



P11 – Appeals and Complaints Handling



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1. PURPOSE

To describe measures that GR certification has implemented as an organization the way appeals are evaluated and a decision is made and the process of receiving, investigating complaints and initiating appropriate corrective and preventive actions.

2. SCOPE

This procedure shall be applicable to all appeals and complaints received by GR in relation to the certification and related services offered by GR in all its operating regions within its accredited and non-accredited scopes of certification.

3. REFERENCES

ISO 17021-1:2015; Clause 9.7 & 9.8 requirements

4. DEFINITIONS

Appeal: An appeal is a plea / request preferred by a client of GR to the highest decision-making committee seeking a resolution on decisions made while the handling of a compliant or dispute or a plea on a certification decision made by GR.

Complaint: A complaint means where a client or other interested / affected parties, either in written and or verbal, identifying an unsatisfactory service and conduct of GR auditor(s).

A complaint also means where an affected party, client or other interested party has either in writing or verbally identified an unsatisfactory service of GR or conduct of GR auditor(s).

5. RESPONSIBILITY

1. Recording Appeals & compliant – Certification Sales Coordinator
2. Analysis of appeals and complaints – Management Representative
3. Monitoring of CAR – Management Representative
4. Review & Approval of Decision – Certification Manager

6. PROCEDURE

6.1 APPEALS

- a) GR shall provide certification services as per document procedures, meeting the requirements of accreditation criteria with a focus on impartiality, competence, responsibility, openness and confidentiality during all stages of service delivery.
- b) However, appeals received from interested parties against decisions taken by GR during its certification service delivery and associated processes shall be handled in a non-discriminatory manner by an independent committee. GR shall be responsible for decisions at all levels of the appeal handling process.
- c) Appeals and complaints handling committee shall be constituted as an independent committee that includes management representative and if required additional members can be nominated by certification manager from impartiality committee.
- d) No member of the appeals committee shall be a member of the audit team or worked as a technical team for a specific client for which appeal has been registered such that the appeals handling process is independent of its certification process of the specific client.
- e) The appellant must have provided complete information giving substantial grounds for appeal within the specified time scales. Provided these criteria is met, the appeals are recorded.
- f) Both the appellant and the relevant GR personnel shall be entitled to be heard in confidence.
- g) Appeals shall be registered by a certification sales coordinator with all details and

acknowledgement will be sent to the appellant within 07 working days. The Register shall be updated with the action undertaken to resolve appeals upon completion of all the activities.

- h) Appeals Committee shall review the appeal and discuss the circumstances necessitating the client to appeal and conclude the findings based on the merit of each appeal and previous similar appeal.
- i) A predetermined date shall be decided for the hearing and the appellant's representative informed of the hearing date to enable them to nominate a representative. The Appellant's representative shall be provided an opportunity to present their details.
- j) After providing opportunities for all concerned parties, a decision shall be given by the committee, which is binding on all concerned.
- k) The decision of the appeals committee shall be reviewed by certification manager and necessary corrective action taken to prevent recurrence of similar appeals and prevent occurrence of potential appeals in future.
- l) The management representative shall write to the appellant informing them of the appeal panel decision, within 07 days of the decision. During the appeal handling process, the progress report is made available upon request of the appellant. If the appellant does not accept the decision they may revoke the conditions of contract i.e., arbitration
- m) Corrective actions shall be implemented by the respective process owners and shall be monitored by management representative.

6.2 COMPLAINTS

The GR Certification sales coordinator shall register all the written or verbal complaints within scope of services provided. Once the complaint is registered, an acknowledgement / the receipt is sent to the complainant within 02 working days. GR may also inform the progress of the resolution of the complaint, if required, in case of any delay in resolution. GR shall be responsible for decisions at all levels of complaint handling process.

- a) Management review shall review the compliance, whether it relates to certification activities that GR is responsible, or whether a complaint relates to a certified client, which may require consideration of the effectiveness of a certified management system. Any complaint about a certified client shall also be referred by GR to relevant client under consideration.
- b) GR shall be responsible to gather all the information about the complaint and verify its validity.
- c) All complaints shall be handled by a committee of personnel who are independent of audits, technical review and decision-making processes.
- d) GR shall analyse the root cause and identify the corrective actions needed within 04 weeks (one month). Additional time may be considered for a specific complaint with justification, if required. 12 weeks (three months) is the maximum time frame after the first hearing or as decided at the first hearing as the target date for closure of the complaint.
- a) If the complainant is not satisfied with the solution or if the time frame is exceeded the complainant may complain to the accrediting body.
- e) The decision of the complaint shall be reviewed and approved by certification manager or by a Management Representative who not involved in the subject of the complaint.
- f) Certification sales coordinator informs the client of the action taken and the resolution within 07 working days from the last day of the completion of the action.
- g) Management representative shall monitor effectiveness of corrective action and shall revise Quality system documents as and if required.
- h) GR shall determine along with the client and the complainant, the extent of subject complaint and resolution which can be made public.
- i) Log of appeals and customer complaints shall be maintained by GR.
- j) **GR shall refer to the accreditation body, the complaints which are longstanding than the specified time.**

6.3 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Appeal and Complaints handling committee are constituted on need basis and is authorised by the certification manger to investigate any appeal or complaints within its terms of reference.

Appeal and Complaints handling committee is authorised to seek any relevant information it requires from any member of staff of GR or any relevant third parties, and all members of GR are directed to co-operate with any reasonable request made by the Appeal and Complaints handling committee.

The Committee must adhere to the relevant standards, accreditation criteria and ISO 17021-1:2015 and GR procedures.

The Committee is authorised by the Certification Manager to obtain guidance, if it considers it appropriate to obtain legal or other independent professional advice and, if it considers necessary, to secure the advice or attention of those with relevant experience.

The role of the GR Appeals and Complaints handling committee is to,

- a) Address all complaints and appeals received by GR impartially.
- b) To be independent in resolving any Appeals and Complaints and shall uphold the integrity.
- c) Counteract any tendency on the part of GR to allow commercial or other considerations to prevent the consistent objectives in handling complaints and appeals received by GR,
- d) Decisions on Appeals and Complaints
- e) Resolve all appeals and complaints within the specified time
- f) Report to GR management on the statuses of appeals and complaints made to GR.
- g) To uphold the confidentiality principles of GR.

The committee members shall be selection shall be determined by the CB's top management.

7. QUALITY RECORDS

Quality Record Number	Quality Record Title:	Retention Time
P11 - F01	Appeal & Complaints Register	Six Years