

1. SCOPE

- 1.1 Any applicant organisations or client of NQA Certification Limited (NQA) has the right to appeal any decision pertaining to the certification, verification or inspection process conducted by NQA and concerning such applicant organisation or client.

Note 1: Submission, investigation and decision on appeals shall not result in any discriminatory action against the appellant.

Note 2: For the purposes of this appeals procedure, an “Independent Person” means a person who has had no direct involvement with the audit or certification of the relevant appellant in the twenty-four months* prior to the submission of the written appeal including the audit or certification decision that forms the subject of the appeal.

*2 years for Management Systems, 3 years for COC and SC.

Note 3: NQA are responsible for gathering and verifying all necessary information to validate the appeal.

- 1.2 Any investigation shall take into account the results of similar appeals.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1 Responsibilities are as defined in the text of this Work Procedure.

3. APPEALS PROCEDURE

- 3.1 In the first instance the appellant submits a written appeal to NQA enquiries@nqa.com setting out the background to and reasons for the appeal.
- 3.2 If the appeal relates to NQAs relevant certification or verification activities, NQA shall log receipt of such an appeal, formally confirm receipt of such appeal and provide the appellant with the name(s) of the individual(s) responsible for the investigation and an anticipated timeframe for completion, within 2 weeks from receiving the appeal.

Note 1: For COC and SC, appeals shall be investigated and closed within 3 months from the date of receipt.

- 3.3 In order to facilitate tracking, each appeal shall be given an individual reference.
- 3.4 On occasions where the anticipated timeframe for completion is exceeded, the appellant shall be kept updated of progress.
- 3.5 The individual(s) responsible for the investigation and provisional decision shall (a) be independent persons, and (b) meet all competence criteria as defined by NQA pertaining to the role of Decision Maker/ Field Operations Management or Customer Service Manager in respect of the scheme or schemes to which the appeal relates.

- 3.6 The outcome of the investigation and provisional decision shall be reviewed and approved by a Manager (or nominated deputy) prior to communication to the appellant. The Manager (or nominated deputy) shall (a) be an Independent person, and (b) have had no prior involvement with the investigation and provisional decision, described in 3.5 above.
- 3.7 In order to ensure impartiality and in addition to the review referred to in 3.6, the outcome of the investigation and provisional decision may be reviewed by the Independent Certification Board of NQA. As in 3.6, this review shall precede communication of the outcome to the appellant.
- 3.8 The Manager (or nominated deputy) shall be responsible for the initiation, monitoring and 'close-out' of corrective actions identified as being incumbent upon NQA.
- Note 2: If an appeal is not received in English then the ongoing communication language shall be agreed by NQA and the appellant.
- Note 3: NQA shall retain the anonymity of the appellant in relation to the client, if this is requested by the appellant.
- Note 3: If an appeal has been raised, for example, because a document may have been tampered with, steps shall be taken to obtain objective evidence to verify the complaint. NQA may contact other relevant parties, such as suppliers, to cross-check information.
- Note 4: For COC and SC related appeals, NQA shall treat anonymous complaints and expressions of dissatisfaction that are not substantiated as complaints as stakeholder comments and address these during the next audit.
- 3.9 Upon completion of the investigation and satisfactory impartiality review if applicable, the outcome shall formally be communicated to the appellant.
- 3.10 Upon occasions where the appellant wishes to challenge the decision of the appeals investigation, an additional appeal may be submitted to the Service Delivery Director.
- 3.11 Subject to 3.12 below, the decision of the Service Delivery Director is final and binding upon all parties.
- 3.12 On occasions where the Service Delivery Director is not Independent, the Service Delivery Director shall refer the final decision to the Managing Director or Global Accreditation Director.
- 3.13 Actions incumbent upon any party within this process (both internal and external) shall be completed within 21 working days.

4. RECORDS

- 4.1 Comprehensive records of the investigation and decision-making processes shall be retained.
- 4.2 Records detailing any corrective actions incumbent upon NQA as a result of a given appeal shall be retained and presented to the Management Review meeting.
- 4.3 If the appellant is not satisfied with the action taken by NQA as detailed above, they shall be invited to contact the relevant Accreditation Body Scheme Owner at the following address;

NQA APPEALS PROCESS

UKAS Accredited Schemes

UKAS

2 Pine Trees Chertsey Lane Staines-upon-Thames TW18 3HR

t: +44 (0) 1784 429015

customerfeedback@ukas.com www.ukas.com

FSC® Chain of Custody Schemes

ASI

Assurance Services International GmbH Friedrich-Ebert-Allee 69

53113 Bonn, Germany

t: +49 (228) 227 237 0

f: +49 (228) 227 237 30

asi-info@asi-assurance.org www.accreditation-services.com

FSC International

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PEFC Certification body licence number PEFC/16-44-2600