

Global Certification and Monitoring Services

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS MANAGEMENT PROCESS



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GCMS
Global Certification and Monitoring Services

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>SCOPE</i>	3
<i>1. GENERAL</i>	3
<i>2. PROCESS AND RESPONSIBILITIES</i>	4
<i>3. VERBAL COMPLAINTS/APPEALS</i>	4
<i>4. WRITTEN COMPLAINTS/APPEALS</i>	5
<i>5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</i>	5
<i>6. INVESTIGATION</i>	6
<i>7. CLOSURE OF COMPLAINTS/APPEALS</i>	7
<i>8. DOCUMENT HISTORY</i>	7



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SCOPE

This is a documented process to receive, evaluate and make decisions on complaints and appeals received by the Global Certification and Monitoring Group (hereafter – GCMS Group, Certification Body). The goal of this process is to deliver a great Client experience and enhance Client's satisfaction while resolving their complaints and appeals in a timely manner and in compliance with our client's complaint and appeal management requirements. In addition, the procedure is assisting GCMS Group in collecting valuable information regarding the Client's experience that will assist in the identification of potential opportunities for enhancement, as well as potential risks for GCMS Group, our clients' organisations and their clients.

1. GENERAL

For general enquiries, GCMS Group provide any information requested concerning its geographical areas in which it operates, the status of a given certification, the name, related normative document, scope and geographical location (city and country) for a specific certified client. Besides that, GCMS records and tracks all received complaints and appeals, as well as the actions undertaken to resolve them.

GCMS Group shall incorporate the following complaints/appeals management methods:

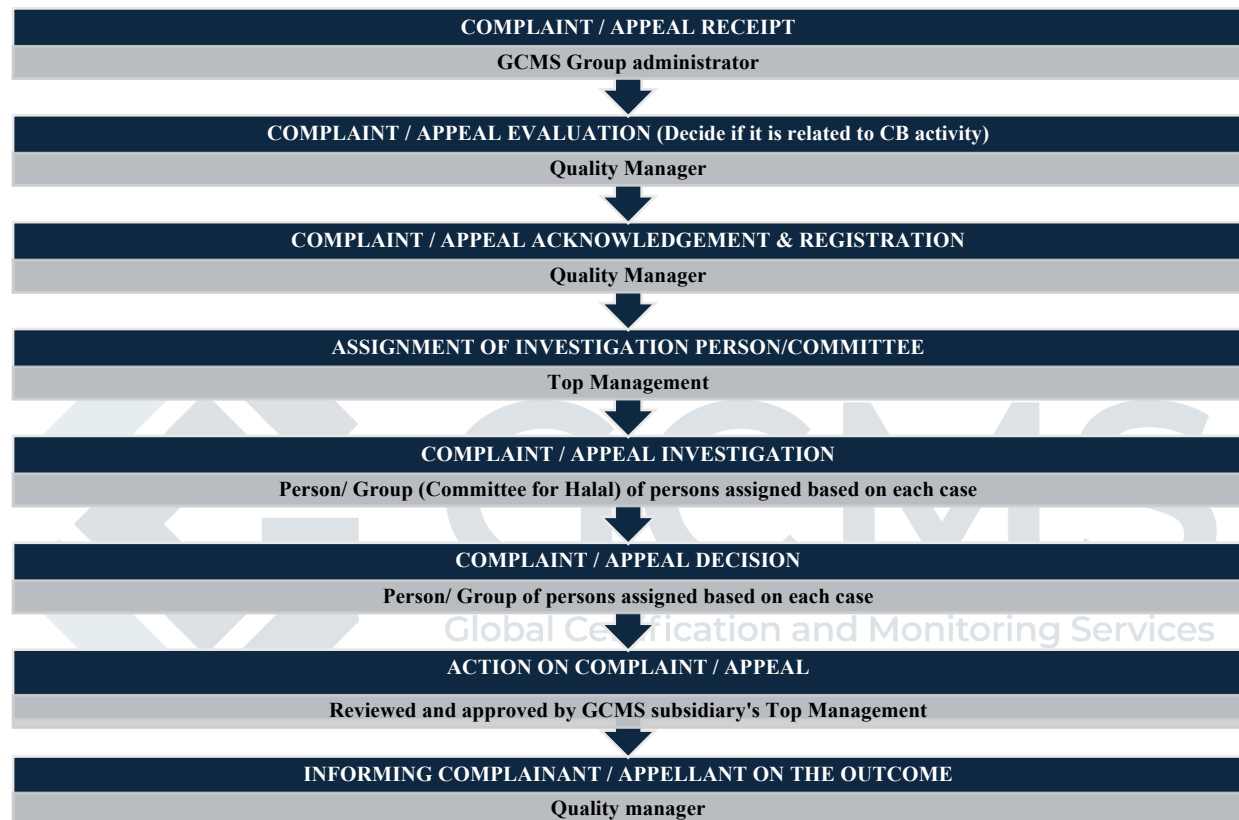
1. following the approved process when receiving, validating and investigating complaints/appeals and deciding which actions need to be taken in response to it, considering the results of previous similar complaints/appeals.
2. tracking and recording complaints/appeals, including actions undertaken to resolve them;
3. ensuring that any appropriate correction and corrective action are taken in response to the complaint/appeal.

