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1. Purpose

The purpose of the procedure is to ensure a stable documented process for handling disputes/complaints/appeal about the service that either KIHT Certification Services (KCS) or its clients provide, which is an integral part of our company's client relations and assurance of customer satisfaction.

2. Scope of Applicability

The procedure is applicable to dispute, complaint and appeal as defined below.

- a) **Dispute:** A dispute is a disagreement between the Client/applicant and KCS audit team (such as non-acceptance of non-conformity (NC) by Clients, non-acceptance by KCS audit team of corrective actions as proposed/implemented by the Clients). Representation on such disagreement should be made to Certification Manager in writing by the Client. KCS will handle disputes by taking the technical support from the independent empaneled technical experts in the subject, if required.
- b) **Complaint:** It is the expression of dissatisfaction (other than an appeal) by any person or organization to KCS relating to the certification activities of KCS or the actions of their certified clients/applicants. The purpose of this procedure is to identify how the dissatisfaction is resolved and corrective action is addressed by KCS.
- c) **Appeal:** It is a request made by a certified client/applicant to the KCS for reconsideration of any adverse decision made by KCS related to its desired certification status.

Note: Adverse decisions include

- refusal to accept an application,
- refusal to proceed with an audits,
- changes in accreditation scope,
- decisions to deny, suspend or withdraw certification, and
- any other action that impedes the attainment of certification.

3. Reference Documents/Standards

- ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015 - Conformity assessment — Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems- Part 1: Requirements
- ISO/IEC 17000:2020 - Conformity assessment — Vocabulary and general principles

4. Responsibilities

The Quality Manager is responsible for following this procedure and the Certification manager will monitor its implementation.


5. Procedures

5.1 Submission of Disputes, Complaints and Appeals

The KCS Quality Manager is responsible for the coordination of disputes, complaints or appeals. Disputes, complaints and appeals shall be sent in writing (by email or letter) to the Quality Manager

The complaint or appeal or dispute shall include:

- a) a clear description of the complaint or appeal or dispute;

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- b) objective evidence to support each element or aspect of the complaint or appeal or dispute;
- c) the name and contact information of the submitter;
- d) a clear statement if the complainant wishes to stay anonymous in relation to the certificate holder against whom the complaint is directed.

In case of appeals, the appellant must file its appeal within 10 calendar days after notification of the decision.

5.2 Steps for Processing of Complaints

5.2.1. Within three working days of receipt of any complaint in writing, the Quality Manager (QM) shall acknowledge in writing (email). In the response to the complainant, QM confirms whether the complaint relates to certification activities for which the KCS is responsible, or the complaint relates to a certified client under KCS. If the complaint is not related to certification activities of KCS or certified client, there will be no further follow-up and the complainant will be informed accordingly.

5.2.2. If the complaint is pertaining to behavior of any particular auditor or KCS staff etc, QM will investigate the complaint, interacting with both the parties (auditors, auditee, client, staff etc) and provide a report towards the closure of complaint and inform the complainant the output of the investigation.


5.2.3. If the complaint is pertaining to KCS certification purview, QM shall appoint a team to follow up on the complaint. The team shall consist of persons that have not been involved in the matter so far. If applicable and possible, the team shall include an appointed KCS Lead auditor, and a person with specific knowledge to understand what are the things to be considered for the received complaints. In place of team, one person may be appointed to investigate the complaint, if required. If the complaint relates to a certified client, then the examination of the complaint shall consider the effectiveness of the certified management system and also the KCS shall refer to the certified client in question within eight working days upon the receipt of the complaint.

The complaint and all relevant information and decision are recorded in the KCS. The complainant is informed of the progress in evaluating the complaint or appeal during the whole process. Information can also be obtained by the complainant on request.

5.2.4. Within two weeks of receiving a complaint, the QM provides an initial response, including an outline of the KCS's proposed course of action to follow up on the complaint, and the team for the follow-up. In case of any perceived conflicts of interest with the team member, the complainant shall identify this and the team may be changed.

In case the complaint requires for in-depth investigation; the team appointed in step 2 shall:

- a) Review the complaint and the related evidence submitted.
 - b) Collect any additional information necessary to assess the complaint
 - c) If required conduct interviews with stakeholders, or onsite assessment
 - d) Prepare a written report and submit it to the KCS Quality Manager
- 5.2.5. A written report of the team related to the complaint is presented to the QM. The QM reviews the report and approves or rejects it. This decision includes:
- a) Description of the investigation that KCS conducted, evidences gathered and verified and the conclusions drawn by the investigation team;
 - b) If applicable, Corrective Actions that were implemented, or are to be implemented, whether at KCS or KCS's clients;
 - c) Information if KCS considers the complaint as resolved (closed) based on the information included in the report.

