

UNIVERSAL QUALITY STANDARDS REGISTRAR

QP 3 Appeals and Complaints

PROCEDURE

Client appeals

A client may appeal following a decision made during the certification process. In the event of a verbal appeal, the client shall be requested to confirm their appeal in writing, with details of their reasons for appeal. An appeal may occur;

- After an Auditor leading an audit has made a decision not to recommend certification, as per Audit and Certification Procedure **(QP-02)**,

or

- When a decision is made either;
 - not to accept a recommendation for certification and/or extension to scope, or
 - to reduce or withdraw certification as per Procedure **(QP-02)**,

or

- Following the review of a appeal.

The appeals process follows two stages;

UQSR ensure submission; investigation and decision on appeals do not result in any discriminatory actions against the appellant. The UQSR receiving the appeal will be responsible for gathering and verifying all necessary information to validate the appeal.

Stage 1: Appeals response [with 'allocated' details (F-045)]

Impartiality Committee will;

- a. Receipt of appeal, acknowledge receipt of the appeal
 - b. Attempt to resolve the appeal, where possible, and indicate a 'closed' date. This may involve;
 - Discussions with UQSR staff and an examination of all the relevant documentation and reports and/or
 - An audit visit to obtain further evidence, or to check the authenticity of a decision or recommendation made.
 - c. Send a formal written reply to the appellant, notifying them of the decision regarding their appeal.
- If the results have already been discussed with the client during the subsequent audit visit the findings will be recorded in the audit report.

Note:

- # The Certification Manager or MP will only attempt to resolve the appeal where they have not been included in the decision making process.
- # when ever required, UQSR will acknowledge receipt of the appeal
- # UQSR will provide the appellant with progress reports and the outcome.
- # UQSR will give formal notice of the end of the appeal-handling process to the appellant.

Stage 2: Appeals Panel investigation

- a. Impartiality Committee will re-investigate the appeal if the Client is still dissatisfied with the outcome, and
- b. Send letter to the appellant notifying them of the decision regarding their appeal.
 - The outcome of the investigation, and any remedial action required, shall be recorded in the Client Site file.

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- The effectiveness of the corrective and preventive actions taken is assessed at management review as per the Quality Manual (**sec. 2.1.6**).

Note:

A decision reached by the Impartiality Committee is final.

Complaints (and/or disputes)

A 'complaint' is defined as any written expression of dissatisfaction

Written complaints may be received from customers, suppliers, UQSR staff or third parties about UQSR or a UQSR certificated client.

- All complaints (or disputes) are referred to the **impartiality committee**.
- The person making the complaint must be informed that the problem is being recorded and will be thoroughly investigated.

Note:

Where the complaint is being received from a third party about a UQSR certified client then no agreement of problem or blame must be made or any other statement which may breach confidentiality and security of information received.

If the complaint relates to a certified client, examination of the complaint consider the effectiveness of the certified management system.

If a complainant is not satisfied with complaint handling process of UQSR, he/she can go to accreditation board.

The UQSR will be responsible for all decisions at all levels of the complaints handling process. Submission, investigation and decision on complaints will not result in any discriminatory actions against the complainant.

Note: if the complaints are not closed out within 3 months of the agreed timeframe complaint handling process of UQSR, he/she has a right to refer the complaint to accreditation board.

MP / Certification Manager will;

- a. Record relevant correspondence on F-044 (Complaints Form), including full details of who the complaint is aimed at (UQSR or a UQSR certificated client) and the problems encountered.
 - b. Carry out a full investigation into the problem, which may involve discussions with UQSR staff or person making the complaint, examination of all relevant documentation and audit reports.
- Ensure the corrective action (suggested by impartiality committee) is initiated promptly, which may require further liaison with the Client to prevent recurrence
 - Procedures amendments may be required as a result of NCR's which will be carried out as per the Document & Data Control procedure (**QP-07**)

Notes:

Third parties will not be informed of the outcome of an investigation as this would also be a breach of UQSR client confidentiality.

Complaints about UQSR certified clients will usually be investigated during the next scheduled surveillance visit.

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Where the severity of the type or level of complaints indicates a breakdown in the clients quality system then a special visit shall be authorised; where significant problems are found then the auditor may recommend that the certificate be suspended or withdrawn.

Certificate Misuse

Certification Agreement (**F-003**) and Supplements Logo Rules (**F-0048**) describe how the Certificate and

Certification / Accreditation Mark may be used by certificated clients. The client, or companies who are not / no longer clients of UQSR, may fail to use these marks correctly or in a misleading way in advertising, catalogues or through statements to third parties. In this event;

- A nonconformity report (**E-002**) shall be raised, usually by the **Auditor**, during an observed audit or surveillance visit, or
- By **MP / Certification Manager** upon review of an audit report.

In either event **MP / Certification Manager** initiates prompt corrective action, which may require further liaison with the Client. The client may also be requested to respond to (or print) transgressions to check the effectiveness of the remedial action taken.

Where the misuse is of a significant nature, or where the *client persists* with misuse and refuses to *take* action then **MP / Certification Manager** will take appropriate action which may involve;

- Reduction in scope,
- Removal of certificate
- Publication of transgression, or
- Taking legal action, as appropriate.

NOTE: this process is publically accessible on UQSR website www.uqsr.org