

GCAS QUALITY CERTIFICATIONS PRIVATE LIMITED

OPERATING PROCEDURE

APPEALS, COMPLAINTS AND DISPUTES

1.0 PURPOSE

To define process to receive, evaluate and make decisions on appeals against its decisions and complaints against GCAS personnel

2.0 SCOPE

This procedure applies to appeals from clients in respect of the following.

- failure to recommendation
- suspension, withdrawal or cancellation of the certificate

The procedure also applies to appeals from a third party against a decision to grant certification and complaints regarding GCAS personnel including subcontractors.

3.0 PROCESS OWNERS AND ROLES

Chief Executive Officer: Responsible for investigating complaints against employees or contracted assessment personnel.

Scheme Manager: Controls and monitors appeals and compliant procedure.

Chairman of Governing Body: Chairs appeal panel. Also is responsible for investigating complaints against the Chief Executive Officer.

Auditor: Responsible for ensuring that the auditor is competent to perform the auditing as per the requirement of ISO 17021 requirements.

Technical Expert: Responsible for providing sector industry knowledge and support to the audit team when applicable.

Certification coordinator: Responsible for planning the audits for Initial (2 stages), Surveillance and recertification.

4.0 DEFINITIONS

Client: the party that is responsible for the Management System being audited

Certificate: certificate issued to record the management system operated by the client has been audited by GCAS in accordance with the ISO 17021 standards.

5.0 REFERENCE

ISO 17021 : 2011 Clause 9.7- Appeals, 9.8- complaints

6.0 DOCUMENTATION

GCAS003 - Terms and Conditions of Certification

GCAS122 - Appeal Register / Appeal File

GCAS121 - Complaint Register

7.0 PROCEDURAL STEPS

7.1 Registration of Appeals

7.1.1 Brief details of the Appeal Procedure are outlined in the Terms and Condition of Certification (GCAS003) and sent to all parties requesting details of the procedure for certification. Also procedure details are made available in the website for publicly access.

7.1.2 Request by a client or other parties for reconsideration of any adverse decision made by the certification body related to its desired certification status

NOTE Adverse decisions include

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

7.1.3 Notification of client's intention to appeal must be made in writing within 30 days of the decision, along with all the necessary documents in support of the appeal.

7.1.4 The Scheme Manager maintains a register (GCAS122) of all appeals. The details recorded include the date of receipt, client details, summary of the appeal, and an appeal reference number. Appeals are registered immediately on receipt and the register is updated with details of the outcome after the hearing.

7.1.5 The identifying appeal reference number is used on all subsequent correspondence and other records related to the appeal, copies are retained in an appeal file.

7.2 Appeal Procedure.

7.2.1 Any person or body can file an appeal against the decision of the Body to the CB Board through Scheme Manager.

7.2.2 The appeal must be filed in writing within thirty days of the decision of the Board along with all the necessary documents in support of the appeal.

7.2.3 The Scheme Manager verifies the documents for completeness and may ask for additional documentary support if necessary. Once the documents are complete, the Scheme Manager acknowledges the receipt of the appeal and forwards the same to the Governing Body Chairman. The Chairman has the right to either disallow the appeal or to form an Appeals Committee based on the merit of the contents of the appeal.

7.2.4 Chairman of the Governing Body chairs the Appeal Panel. He will appoint two members from the Governing Body who are not having any direct commercial interest in the service concerned as Appeal Panel and make the necessary arrangements for the panel to meet.

7.2.5 A meeting of an Appeal Panel is held within 30 days of receipt of the appeal. The appeal process includes the following elements and methods: -

- a) investigating the appeal, and for deciding what actions are to be taken in response to it, taking into the accounts the results of previous similar appeals;
- b) tracking and recording appeals, including actions taken to resolve them
- c) ensuring that any appropriate correction and corrective actions are taken.

7.2.6 The appellant is given at least 7 days notice of the time and place of the meeting and is entitled to be heard in confidence.

7.2.6 The decision of the majority of the Appeals Panel as declared by its Chairman is communicated to both parties at the end of the hearing and is final. Once the Appeal Panel has made a decision regarding an appeal, no counter claim by either party in dispute can be made to amend or change this decision.

