

Complaint and Appeal Handling Procedures

Version: 1

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1. Purpose

To establish a transparent and effective process for managing **complaints** and **appeals** related to **STEP UP Certification** activities, ensuring impartiality, fairness, and continual improvement.

2. Definitions

Complaint:

A **formal expression of dissatisfaction** by a stakeholder, client, applicant, or interested party regarding the organization's activities, decisions, or procedures, seeking resolution or redress. Complaints may concern delays, perceived unfair treatment, or procedural errors.

Appeal:

A request made by a client, applicant, or stakeholder to **challenge a certification or recertification decision** made by STEP UP Certification. An appeal addresses **disagreements with the certification outcome** or with the certification process and seeks a review of that decision.

3. Complaint and Appeal Registration

All complaints and appeals are **registered in a dedicated record document** maintained by the organization. This register captures key details such as dates, parties involved, summary of issues, and status. All entries are kept confidential and retained for a minimum of **5 years**.

4. General Principles

- Complaints and appeals are handled **promptly, fairly, and impartially**.
- The process should ensure **confidentiality** and **impartiality**.



- The review of **complaints and appeals** shall be conducted **by personnel or committees that are independent** from assessment and certification processes, to ensure impartiality and objectivity.
 - The organization commits to provide **a response to the complainant or appellant within 20 working days** from receipt of the complaint or appeal.
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5. Process

5.1. Receipt of Complaint or Appeal

- Complaints and appeals must be submitted in writing, clearly stating the issue, basis, and supporting evidence if applicable.
- A record (register) of complaints and appeals is maintained, capturing the date, stakeholder details, issue summary, and response status.

5.2. Acknowledgment

- The recipient acknowledges receipt within **5 working days**.
- The acknowledgment explains the process, including that a response will be provided within **20 working days**.

5.3. Investigation / Review

- The **Board Member** or a **designated independent body** reviews the complaint or appeal.
- The investigation includes examining all relevant evidence, records, and documentation.
- The review is **carried out by personnel or committees that are independent** from assessment and certification processes, to ensure impartiality and objectivity.
- The **review team** documents their findings in the complaint/appeal register and prepares a report.

5.4. Decision & Resolution

- The **Board Member** reviews the **reviewer recommendations** and assessment report, and **makes the final decision**.
- The decision can be:



- Accept (corrective actions, apologies, or other resolutions).
 - Reject (no basis or unfounded).
 - Re-open or escalate if justified.
- The organization commits to **respond in writing within 20 working days** of receipt of complaint/appeal, informing about the decision and any corrective actions.

5.5. Follow-up

- Corrective actions or improvements resulting from the review are implemented.
- Further assessments or reviews are scheduled if needed.

5.6. Recordkeeping

- All complaint and appeal documentation, decisions, and correspondence are recorded in the register and retained for at least **5 years**.

6. Response Time & Handling of Unfounded Complaints/Appeals

- The organization aims to respond within **20 working days** from receipt.
- Complaints or appeals deemed **frivolous or unfounded** after review may be rejected, with reasons provided to the complainant/applicant.

7. Confidentiality & Impartiality

- All activities are conducted with confidentiality.
- The process ensures impartiality, conducted by personnel or committees that are independent of the assessment and certification activities.

8. Scheme-specific Clauses

Note: Additional procedures or criteria may be inserted for specific schemes as applicable.