

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

FOR PRODUCT CERTIFICATION

(ISO/ IEC 17065:2012)

DOC NO.:	VG-PR-06	ISSUE:	01
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ISO/ IEC 17065 PROCEDURE – COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to describe handling of incident, complaint and appeals received from the client, in house and from other parties.

2. SCOPE

This procedure is applicable to all types of complaints and appeals received by Verger.

3. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

INCIDENT

Referred to Complaints, Suggestions, Appeals, Observations and Opportunities for improvement.

COMPLAINTS

Complaints are incidents of grievance or dissatisfaction with Verger. Complaints may be internal in nature or external in nature raised by client, suppliers or other affiliated organizations or complaints raised by client's customers or stake holders as well as written or verbal.

SUGGESTIONS

Verger recognizes that positive feedback is as important as negative. Suggestions are vital in identifying risk and system improvement. As with complaints, suggestions may be internal or external in nature, written or verbal.

APPEALS

Verger recognizes that the client may have some reservations or may not agree with the conduct of evaluator, evaluation findings, certification committee decision and/ or overall interaction with Verger staff. Client is free to communicate the same to Verger Appeal committee and this is treated as an appeal from the client.

OBSERVATIONS

Observations are witnessed incidents of service/operational deficiency, and/ or failure. Observations are often made by individuals independent of the activity witnessed and therefore objective in nature. Observations also play important role in identification of risk and system improvement.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Opportunities for Improvement are incidents where the system has not failed, yet greater operational efficiency may be obtained in analyzing current practice. Opportunities for Improvement are often collected internally but input from external sources is also beneficial.

All applicable as defined in clause 3 of manual.

4. PROCEDURE

4.1 MANAGEMENT SYSTEM INCIDENTS

For the purposes of this document Management System Incidents are defined as complaints, suggestions, observations and opportunities for improvement. Management System Incident data is entered into the Corrective Action for proper treatment. This procedure describes the methodology

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by which Verger collects and processes incident reports; and communicates the impact to staff members.

Verger recognizes those incidents which occur in daily operation that collectively have an impact on the Management System. In order to properly analyze and address system issues, a consistent and thorough process for collection of information is vital.

4.2 RECEIPT OF INCIDENTS

The incident may be reported by any means – verbal or written. In case of an external source, the Customer complaint record may be received by any staff member. The staff member shall fill the Customer complaint record recording all the information and details of the complaint. The filled report shall be submitted to QA Engineer for further action. In case of internal source, the Customer complaint record shall be filled by the staff member and submit to QA Engineer.

QA Engineer shall contact (telephone, email, letter) the external source to acknowledge the receipt of information within 48 hours of receipt. He shall understand the issue in detail from the source (to avoid any error in writing the report). He may decide to personally meet the initiator, depending on the gravity and seriousness of issue.

All such incidents received by any means or by any one is first of all recorded in the Customer complaint record with the details of;

- Complaint and appeal Sr. No.,
- Mode of receipt,
- Received by,
- Name of client / other parties,
- Description of complaint and appeal,
- Reference of services against, which complaint and appeal is raised along with the reference, date and other details.

QA Engineer to register complaint / appeal in the Complaint and Appeal Register (VG-F-38). Client/ other parties' complaint and appeal Customer complaint record are issued to the QA Engineer for analyzing the root cause.

QA Engineer validates the complaint after checking necessary back-up records or personal interview of evaluators/ staff members (who were involved into job).

4.3 TREATMENT OF CLIENT COMPLAINT AND OBSERVATIONS

In case of a complaint/ observation against Verger, QA Engineer analyses the issue to determine if there is system error or person error. He shall determine the root cause and determine correction, corrective action. The possible complaints are –

- Administration problems with appointments, certification files, certificates issued or issued late.
- Evaluators / subcontractor problems with incomplete evaluations documentation

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- Agents – problems with general compliance with Verger administration or evaluation procedures

The correction is effected immediately to satisfy the complainant. This may include training / counseling the person involved. The CAR/ PAR is discussed with management during next Management Review. Appropriate action is taken based on discussions (change in procedure/ formats, training to all personnel etc.). An email is sent out to all staff detailing the issue and remedial action (for information). A copy of the complaint and investigation details is maintained in the respective individual's personnel file for reference at the performance appraisals.

In case of a complaint/ observation against a certified client, the QA Engineer studies the complaint and discusses with the evaluator. If the complaint is found genuine and valid i.e. indicates a system failure, the complaint is sent to the client for a response. No confidential reports or information will be sent to complainants without written permission from the client. Adequate time is given to the client for response. If required, QA Engineer follows up with the client for the response. Depending on the response, QA Engineer may decide to;

- Write to the complainant about the response and asks for his response.
- Ask further clarification from the client
- Depute an evaluator to personally visit the client and investigate for failure. Such visit shall be considered as special visit and charged to client.
- Request a joint meeting with client, complainant and Verger

QA Engineer shall communicate with the complainant at the end of the process detailing the findings and to formally close the complaint. A copy of the correspondence is kept in the client file for records and the same is passed to evaluator during next audit. The details of all complaints and action taken (Correction, CAR/ PAR) are discussed in Management Review and IC meeting.

