

SQAPL	Procedure Manual
Section Name	Procedure for Resolution of Appeal, Complaints and Disputes

1.0 Purpose:

To document, establish, implement and maintain the system for addressing Appeal, Complaints and Disputes received by SQAPL as per requirements of ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015, ISO 17021-2:2016, ISO 17021-3:2017, ISO 17021-10:2018, ISO 22003-1:2022, ISO 27006:2015, & ISO:50003:2021 and other applicable international standards for certification bodies offering management system certifications

2.0. Scope:

This procedure is applicable to all appeal, complaints and disputes received by SQAPL related to its Management System Certification.

2.0 Responsibility:

Managing Director

3.0 Procedure:

4.1 Appeals

4.1.1 Any client shall make an appeal to the managing director of SQAPL in respect of the following,

- (a) Non acceptance of client's application for certification
- (b) Granting, suspending, withdrawing or denying of certification

4.1.2 SQAPL shall record all appeals in document SQAPL-85 and acknowledge the receipt of the appeal. All appeals shall be addressed within 30 working days from the receipt of the appeal and SQAPL shall provide the client with progress reports and the outcome.

4.1.3 All appeals are reviewed by the appeal panel constituted by Managing Director for each appeal. The appeal panel shall contain at least two members from SQAPL's auditor panel who have not been part of the audit and also not involved in certification decision or involved in the subject of the appeal. For appeal against the decision of the Managing Director the matter shall be referred to the chairman of the impartial committee for constituting the panel and taking the decision.

4.1.4 The appeal panel shall investigate the appeal by looking into the records and / or talking to the appellant and SQAPL and shall take a decision taking into account the results of any previous such appeals. SQAPL gathers and verifies all necessary information to validate the appeal.

4.1.5 Based on the decision of the appeal panel SQAPL shall initiate appropriate correction and corrective action and the same recorded in SQAPL-85, register for complaints, appeals & disputes.

4.1.6 SQAPL shall be responsible for all decisions at all levels of the appeal handling process. The decision on the appeal is reviewed and approved by Managing Director and is communicated to the

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client. This completes the appeal process and SQAPL shall also inform the appellant at this time about the closure of the appeal.

4.1.7 SQAPL shall ensure that the submission, investigation and decision on appeals shall not result in any discriminatory action against the appellant.

4.1.8 The right of the client to appeal against any decision by SQAPL is communicated at the time of sending the quotation through document PD-UL-01.

4.1.9 Information about appeal handling process of SQAPL is made publicly available through web site and / or document PD-UL-01.

4.2 Complaints

4.2.1 SQAPL shall receive, evaluate and make decisions on complaints while taking utmost care for confidentiality, as it relates to the complainant and to the subject of the complaint. Information about complaint handling process of SQAPL is made publicly available through website document PD-UL-01. The complaints handling process includes the following-

- a) an outline of the process for receiving, validating, investigating the complaint and for deciding what actions to be taken in response to it
- b) tracking and recording complaints, including actions undertaken in response to them;
- c) ensuring that any appropriate correction and corrective action are taken.

The Managing Director is responsible for gathering and verifying all necessary information to validate the complaint and all decisions at all levels of the complaints handling process.

Submission, investigation and decision on complaints do not result in any discriminatory actions against the complainant. Any valid complaint about a certified client shall also be referred by SQAPL to the certified client in question at an appropriate time.

4.2.2 The complaint can be made to the Managing Director by the client or any other interested party in writing giving details of the complaint. The complaint shall either relate to the certification activities of SQAPL or to the certified client and its activities.

4.2.3 The complaints received are recorded in SQAPL-85 and is acknowledged to the complainant. The managing director shall review the complaint to ascertain the seriousness and the genuineness of the complaint. SQAPL shall provide the complainant with progress reports and the outcome.

4.2.4 SQAPL shall refer all the complaints not closed within three months of agreed time frame (aged Complaints) to AB.

4.2.4. The complaint redressal process:

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4.2.4.1. Complaints about SQAPL from the client or third party

- (a) Depending on the nature of the complaint, *Chairman of the Impartiality Committee* shall decide to conduct the investigation himself or appoint a complaint panel for each complaint. The complaint panel shall contain at least two members from SQAPL's auditor panel who have not been part of the audit and also not involved in certification decision or involved in the subject of the complaint. Further, the complainant shall be given an opportunity to present the case to the panel in person if he so desires.
- (b) The complaint panel shall investigate the complaint by looking into the records and / or talking to the complainant and SQAPL and shall take a decision taking into account the results of any previous such complaints.
- (c) The details of investigation and the correction and the corrective actions identified are recorded in the complaint register. Upon verification on the effectiveness of corrective action taken, SQAPL shall inform the complainant about the correction and corrective action taken and if the complainant is satisfied with the actions taken the complaint is treated as closed. *The final Decision on the resolution of complaint shall be taken by the chairman of the impartiality committee.*

4.2.4.2. Complaints about the certified client from its customers or any other third party:

- (a) SQAPL shall inform the client about the complaint received and ask the client to investigate the complaint and report the findings to SQAPL within two weeks from the date of receiving the complaint by the client.
- (b) If SQAPL does not receive any response from the client or the action taken by the client is not found effective, SQAPL shall inform the client accordingly and ask for a special audit at the client site by SQAPL. On confirmation from the client SQAPL shall conduct a special audit as per SQAPL procedure, SQAPL-QP-13 and investigate the complaint.
- (c) If the complaint is of serious nature SQAPL shall initiate the special audit directly with the client
- (d) As its policy, SQAPL shall not disclose the identity of the complainant to the client.
- (e) If any action is needed to be taken by the client SQAPL shall verify the effectiveness of such action by suitable means appropriate to the gravity of the problem.
- (f) If the corrective action taken by the client is found effective SQAPL shall inform the complainant accordingly and the complaint shall then be treated as closed.

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4.2.5. SQAPL shall decide to make public the complaint and its resolution if agreed with client and complainant.

4.2.6. All the complaints received and their status with respect to their resolution are presented in the MRM and the IC meeting

4.3 Client feedback

4.3.1 After every audit (certification, surveillance and re-certification) a feedback from the client is obtained in document SQAPL-36, to assess,

- SQAPL's office responsiveness to client queries at various stages of the certification process
- Performance of the audit team
- Areas for further improvement

4.3.2 All the feedback forms received from the clients are analyzed and appropriate action taken if required.

4.3.3 The actions taken are recorded in SQAPL-36

4.3.4 A summary of feedback and the findings with corrective action taken are reviewed in MRM and IC meeting.

4.4 Disputes

4.4.1. Any dispute arising out of SQAPL's certification activities shall be settled by private negotiations between the parties, and if this is not possible it shall be referred to arbitration as per the Indian Arbitration Act, 1996, subject to Delhi jurisdiction. The decision of the arbitration shall be binding for the both parties

4.4.2 Records of all the disputes are maintained and reviewed in MRM and IC meeting.

5.0 Records

- (a) SQAPL-85 – Register for Appeal, complaints and disputes
- (b) SQAPL-36 – Feedback form
- (c) SQAPL-32- Special Audit Report

6.0 References

- (a) PD-RRC-01-Rules and regulation for certification

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(b) SQAPL-QP-13, Procedure for Special Audit

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