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- 5.2.6. Within 24 days of receiving the complaint, the report from Step 4 and the decision of KCS is communicated in writing to the complainant.
- 5.2.7. Every registered complaint has to be analyzed for the root cause, correction, corrective action and possible preventive action.

5.3. Steps for Processing of Appeals


- 5.3.1. Within three working days, the QM shall acknowledge in writing (email) the receipt of the appeal.
- 5.3.2. Once the appeal is received, the QM shall appoint a team to follow up on the appeal. The team shall consist of persons that have not been involved in the matter so far. If applicable and possible, the team shall include an appointed KCS Lead auditor, and a person with specific knowledge to understand what are the activities of the concerned client. The “team” can also consist of only one person. The QM or Certification Manager shall not be part of the team, if they approve the final report regarding the appeal.
The appeal and all relevant information and decision are recorded in the KCS. The appellant is informed of the progress in evaluating the appeal during the whole process. Information can also be obtained by the appellant on request.
- 5.3.3. Within two weeks of receiving an appeal, the QM provides an initial response, including an outline of the KCS's proposed course of action to follow up on the appeal, and the team for the follow-up. In case of any perceived conflicts of interest with the team member, the appellant shall identify this and the team may be changed.

In case the appeal requires for in-depth investigation; the team appointed in step 2 shall:

- a. Review the appeal and the related evidence submitted.
 - b. Collect any additional information necessary to assess the appeal
 - c. If required conduct interviews with stakeholders, or onsite assessment
 - d. Prepare a written report and submit it to the KCS Quality Manager
- 5.3.4. A written report of the team related to the appeal is presented to the QM. The QM reviews the report and approves or rejects it. This decision includes:
 - a) Description of the investigation that KCS conducted, evidences gathered and verified and the conclusions drawn by the investigation team;
 - b) If applicable, Corrective Actions that were implemented, or are to be implemented, whether at KCS or KCS's clients;
 - c) Information if KCS considers the appeal as resolved (closed) based on the information included in the report.
 - 5.3.5. Within 24 days of receiving the appeal, the report from Step 4 and the decision of KCS is communicated in writing to the appellant.

5.4 Steps for Processing of Disputes

- 5.4.1. The dispute needs to be submitted either by the certified client/applicant in writing stating clearly what the dispute is related to. Within three working days, the QM shall acknowledge in writing (email) the receipt of the dispute.
- 5.4.2. Once the dispute is received, the QM shall review appoint a team to follow up on the dispute. The team shall consist of persons that have not been involved in the matter so far who will perform an additional review.
- 5.4.3. The dispute and all relevant information and decision are recorded in the KCS. The disputant is informed of the progress in evaluating the dispute during the whole process. Information can also be obtained by the disputant on request.

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- 5.4.4 If the dispute is against a decision made by the certification council, it will be presented to the Impartiality Committee. The Impartiality Committee shall review the situation.
- 5.4.5 Upon completion of the review within ten working days of receiving the dispute, the client will be informed of the decision.
- 5.4.6 If the dispute cannot be resolved or the initiator/concerned party does not accept KCS response, an appeal can be made by the disputant.

5.5 Root cause, correction and corrective action

Each complaint/ appeal/dispute after closure shall be analyzed for:

- Root cause of the complaint/appeal
- Correction taken
- Corrective action Implementation & date of implementation
- Effectiveness of implementation of corrective actions

5.6 Record Maintenance

KCS would maintain a record of all complaints, disputes and appeals received, actions taken, corrective actions, if any, and their effectiveness. The client is notified through email regarding the progress of the complaint, appeal or dispute. These records would be maintained for a period of 5 years.

6.0 Records - Other Applicable Document

- List of External documents submitted by Client
- Complaint and Appeal Register (F203, F204)
- Procedure for corrective action (PR13)

Revision Status

Resv. no	Date of approval	Clause/Para under change	Reason of Change
01	04.11.2023	Revision Status	Revision number column added in the revision Status

Revathi. K

K. Udayabhaskar

Prepared By: Quality Manager Date: 04-11-2023	Reviewed & Approved By: Certification Manager Date: 04-11-2023
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