4.4 TREATMENT OF HANDLING OF APPEALS

Any company or organization who fails to satisfy an evaluation or surveillance may appeal against the decision. Where an appeal is received the following procedure will be followed.

The CEO will appoint the members of the appeals committee under the leadership of CEO who will hear the appeal and determine the outcome. In case, CEO are part of the certification team, CEO shall decide the investigating officer for the appeals process. In such a scenario CEO shall approach Impartiality Committee and/ or Verger team to provide decision on the appeal. The decision on the appeal shall be taken based on the decision by Verger committee and the Impartiality committee. Results of the appeal will be reported to the Impartiality Committee.

- All appeals shall be received by the QA Engineer and details of appeals shall be recorded in the Appeals Register maintained by the QA Engineer.
- QA Engineer shall investigate the appeal made and inform the client about its plan of action for investigation and action there upon.

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- An investigation report (Incident Report) for each individual appeal shall be maintained by the QA Engineer. In case, any further corrective and preventive action is required post actions identified and taken based on Incident report, Corrective and preventive action procedure.
- A copy of the investigation report shall be sent to the client.
- In case of any further ambiguity, the same shall be reviewed by the board of directors and appropriate decision arrived at.
- In case the issue still remains open; the same shall be intimated to the accreditation board for its valuable comments.
- All appeals made are collated and analyzed on a yearly basis.
- Necessary corrective and preventive actions shall be taken based on the appeal trend.
- Appeal trends and corrective and preventive action taken shall also be reviewed as part of the Management committee meeting and Impartiality committee meeting.
- QA Engineer shall ensure that details with respect to the appellant and actions there upon is not shared with the audit team members.
- QA Engineer shall ensure that no discriminatory action is taken against the appellant.
- The client is made aware of the appeals process and is available to him on request.

4.5 TREATMENT OF OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPROVEMENT

In case of opportunity for improvement, the source is predominantly internal and the concerned staff member fills the Customer complaint record and submits to QA Engineer. The other source may be internal / external.

QA Engineer studies the suggestion to determine any conflict with ISO 17065. In case the suggestion is in conflict, the same is communicated to the initiator. However, the suggestion is also discussed in Management review. In case the suggestion is found not in conflict, the suggestion is studied for benefits and the impact on other processes.

The suggestion is accepted if found beneficial and does not adversely impact any other process. QA Engineer determines the changes in existing documentation and implements through Document Control Procedure.

If any certified client or interested party asks for the appeal/ complaint handling process, then it is forwarded to QA Engineer. He will inform a certified client/any other interested party the appeals and complaint handling process of Verger if any complaints/ appeals are received by certified clients/ interested party.

4.6 CLOSING OF COMPLAINT AND APPEAL

Depending on the nature of the incident, the QA Engineer may follow up with requests for corrective and preventive actions. When the investigation of client complaint and appeal determines that remote operation or other external organizations contributed to the complaint and appeal, the Technical Director or his delegate contacts these organizations and provides them with all relevant information.

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Every client complaint and appeal are recorded. The records are maintained by the QA Engineer. When there are copies of written communication, reports and other documents related to a complaint and appeal, these records are organized into a file and are identified with the complaint and appeal number and also having records of the corresponding corrective action. The records of investigations that concern service quality or other test characteristics are maintained by the Technical Manager. Based on analysis of Client/ Other Parties complaint and appeal, necessary actions are taken and client is replied for closing the complaint and appeal. QA Engineer identifies need for taking corrective action to prevent such complaint and appeal in future and accordingly concerned person is informed.

All the complaint and appeal received by Organization will be closed within 7 working days after receipt of the complaint and appeal. QA Engineer / Technical Manager authorized for closing of complaint and appeal.

5. REFERENCES

- ISO/ IEC 17065:2012

6. RECORDS

- 6.1 Customer Compliant Report: VG-F-04

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CHANGE HISTORY

ISSUE	CHAPTER	PAGE	CHANGE INTRODUCTION	REV NO.	EFFECTIVE DATE
01	/	/	First version	00	20/11/2020
01	/	/	Reformatted the whole document and amended the document control no. as per procedure.	01	04/02/2021
01	/	/	Reformatted document as Verger Group	02	21/07/2022
01	4.2	4	Complaint and Appeal Register format number and incident report name change to customer complaint record.	03	06/11/2024
01	/	/	Made few corrections(like spelling mistakes and typo error)	04	16/12/2024