeal, the appellant will be informed via correspondence mail that he/she can directly contact Committee for Safeguarding Impartiality (CSI).

Authorised action officers:

➤ For appeals: the action officer shall be the HoC. In the case where the appeal is in relation to the HoC, the General Director (GD) will be the action officer, and the appellants may also refer it to the CSI of BVQA. In any situation, BVQA ensures that the persons engaged in the appeals-handling process are different from those who carried out the audits and made the certification decisions.

➤ For complaints subjected to finance: the action officer shall be the Finance and Administration Manager (FAM). In the case where the complaint is in relation to the FAM, the General Manager of the auditing office (GM) will be the action officer. In the case where the complaint is in relation to the GM, the GD will be the action officer.

➤ For complaints subjected to customer related processes and bussiness development: the action officer shall be the Customer Service Manager (CSM). In the case where the complaint is in relation to the CSM, the GM will be the action officer. In the case where the complaint is in relation to the GM, the GD will be the action officer.

➤ For complaints subjected to **BVQA** certification activities, or/and certified organization: the action officer shall be the Certification Manager (CM) of Auditing Offices. In the case where the complaint is in relation to the CM, the GM will be the action officer. In the case where the complaint is in relation to the GM, the GD will be the action officer with the assistance from HoC.

4 Preliminary review of the complaints and appeals

Preliminary review of the complaints and appeals shall be conducted following criteria such as: nature of complaints/appeals, severity, concerned level to certification activities, knottiness, influence, demand and possibility for giving adequate decisions.

The authorised action officer will be mainly responsible for solving complaints/appeals. He/she shall identify and plan necessary resources for dealing with complaints/appeals at relevant functions.

5 Retain all complaints/appeals treatment records

The authorised action officer shall retain all complaints/appeals treatment records together with supporting data. Identification and retaining of records shall be separated by incidents.

6 Dealing with complaints, appeals

The authorised action officer and his/her assistants shall investigate the circumstances and supporting data, root causes to complaints/appeals. The authorised action officer shall consider both immediate and long term action required by all parties concerned, taking into account the results of previous similar appeals/complaints. **The complaints/appeals dealing process must be completed within 10 working days.**

7 Notification of the decision to complainants/appellants

The complainants/appellants is kept informed of the progress reports. The authorised action officer shall notify the decision and/or actions to be taken to the complainants/appellants for dealing with the complaints/appeals.

If the complainants/appellants do not satisfy with the decision and/or actions recommended, the authorised action officer and his/her assistants shall find out more adequate solutions. The authorised action officer shall apply suitable methods for monitoring of the complaints/appeals dealing processes until archiving the final adequate solution that makes the complainants/appellants satisfied. For appeals, when all attempts to archive the final adequate solution recommended by the authorised action officer are failed, CSI will be invited to hear the appeal. The decision achieved by voting by CSI members will be the final.

Notification of the decision to complainants/appellants must be conducted within 30 days since received the complaints/appeals. In exception cases, the authorised action officer proposes the GD for extension of the deadline.

When CSI is invited to hear the appeals, an Appeal Panel will be established that consist of members of CSI. Any members of CSI who have conflict of interest must inform the Appeal Panel and will not participate in the appeal hearing processes.

8 Recording actions taken

When the complainants/appellants receive the Notification of the Decision, if the recommended decision and actions are accepted, then the authorised action officer will inform concerned departments for implementing the decision. And the authorised action officer will retain all related records, end of complaints/appeals dealing process. The complaints/appeals dealing process of each incident including actions undertaken to resolve them will be daily recorded in **Complaints & Appeals Diary**. List of complaint and appeal incidents will be updated in **Complaints & Appeals Log**.