7.2.7 If an appeal is found to be in the favor of the appellant the panel will be responsible for ensuring that suitable corrective and preventive action is taken which may in the form of;

- an additional assessment of the client's Management System free of charges

- retraining of Auditors
- changes to procedures

7.3 Complaints

7.3.1 Brief details of the complaints Procedure are outlined in the Terms and Condition of Certification (GCAS003 / GCAS105) and also in the website sent to all parties requesting details of the procedure for certification.

7.3.2 Complaint can be made by any person or body against the following;

- i) the Certification Body(CB), its operation and/or procedures
- ii) the assessors, experts, committee members or staff of the CB
- iii) assessment process followed by the assessors and/or by the CB
- iv) misuse of the accredited status either in scope or in use of the logo or mark

(Note: Compliant means expression of dissatisfaction, other than appeal, by any person or organization, to certification body, relating to the activities of certification body, where a response is expected)

If the complaints involve the Scheme Manager it should be addressed to the Chief Executive Officer and the complaints involves Chief Executive Officer, it should be addressed to the Chairman of the Governing Body of GCAS.

7.3.3 If the complaint has no details of the complainant or the description is not adequate, the CB will reserve the right of dealing with the complaint as deemed fit.

The Scheme Manager maintains a Complaints register (GCAS121) for all complaints. This includes the date of receipt, client details, summary of the complaint, and a complaint reference number

7.3.4 Complaints are registered immediately on receipt and the client is sent an acknowledgement letter indicating that the matter is receiving timely attention.

7.3.5 The Scheme Manager or Chairman decides on an appropriate course of action and the decision is recorded in the complaints register.

7.3.6 The client is informed of the proposed actions and is asked to comment.

7.3.7 The register is updated with details of the action and the client's response, if any, is noted.

7.3.8 Complaints are monitored with a view to improving client satisfaction and reducing their future incidence.

- 7.3.9 Any registered supplier or any other affected party can send complaint to the GCAS Scheme Manager on one or more of the following situations
- a) Any end user who is experiencing misuse or abuse of GCAS logo or certification by a certified supplier
 - b) Any registered certified supplier can send complaint against the Certification Body personnel on their attitude / behavior including onsite / offsite activities
 - a. Any applicant who is seeking to get clarification is not provided with the relevant for his clarity

7.4 Dispute

- 7.4.1 GCAS considers Dispute as “Unresolved complaints about accreditation criteria or procedures”
- 7.4.2 The disputes about the certification system, assessment process etc. should be forwarded to the Scheme Manager in writing along with the information on the issue supported by the documentary evidence. The action taken by the two parties involved in the dispute shall also be enclosed along with the dispute.
- 7.4.3 The Scheme Manager will acknowledge the Dispute and indicate the approximate time required to resolve the same.
- 7.4.4 The details of the Dispute are forwarded to either the CEO or the Technical Committee Chairman as appropriate for their comments and decision. The respective committee chairman or CEO may consult any of the committee members, experts or assessors.
- 7.4.5 The decision on the dispute shall be forwarded to the person or body by the Scheme Manager.

7.5 Review

- 7.5.1 The Scheme Manager has been assigned to ensure the following activities arising out of 1) Appeal 2) Complaints and 3) Disputes either with the supplier or other interested parties;
- Taking appropriate corrective and preventive action as identified.
 - Keeping records related to all appeals, complaints, disputes and remedial actions related to certification / registration activities.
 - Assessing the effectiveness of action taken and document the action taken for submission to Technical Committee and Governing Body.

7.5.2 The status of progress of appeals and complaints are reviewed on a regular basis by the Scheme Manager

7.5.3 This review forms part of the periodic management review of the certification system

7.6 Other parties Appeal, Dispute and complaint

7.6.1 Appeal: This will be processed through appeal panel and the decision of the Appeal panel will be communicated to the affected party. If any damage or rectification has to be initiated from the GCAS the same will be completed as per the target stipulated by the appeal panel.

7.6.2 Complaints: The technical committee will review the complaints and the remedial action identified will be recorded and communicated to the person who has lodged the complaint.

7.6.3 Dispute: The appeal panel if needed will listen to the affected parties, for analysis the disputed issues. Based on the submission, decision will be taken and action will be identified and recorded for execution.

7.7 Financing the Complaint, Appeal and Dispute Process

7.7.1 If the resolution of the Complaint, Appeal or Dispute is done without undertaking any travel or additional assessment, no financing will be needed for such resolutions. If the resolution calls for undertaking travel and assessment, the cost will be borne by the defaulting party.

(END OF SECTION)