


FIRST QUALITY CERTIFICATION	QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM	Document Copy Status <u>CONTROLLED</u>	
	Document Title Complaints Appeals & Disputes	Copy No. Copy 1	
		Ref. No.: QPR-019-CAD	Page No.: Page 2 of 8
		Rev. No.: Rev.00	Date: 01-Apr-18

Approvals

The signatures below certify that this procedure has been reviewed and accepted and demonstrates that the signatories are aware of all the requirements contained herein and are committed to ensuring their provision.

Prepared by: _____
Operations Manager

Date: _____

Reviewed by: _____
Certification Manager

Date: _____

Approved by: _____
CEO

Date: _____

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- Controlled Copy 4 - OPERATION MANAGER

1. Purpose/ Scope


This procedure addresses clause 9.8 of ISO 17021:2015 and describes how complaints relating to the First Quality Certification (FQC) activities are handled and how FQC reviews the cause of complaints to identify whether or not any system changes need to be made.

This Procedure also addresses Clause 9.7 of ISO 17021:2015 and describes how:

- a. all appeals relating to management systems certifications are dealt with in a prompt, unbiased and professional manner, and;
- b. FQC reviews the cause of appeals and disputes and identifies any potential system changes.

2. References

- ISO 17021-1:2015 – Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems
- ISO 9001:2015 – Quality management systems – Requirements
- ISO 10003:2018 – Quality management – Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for dispute resolution external to organizations
- ISO 10004:2018 Quality management – Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for monitoring and measuring
- FQC Management System Manual
- FQC's documented processes for certification

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3. Terms and Abbreviations

FQC – the company First Quality Certification

CEO – Chief Executive Officer

CM – Certification Manager

MR – Management Representative

DRP – dispute resolution process

Internal customers – means FQC employees, management and its stakeholders

External customers – customers FQC provided the services with; see also “Customer”

Complaint – any expression of dissatisfaction on the service provided by the company or by its personnel, which may either be written or verbal or the complaints-handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected

Complainant – person, organization or their representative making a complaint

Customer – person or organization that could or does receive a product or service that is intended for or required by this person or organization such as consumer, client, end-user, retailer, receiver of product or service, from internal process, beneficiary and purchaser

Customer satisfaction – customers' perception of the degree to which the customer's expectations have been fulfilled

Customer service – interaction of the organization with the customer throughout the life cycle of a product or a service

Customer = Client


Feedback – opinions, comments and expressions of interest in a product, a service or a complaints-handling process. Feedback can be given in relation to other processes where the organization interacts with the customer

Interested party/ Stakeholder – person or organization that can affect, be affected by, or perceive itself to be affected by a decision or activity such as customers, owners, people in an organization, providers, bankers, regulators, unions, partners or society that can include competitors or opposing groups

Organization – person or group of people that has its own functions with responsibilities, authorities and relationships to achieve its objectives. It includes but not limited to sole-trader, company, corporation, firm, enterprise, authority, partnership, association, charity or institution, or part or combination thereof, whether incorporated or not, public or private

Dispute – disagreement, arising from a complaint, submitted to a DRP provider

Dispute resolver – individual assigned by a DRP-provider to assist the parties in resolving a

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dispute such as staff, volunteer, contract personnel

DRP-provider / provider – person or organization that supplies and operates an external dispute resolution process, external to the organization. In this document, instead of the term *DRP-provider*, the term “provider” is used.

In general, a *DRP-provider* is a legal entity, separate from the organization or person as an individual and the complainant. In this way, the attributes of independence and fairness are emphasized. In some situations, a separate unit is established within the organization to handle unresolved complaints. However, ISO1003 standard is not intended for that situation, but it can be useful.

The *DRP-provider* contracts with the parties to provide dispute resolution and is accountable for performance. The *DRP-provider* supplies dispute resolvers. The *DRP-provider* also utilizes support, executive and other staff to supply financial resources, clerical support, scheduling assistance, training, meeting rooms, supervision and similar functions.

