

1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

- 1.1 The procedure to be followed to address and resolve any formal written complaint regarding the performance of ASI, of one of ASI's accredited CABs, or of a certified organisation.

Note: This procedure does not address general expressions of dissatisfaction or verbal complaints, which shall be addressed on a case by case basis by ASI staff.

2 TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 All terms and definitions are provided in the ASI Vocabulary.

3 ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTATION

3.1	Standards and Policies	ISO 17011:2004
3.2	Procedures, Guidelines	ASI-PRO-10-101-System Improvement v1.0 ASI-PRO-20-103-Appeals v2.0 Terms of Reference for ASI Accreditation Committee Members
3.3	Checklists, Templates, etc.	Complaints File Internal Nonconformity (NC) Form Personal File

4 PROCEDURES

4 GENERAL

- 4.1 ASI will address formal written (email/letter) complaints for which a response is required that are brought to its attention.
- 4.2 If an individual or an organisation expresses general dissatisfaction or makes a verbal complaint to ASI personnel, ASI staff member shall first attempt to satisfy the complainant if able to do so. If this is not possible, the complainant shall be invited to lodge a formal complaint addressed to the relevant ASI APM or ASI Director.

- 4.3 To be accepted and classified by ASI as a formal complaint, it shall:
- 4.3.1 be in writing (email/letter);
 - 4.3.2 state that it is a complaint;
 - 4.3.3 be submitted in English. Other languages may be accepted by ASI on a case by case basis.
 - 4.3.4 be specific and include appropriate objective evidence to substantiate any claim. A complainant is required to provide specific justification for the complaint and evidence of any alleged nonconformity if relevant. Use of layman's language is acceptable.
- 4.4 Complaints based upon hearsay -may not be accepted by ASI, or ASI may ask further formalization to the complainant.
- 4.5 A formal complaint should be:
- 4.5.1 From a CAB regarding ASI's accreditation function or other activities of ASI;
or
 - 4.5.2 From interested parties or stakeholders regarding the performance of an ASI accredited or applicant CAB; or
 - 4.5.3 From interested parties/stakeholders regarding the performance of a certified organisation.
- 4.6 Appeals may only be made by a CAB against an accreditation decisions made by ASI, and are covered separately by the ASI Appeals Procedure.
- 4.7 If certification scheme owners operate an independent objection, complaint or appeal system, ASI shall take the results of any complaints into account but shall not be bound by them.
- 4.8 Complaints shall be screened by the ASI personnel to ensure that they meet the criteria indicated above. If they do not the complainant will be informed that their complaint will not be accepted and the reasons why.
- 4.9 Accepted complaints shall be acknowledged in writing (email/letter) by the ASI Director or relevant APM within 10 days of receipt.
- 4.10 Complaints received by ASI are reviewed annually during ASI Management Review.

5 COMPLAINTS ABOUT ASI

- 5.1 A complaint against the ASI Director shall be forwarded to the Chairman of the ASI Accreditation Committee who shall review it and allocate it for action as required.
- 5.2 A copy of the complaint may be forwarded to the Chief Executive of the relevant certification scheme.
- 5.3 Complaints against ASI staff members will be investigated and addressed according to ASI internal procedures and any relevant legal requirement in order to protect the rights of the ASI staff member.

- 5.4 The ASI Director or the Chairman of the ASI Accreditation Committee shall allocate each complaint to an 'investigator', who shall either be from amongst ASI personnel, or if the complaint appears to warrant it, shall appoint an investigator independent of ASI. (The investigator can be more than one person working as a team). A copy of the complaint, with all correspondence, shall be forwarded to the designated person. In all cases the investigator shall be independent of the complaint.
- 5.5 The investigator may contact the complainant and may obtain any additional information from other sources such as the CAB, the CAB's clients, the certification scheme owner and / or other stakeholders if necessary.
- 5.6 The investigator, having reviewed all available information, shall make a decision on whether the complaint against ASI performance or ASI systems is justified, and if so shall report back to the ASI Director or the Chairman of the ASI Accreditation Committee.
- 5.7 The ASI Director shall ensure that ASI implements the appropriate measures to address the complaint.
- 5.8 The ASI Director shall notify the complainant that the complaint has been addressed and may, providing that confidentiality is not breached, choose to explain how the complaint has been addressed and the issue resolved, and the actions have been taken.
- 5.9 When completed the complaint and other records created shall be filed in the ASI Complaints File.
- 5.10 For a complaint against an ASI staff member, a copy of the complaint, relevant correspondence and measures taken shall be filed in their Personal File.
- 5.11 ASI decision and measures taken to address a complaint cannot be appealed. If the complainant is not satisfied with the measures taken by ASI, a formal complaint maybe raised with the relevant certification scheme owner.

6 COMPLAINTS ABOUT ASI ACCREDITED CABS

- 6.1 In the first instance complaints against a CAB shall be directed to the CAB. Any complaint which has not been referred to the CAB for resolution will be directed to the CAB and will not be directly handled by ASI.
- 6.2 When a complaint is received about an ASI accredited or applicant CAB and if, in the view of the complainant, the complaint has not been satisfactorily addressed and resolved by the CAB, the complaint may be passed to the relevant ASI APM for follow-up. Complaints against an ASI accredited or applicant CAB are dealt with in the same way as complaints against ASI, except that the investigator will be the relevant ASI APM.
- 6.3 Depending on the seriousness of the issue raised a desk review or field assessment maybe required. If after investigation the complaint is found to be justified, and

nonconformity has been detected, ASI shall issue appropriate Nonconformity (NC) and require the CAB to take appropriate corrective action.

6.4 ASI NC and the corrective action implemented by the CAB shall be recorded in the complaints log and in the relevant ASI report if an assessment of the CAB is performed.

6.5 ASI shall ensure that complainant is advised of ASI follow-up and actions taken.

7 COMPLAINTS ABOUT CERTIFIED ORGANISATIONS

7.1 In the first instance complaints against certified organisations shall be forwarded to the CAB concerned for action.

7.2 The CAB shall undertake the investigation of the complaint about the certified organisation. If relevant, ASI may request a response from the CAB explaining the outcome of their investigation and ensure the complaint has been satisfactorily investigated and corrective action taken as appropriate.

7.3 Complaints received by CABs and the way in which they were processed shall be reviewed during ASI office assessments. ASI shall ensure that complainants are advised of CAB actions by the CAB.

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