



Documented Management System

Appeals Process

2.09

Issue 2

20th August 2015



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1. Document control

1.1 Control

Control of this document is in accordance with Documentation Control Procedure 2.11. The General Manager shall maintain a history of all amendments on a change register. The latest date and issue of this manual shall appear on the front cover and document reference and revision number is identified at the top of each page. The content and currency of this Policy document is the responsibility of the General Manager.

1.2 Circulation

A hard copy of this Document is held as a master copy back up and all staff can view this document in head office when required. An electronic copy is also available on the server.

1.3 Approval

Prior to the implementation of any documented process or operational procedure, the formal document will be subject to review to ensure that the commitments and process steps detailed are achievable and realistic, whilst linked to Policies and Objectives. Once reviewed and approved, the version history at 1.4 will be updated to signify the approval, and requisite authority of the approval.

1.4 Version history

Version	Author	Date released	Approved by	Date approved	Change overview
1	Tony Duff	01.05.2015	Tony Duff	01.05.2015	First Issue
2	Tony Duff	20.08.2015	Tony Duff	20.08.2015	Aligned panel & responsibilities

2. Introduction

This document sets out the procedure for receiving, evaluating, managing and resolving appeals and disputes against audit and/or certification decisions made during the certification and audit activities of System Certification Services.

3. Disputes during Audit

Where a dispute arises during an audit, the auditor will discuss the issue with the client and aim to reach an agreement.

If it is not possible to reach agreement, the auditor will note the diverging opinion on the report and highlight for review. The auditor will be responsible for contacting the General Manager as soon as possible after the audit, and providing him with a written summary of the dispute, along with any evidence gathered during the audit.

The General Manager will consider the evidence provided, and contact the client to ascertain their side of the dispute. If necessary, the General Manager will visit the client to collect further information and evidence. The General Manager will seek any further guidance or technical advice as necessary, and make an objective judgment on the dispute, and inform the client and the auditor of this in writing.

The General Manager will record all details of the dispute, investigation and recommendations/actions on a non-conformance report. This information will be passed to the Certification Officer, along with all collected evidence, and will be used to inform the decision on certification.

If the General Manager rules against the client, the client will be informed of their right to lodge an appeal, as outlined in the Auditee Handbook 3.04, and the procedure detailed following. All records related to the dispute will be kept in the client file.

4. Disputes between Auditor and Certification Officer

The role of the Certification Officer is to make a decision for or against certification based on the information provided from the assessment process (2.04).

If the Certification Officer requires more information regarding the auditor's records or recommendation, then he or she will contact the auditor to clarify. Any such communication will be recorded on the Certification Review form.

Where a Certification Officer disagrees with the recommendation made by the auditor, this will be recorded on the Certification Review form, and the General Manager will be informed (if the General Manager is either the auditor or the Certification Officer, this will be delegated to the Business Development Manager or other appropriate representative).

The General Manager (or delegated representative) will review the information available, and seek further information or technical assistance if required. If necessary, the General Manager will contact the client for more information, which could include a visit.

If the dispute relates to a negative auditor recommendation, the General Manager will inform the Impartiality Committee of the dispute, and make it clear that any Member may be involved with the investigation if he/she wishes. Particular attention will be placed upon disputes against a negative auditor recommendation, and the General Manager (or delegated representative) will ensure that any decision to overturn such a recommendation is clearly justified and evidenced.

The General Manager (or delegated representative) will make the final decision for or against certification, and this information will be recorded on the Certification Review form, along with a justification for the decision. All records relating to the dispute will be kept in the client file.

5. Receiving an Appeal

Overall responsibility for ruling on the decisions of appeals rests with the Certification Body, and this responsibility is delegated to the General Manager in the first instance. The approach for a customer to appeal against a decision is set out in the Auditee Handbook 3.04.

Upon receipt of an appeal, the General Manager will be informed and will ensure that the details are entered into the Appeals Register. If any information is missing, the appellant will be contacted by the General Manager or delegated authority to gather the information. The appeal will be acknowledged in writing, informing the appellant of the next steps. Progress and outcome will also be notified in writing.

All information relevant to the appeal shall be gathered and investigated; this will include audit reports and notes, statements from auditee and auditor, relevant documentation. A review will be carried out of all documentation and a conclusion and subsequent corrective actions made. The conclusions and corrective actions shall be validated within SCS by discussing with other appropriate personnel and the Executive Board, or Impartiality Committee if of a more serious nature before feeding back to relevant parties. A review of previous similar appeals may be included as part of the investigation.

The General Manager will send details of the appeal to all members of the Impartiality Committee, informing them of his intention to convene an appeals panel to independently review the case. The Chair will decide whether or not it is appropriate for responsibility for the appeal decision to remain with the General Manager, and in doing so may elicit the views of other Members. If responsibility is not delegated, the Chair will convene the Appeals Panel and be responsible for ensuring that all appropriate action is taken according to this procedure. Any Member wishing to nominate themselves or any other party to sit on the appeals panel will contact the General Manager.

The Appeals Panel will consist of, as a minimum, the General Manager and two members of the Impartiality Committee. One member of the Panel should also be a lead auditor, who has not been involved in the audit or certification process for the case under investigation. If the General Manager has been involved with the audit or certification process, then another member of the Management Staff may replace him.

6. Hearing the Appeal

The Appeals Panel will convene within 30 days of receipt of the appeal, and the appellant will be given at least 7 days notice of the time and place of the hearing. The appellant has the right to attend the hearing and present his or her case to the Panel.

The Panel will review the case in detail and consider all available evidence, including:

- Appellant's testimony, correspondence etc
- Audit reports
- Auditor notes
- Certification review
- Interviews with the appellant and/or relevant personnel

The Panel will judge the case against all appropriate normative documents, specifically:

- The appropriate national / international standard against which the appellant is being assessed
- Additional guidance documents (e.g. IAF and UKAS Guidance Documents)
- Other external documents specific to the scheme
- DMS Manual and procedures of System Certification Services
- System Certification Services Scheme Documents
- Other relevant regulations

On behalf of the Certification Body, the Panel will reach a decision on the appeal, and decide appropriate follow-up action. Responsibility for all decisions at all levels of the appeals handling process rests with the Certification Body. Minutes of the meeting will be made, including the decision and its justification and the responsibilities and time-scales for taking follow-up action.

7. Follow-Up Activity

The General Manager will inform the appellant in writing of the decision within 7 days.

The General Manager will inform the Impartiality Committee of the decision, including a brief summary of the pertinent details of the case and actions to be taken. A detailed account of the proceedings of the appeal will be included in the General Manager's report for the following Impartiality Committee meeting. The General Manager is responsible for monitoring and ensuring the completion of all follow-up actions. Progress of follow-up action will be included in his or her report to the Impartiality Committee.

8. Other Disputes

Any other dispute or appeal not covered above, including those from 3rd parties, will be referred to the General Manager. The General Manager or delegated representative will undertake an investigation, gathering relevant evidence, and deciding appropriate actions, and informing all relevant parties of the outcome.

9. Records

All records relating to the appeal, including correspondence, minutes of meetings, reports and testimonies will be held in the client's file. The General Manager will ensure that the Appeals Register is kept updated throughout the appeal to list actions and correspondence undertaken, and provide reference to records held in the client file.