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Purpose

To define a procedure to ensure that appeals, complaints and disputes with clients or any interested party are promptly dealt with.

Scope

Applicable to all services of IRQS.

Responsibility

As noted in details.

Details

1. General:

1.1.1 Appeals, complaints and disputes brought to the notice of IRQS are promptly dealt with and remain confidential. Information about the client from sources other than the client are kept confidential. This procedure is applicable to decisions pertaining to certification including maintenance.

1.1.2 It is ensured that personnel including those acting in managerial capacity are not employed to investigate any appeal, complaint or dispute if they have been directly involved in the activities (as specified in Clause 9.7.3 of ISO 17021:2006) towards the Organization or any other party involved in the appeal, complaint or dispute in question within the last two years.


1.1.3 It is ensured that submission, investigation and decision on appeals and complaints shall not result in any discriminatory actions against the appellant / complainant.

1.1.4 In situations where appeals or complaints cannot be resolved by Nominated Representative or the Chief Surveyor, the same shall be referred to QSC.

1.1.5 A summary of appeals / complaints received, actions taken/completed is forwarded to the Management Representative for presentation in the Management Review meeting. Actions as decided in the Management Review meeting are implemented as per procedure II.IRQS:11.

2. Appeals:

2.1 "Appeal" means "any request for review that is conveyed in writing, against a decision made by IRQS taking into consideration the explanation provided by the client". This may be either during the course of audit at the client's premises or any work pertaining to H.O.

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2.2 Appeals can be due to:

- refusal of an audit by IRQS;
- non acceptance of scope of certification;
- decisions made on misuse, suspension, withdrawal, cancellation, extending and reducing the certification;
- failure to recommend certification by IRQS;
- notification by any third party/interested party against the grant of certification by IRQS.

2.3 Any appeal from client or interested parties seeking redressal when received is recorded and acknowledged. The appeal should contain all available documentary evidence. Any such appeals referred to management are examined in fairness and reviewed by Nominated Representative and any other personnel as required either separately or jointly. The appellant may be asked to withdraw the appeal if found not relevant. Actions shall be initiated by Nominated Representative for resolving the appeals within a stipulated period of 3 months.

2.4 Resolution of Appeal shall be handled in the following manner:


- An attempt is made by the team leader to resolve the issue at the audit site
- If the appeal is not resolved, the matter is taken upto Nominated Representative and Chief Surveyor
- In case the Chief Surveyor is unable to resolve the appeal, the same shall be referred, with all information (including documentary evidence) to the Quality Sub Committee

2.5 Nominated Representative tracks and maintains a record of all appeals along with remedial actions pertaining to the certification system and keeps the appellant updated about the progress and outcome.

2.6 Nominated Representative identifies problems requiring any actions to prevent recurrence of the above for corrective action (and preventive action if required) commensurate with the nature and risk involved. These include measures such as:

- restoring conformity to the certification system process
- assessing the effectiveness of remedial/corrective actions taken.

2.7. A formal notice of conclusion of the appeal handling process shall be provided to the appellant.

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3. Complaints:

3.1 Normally complaints (dissatisfaction expressed by a person or by the Organization) are made to H.O. However, when any outport receives any complaint, it is passed on to Nominated Representative. Any complaint received by IRQS, whether it pertains to IRQS functions or the certified Organization, would be treated in all seriousness and investigated. These complaints are recorded and the complainant would be informed of the receipt of complaint and advised on the investigation required within a reasonable time. Actions are initiated by Nominated Representative for resolving & restoring conformity to Management System and for closing the complaint within three months from the date of receipt of complaint unless delayed for a specific reason. The results and actions taken/completed are informed accordingly to the concerned parties.

3.2 For complaints received against certified Organizations, Nominated Representative may decide to:

a. Advise the controlling office of IRQS for a reference to the client based on which a visit / audit may be planned for ascertaining the actions taken and ensuring effectiveness of the certified management system.

b. Advise verification of actions taken during forth-coming surveillance audit.


3.3 Any such complaints referred to management are examined in fairness and reviewed by Nominated Representative and any other personnel as required either separately or jointly. The complainant may be asked to withdraw the complaint if found not relevant. A complaint after the date on which it has been received, is to be dealt with, within three months.

3.4 Resolution of Complaint shall be handled in the following manner:

- An attempt is made by the team leader to resolve the issue at the audit site which is recorded subsequently in the complaint log.
- If the complaint is not resolved, the matter is taken upto Nominated Representative, who analyses and initiates correction, corrective action / preventive action in co-ordination with Management Representative.
- In case the Head IRQS is unable to resolve the complaint, the same shall be referred, with all the information (including documentary evidence) to the Quality Sub Committee

3.5 Nominated Representative tracks and maintains a record of all complaints along with remedial actions pertaining to the certification system and keeps the complainant updated about the progress and outcome.

3.6 Nominated Representative identifies problems requiring any actions to prevent recurrence of the above for corrective action (and preventive action if required) commensurate with the nature and risk involved. These include measures such as:

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- notification to appropriate authorities as required by regulation
- restoring conformity to certification system process
- preventing recurrence;
- evaluating and mitigating any adverse incidents (including hazards, safety & security) and their associated risks and impacts
- ensuring satisfactory interaction with other components of the Management System
- assessing the effectiveness of remedial/corrective actions taken.

3.7 In case of complaints relevant to public interest, the certified organisation and the complainant shall be consulted and if felt necessary information about the complaint and its resolution will be made available for public viewing.

3.8 A formal notice of conclusion of the complaints handling process shall be provided to the complainant.

4. **Disputes:**

4.1 Disputes here convey disagreement and are applicable to certification process decisions made during the course of audit including document adequacy.

4.2 The team leader is authorized to resolve the dispute and conclude the audit effectively.

4.3 The dispute if not resolved adequately by the team leader can be brought to the notice of Head – IRQS as an appeal. The Head – IRQS shall resolve the matter through the appeal handling process (as described in para 2 of II IRQS 18:01) .

4.4 Any such disputes of significant nature as decided by the team leader are communicated in writing to Head - IRQS.

5. **Reference to quality sub committee.(QSC)**

5.1 The Quality Sub-committee meetings are convened as described in II.IRQS:06.

5.2 A summary of appeals, complaints and disputes is reviewed, as part of routine agenda, in all QSC meetings for adequacy of actions taken and for any suggested improvements.

5.3 During the course resolution of any appeals, complaints and disputes if a decision is made to refer specially to QSC, this aspect will be specifically reviewed .If required a special session is convened. Atleast three members of the Quality Subcommittee (Appeals committee) will have to be present when the appeal, complaint or dispute is taken up and none of them would have any interest in the party making the appeal, complaint or

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dispute. In case an appellant submits to IRQS motivated objections in writing against a certain member, this member during the duration of appeal, shall withdraw in favour of a substitute, if the objections are judged to be well founded.

5.4 The decision of the Quality Sub-committee shall be final and binding on both parties. The same shall be communicated to the concerned parties and decision implemented .

6, Customer complaint log format

S.No	Date received	Mode of payment	From	Complaint details	Date acknowledged	Correction details	Date implemented	Date communicated to customer	Corrective /Preventive action	Date implemented