

1 Objective

The propose of this procedure is to stablish the systematic for receiving, assessment and taking decisions on complaints and appeals relating the activities carried out by Sbcert.

2 Reference and Additional Documents

- ISO/IEC 17065 - Conformity assessment - Requirements for bodies operating certification systems for products, processes and services;
- ISO/IEC 17000 - Conformity assessment - Vocabulary and general principles;
- FSG-03 – Complaint and Appeal Report;
- FSG-04 – Corrective Action, Preventive Action or Improvement;
- FSG-05 – Non-Conformity Map, Corrective Action/Preventive Action/Improvement;
- PSG-04 – Corrective Action, Preventive Action and Improvement.

3 Terms and Definitions

Assessment: Process carried out by Sbcert to assess the conformity of an organization, based on standard(s) and/or normative documents for a specific scope/scheme/audit.

Appeal: Request by a person or organization that provides or is the subject of conformity assessment to Sbcert or an accreditation body for reconsideration by that decision-making body of any decision taken in relation to the object.

Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction, other than an appeal, issued by a person or organization to an assessment body, related to the activities of that assessment body, where a response is expected.

4 Deadlines

4.1 Deadline for Client Complaint or Appeal

Complaint: within 10 calendar days of the occurrence or the certification decision/sending of the certificate.

Appeal: up to 7 calendar days immediately after the audit (e.g. receiving of the NC report) and after the certification decision/sending of the certificate.

4.2 Deadline for Sbcert to Return Received Complaints and Appeals

Sbcert will send the complainant or appellant a confirmation of receipt and registration of the appeal/complaint within 5 calendar days.

Complaints: will be concluded within 30 calendar days of receipt at the latest. If it is not possible to conclude the case within this period, the customer must be informed of the status of the case.

Appeals: will be concluded within 20 calendar days of receipt.

Note: For complaints and appeals relating to IFS protocols, Sbcert will send a first response within 10 calendar days of receipt before conclusion of the complaint or appeal.

4.3 Communication to Scheme Owners

For schemes that require direct communication regarding complaints and appeals, Sbcert establishes the following:

- **LEAF:** Complaints related to the LEAF protocol must be communicated to the scheme owner within a maximum of 5 (five) business days after receipt.
- **IFS:** For complaints and appeals related to the IFS protocol, the case must be reported to the scheme owner immediately upon receipt, before any decision is made on the matter.
- **BRCGS:** For complaints related to the BRCGS protocol, communication to the scheme owner must be made within 3 (three) months after receipt of the complaint.

5 Responsibilities

Employees: It is the responsibility of all employees to report clients' complaints/appeal and send them to the Quality department for registration.

Certification Manager: Responsible for resolving the received appeals and complaints.

Quality Manager: Responsible to managing customer complaints and appeals, ensuring that the complainant or appellant is informed about complaint and appeals, about the procedure to treat the complaint and people involved, provide records and all actions that were resulted from the complaint or appeal received. Formally notifying the appellant of the outcome of the appeal and whenever possible send a formal notification of the outcome at the end of the complaint results.

6 Procedure

6.1 Complaint

Complaints can be received by various means such as email, website, telephone, and others.

Upon receiving the complaint, it must be registered in FSG-03 - Complaint and Appeal Record and/ or forwarded to the Quality Sector, which must confirm that the complaint is related to Sbcert's responsibility certification activities.

If the complaint is not related to the activities developed by Sbcert, the person in charge records the finding in the form, concludes as unfounded and send a response to the complainant, thanking the statement informing about the finding.

If the complaint is related to the activities carried out by Sbcert, the Quality Sector formally informs the complainant about the registration of the complaint.

The Responsible Manager or the person designated by him shall collect information as much as possible and assess the scope, then forward it for a final decision.

In case of the complaint, the action to be taken must be defined, registering the decision. This decision should be consistent with the nature of the complaint.

The decision of a complaint is made, reviewed, and approved by persons who were not involved in the certification activities related to the complaint. In addition, staff who have consulted or been contracted by the customer involved in the complaint are not used to review or approve that customer's complaint for at least the two years following completion of the consultancy or termination of employment.

Whenever possible after completion of the complaint the Quality Sector informs the complainant about the completion of the process.

6.2 Appeals

Appeals can be received by email or website. They are usually received by Certification Managers or Technical Sector.

When received should be forwarded to the Quality Sector, which in turn registers the appeal in *FSG-03 - Complaint Record and Appeal*. After registration, the Quality formally informs the appellant and forwards it to the Certification Manager.

The Certification Manager shall designate an independent and impartial person to collect and verify all information necessary to assess the appeal against the requirements of the applicable scheme, these persons must not have participated in the certification evaluation and decision process.

After surveying and technical analysis to the Board, or person designated by it according to the job description, makes the decision based on the withdrawals. The decision is made, reviewed and approved by people who were not involved in the certification activities. In addition, staff who have consulted or been engaged by the client involved in the appeal is not used to review or approve the appeal of that client for at least two years following the completion of the consultancy or termination of employment.

After a decision, the records are forwarded to the Quality Sector and archived in the computerized system and informed the appellant about the completion of the process.

6.3 General Provisions

When deemed necessary, an internal process of corrective action may be requested. This process can occur parallel to the treatment of the complaint/ appeal, or even be initiated after the completion of the same.

If applicable, competent authorities should be included in the complaint/appeal process.

Periodically the Quality Manager processes an analysis of the complaint records to assess the occurrence of their repetition.

When the evaluation indicates that the complaint may be repeated or there are situations that put at risk the conformity of the activities, a Corrective Action must be registered in the form *FSG-04 - Corrective Action AP and Improvement*, as indicated in the procedure *PSG-04 - Corrective Action, Preventive Action and Improvement*.

7 Revision Table

| Revision Table | | | |
|----------------|---|------------|-----------------|
| Rev | Description | Date | Responsible |
| 13 | Revision of the text of the note in item 4.2. | 12/09/2024 | Quality Manager |
| 14 | Inclusion of item 4.3. | 05/21/2025 | Quality Manager |