4. Roles & Responsibility

Certification Manager roles & responsibility includes, but not limited to;

- notify the Appellant and the Appeal panel of the hearing schedule and make the necessary internal arrangement


- lead the investigation and inform the Appellant in writing of the decision reached by the panel;
- defines and reviews the effectiveness of this procedure

Chairman responsibilities includes but not limited to;

- leads proceedings during a formal meeting/proceeding/appeal;
- decides on whether witnesses are relevant to the proceedings;
- informs relevant parties, in writing, as to the outcome of the meeting, hearing or appeal;
- is instrumental in facilitating the panel's deliberations and decision making;
- determines if it would be appropriate for an appeal panel to hear a full or partial rehearing, where relevant

Investigators/Panel/ Dispute resolver responsibilities includes, but not limited to;

- planning and conducting the investigation process, by which the facts relating to the appeal/dispute are gathered, and summarized in an investigation report;
- presenting the management case at a formal hearing, as necessary

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5. Methods

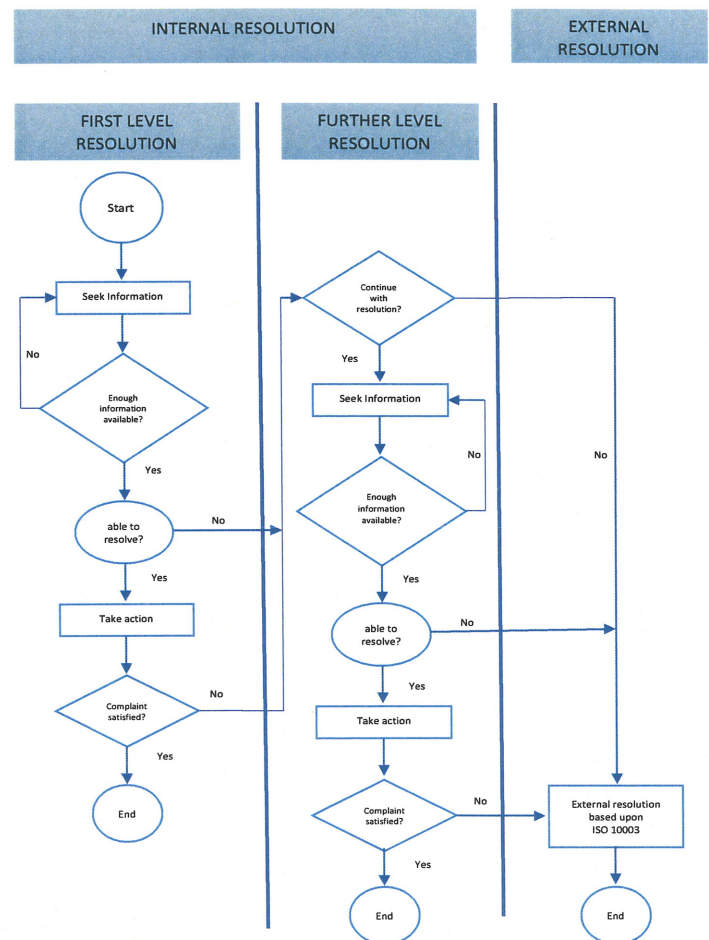
5.1 Disputes

By dispute we mean an expression of disagreement or dissatisfaction with some matter related to FQC personnel, committees, auditors, and our clients, arising from a complaint, submitted to a DRP-provider.

Some organizations allow their customers to express their dissatisfaction to a DRP-provider in the first instance. In this situation, the expression of dissatisfaction becomes a complaint when sent to the organization for a response and becomes a dispute if not resolved by the organization without DRP-provider intervention.


Many organizations prefer their customers to first express any dissatisfaction to the organization before utilizing dispute resolution external to the organization (external resolution). See figure.

Escalation Flow Chart



In the event of a dispute relating to client activities, the FQC Auditor or MR provides such information and advice to enable individuals to progress their disagreement at the appropriate level i.e. to promote direct dialogue and agreement between interested parties, or to register a dispute as a complaint.

When client informs FQC of a dispute, we request the following information:

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- a. name of the company
- b. certification scheme
- c. nature of the dispute
- d. action taken / advice given

When attempting to resolve the dispute, if the organization is not happy with the answer which the organization receives, the organization may ask for the dispute to be registered as a complaint.

The existence of a dispute between FQC and a client is not a justification for the client to withhold payment for contracted work completed by FQC.

5.2 Complaints-handling process

On receipt of a complaint FQC verifies that the complaint relates to certification activities that FQC is responsible for and if related to a client is considered the effectiveness of the certified management system.

Upon receipt of a complaint, FQC confirms whether the complaint relates to certification activities that FQC is responsible for, if yes same is dealt with.

If the complaint relates to a client which is certified by FQC, then examination of the complaint considers the effectiveness of the certified management system.

Any complaints about a certified FQC client is also referred by FQC to the client in question at an appropriate time.

After receiving the complaint, FQC is responsible for gathering and verifying all the necessary information to validate the complaint.

FQC acknowledges the receipt of the complaint and provide the complainant with the progress/action taken by FQC and its outcome in due course.

The decision and actions are communicated to the complainant and dealt with individually by a member of the FQC team who has not previously been involved in the subject of the complaint.

Once the complaint handling process is completed, a formal notice is given to the complainant at the earliest opportunity.


FQC determines with the client and the complainant whether the extent of the complaint and its resolution is made public.

Also see related documented procedure, "Customer Survey & handling Complaints, QPR-010-CSC".

5.3 Appeals

1. Receipt of an Appeal or Dispute

A notification of appeal or dispute is received within 14 days of the date of notification of the decision appealed against. For instance, this could be the date a non-conformance was raised or the date or the date proposed corrective action was rejected.

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A notification of appeal or dispute is made in writing to the Certification Manager, who acknowledges the appeal or dispute.

The appeal or dispute is accompanied by a suitable statement giving the grounds for the appeal or dispute with a summary of the supporting evidence.

The Certification Manager gives an initial judgement on the case on receipt of full supporting documentation that has two possible outcomes;

- the appeal or dispute is granted without the need for further action under this procedure; or
- putting the appeal or dispute to an appeal panel comprising of three independent members.

2. Appeal Confidentiality

Persons taking part in appeals proceedings are required to act in a manner that preserves confidentiality and avoids prejudicing the outcome or exercising an improper influence upon it. Members of the Appeals Panel have a duty to declare any interest that may be considered to compromise their impartiality. The views of the Appellant are taken into consideration when deciding whether the impartiality of any member of the Appeal Panel might be compromised hence is required to be replaced.

3. Consideration of an Appeal or Dispute

The Certification Manager notifies the appellant of the three independent members of the Appeals Panel, stating that the Appellant has a right to object to the constitution of the panel and that if no objections are received within fourteen days the appeals panel convene. If the Appellant does object to the constitution of the appeals panel then the Certification Manager proposes an alternative to the Appellant.

After receipt of the appeal or dispute, Chair convenes the panel at any time appropriate, but shall not be later than 6 weeks.

Once internal arrangements for an appeal panel is made, the appellant is notified of the arrangements by the Certification Manager and requested to confirm attendance at the appeal.


All appropriate information and papers are made available to the panel and the Appellant for the purpose of the hearing. If necessary, specialist advisors may be called on from within or outside FQC.

The outcome of the appeal/dispute is on the basis of a majority decision by the panel.

4. Appeal Proceedings

Appeal Panel reviews the evidence on which the Complaints panel's decision was made, its decision and sanctions imposed.

The Appeal panel does not consider information and/ or documentation that were not available to the original Complaint panel.

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If the Appeal panel concludes that additional information and/ or clarification should be considered, the Appeal panel may return the matter back to the original Complaint panel. Otherwise, Appeal panel will decide whether the Complaint's panel decision is to be upheld or dropped.

5. Action following an Appeal

Once a decision is made, the Certification Manager informs the appellant in writing of the decision including the reasons for the decision reached.

For appeals resulting in the original decision being overturned, the Appellant and original complainant are notified that the Complaint panel decision is dropped.

For appeals resulting in the original decision to be upheld, the appeal is dismissed. Appellant and original Complainant are notified not later than 10 days of the appeal decision, and any sanctions imposed by the original Complaint panel decision are implemented immediately.

For organizations which are already certified, if the appeal/dispute is refused, information relating to the withdrawal/suspension of the certification or corrective actions required and any appropriate penalties for misuse may, as required, are forwarded to the appellant by the Certification Manager. In this case, the organization are monitored to ensure that it complies with the requirements laid down in a registered file.

For organizations which appeal against or dispute a recommendation not to issue

certification following an initial assessment, the lead assessor from the assessment discuss, with the appellant, corrective action to be taken in order to continue with the certification process or, under the instruction of the client, to close the file for the organization.

6. Referral to Impartiality Committee

In the event that the appellant does not accept the decision of the appeals panel the papers are forwarded to the Impartiality Committee members for arbitration.

6. Records

Complaint Follow-up Form, QPR-010-CSC-F003