Any valid complaint about a certified Client is also referred to the certified Client in question at an appropriate time.

All received complaints and appeals are treated as strictly confidential by all GCMS Group personnel.

2. PROCESS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

GCMS Group is responsible for all decisions at all levels of the complaints and appeals handling process. GCMS Group ensures that the persons engaged in the complaints and appeals handling process are different from those who carried out the audits and made the certification decisions. Depending on the type of the complaints and appeals, a responsible person / committee is assigned for investigation and decision. The general steps of complaints and appeals handling process are described below:



3. VERBAL COMPLAINTS/APPEALS

If a complainant ('Complainant') or appellant ('Appellant') raises his/her complaint/appeal verbally, for example during a telephone call, a GCMS Group's administrator must request that the Complainant/Appellant to submit a formal written complaint/appeal, in an email or a letter form and specify, which GCMS subsidiary the complaint/appeal is addressed to. The written complaint/appeal must be forwarded to the GCMS Group's Quality manager immediately. The Quality manager then evaluates whether the complaint/appeal relates to the Certification activities and if yes, registers it and forwards it to the Certification manager and or Top management to assign the person for investigation and decision.

4. WRITTEN COMPLAINTS/APPEALS

GCMS Group's administrator forwards the complaint/appeal to the Quality manager immediately upon its receipt. The written complaint/appeal should provide clear details of the issue or matter of concern, the desired outcome, which GCMS subsidiary the complaint/appeal is addressed to and include supporting documentation or evidence, where applicable. The quality manager evaluates whether the complaint/appeal relates to the certification activities and if yes, registers it and forwards it to the Certification manager and or Top management to assign the person for investigation and decision.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Submission, investigation and decision on complaints/appeals shall not result in any discriminatory actions against the Complainant or Appellant.

Upon receipt of a complaint, GCMS Group Quality manager shall confirm whether the complaint relates to certification activities that it is responsible for and, if so, shall deal with it. If the complaint relates to a certified Client, then examination of the complaint shall consider the effectiveness of the certification process. Any complaint about a certified Client shall also be referred by GCMS Group to the certified Client in question at an appropriate time.

An acknowledgement letter/email will be issued by the GCMS Group's quality manager to the Complainant/Appellant, within 10 business days from the receipt of the written complaint/appeal, unless the complaint/appeal has been fully resolved within the intervening period. This communication to the Complainant/Appellant must include the details of the complaint management process which includes but is not limited to the type of information that must be provided by the Complainant/Appellant, identity and contact details of the person to whom the complaint/appeal should be directed, the indicative timeframe for handling the complaint/appeal. Furthermore, GCMS Group is obliged to provide the Complainant/Appellant with a final response by no later than one month after date of receipt of the formal written complaint/appeal. Where the desired outcome cannot be provided within this period, GCMS Group will inform the Complainant/Appellant of the causes of the delay and indicate the date at which a response is likely to be made. Any complaints/appeals from a government or regulatory body must be immediately reported to the Top Manager of the relevant GCMS subsidiary who will be the sole point of contact for complaints/appeals.

6. INVESTIGATION

The GCMS Group's Complaints and Appeals assigned person/committee investigates and analysis of the facts and circumstances that lead to the complaint/appeal. The GCMS Group responsible for gathering and verifying all necessary information to progress the complaint/appeal to a decision. To avoid any conflicts of interest, only employees who are not involved or related to the matter of the complaint/appeal shall be asked to assist with the investigation. The decision resolving the complaint or appeal is always made by the assigned person by the top management depending on the subject of the complaint/appeal, to ensure that there is no conflict of interest, personnel provided consultancy to a Client, or been employed by a Client, is not used to review or approve the resolution of a complaint or appeal for that Client within two years following the end of the consultancy or employment. All decisions regarding complaints/appeals are taken anonymously by the members of the assigned members GCMS Group. Upon the finalisation of the investigation, the assigned person will make a recommendation to the Top Management of the relevant GCMS subsidiary on the appropriate recourse, if any. The recommendation to the Top Management may include a number of proposed remedial solutions such as an apology letter, the provision of an explanatory letter to the Complainant/Appellant, financial compensation and/or remedial action against the employee who is subject to the complaint/appeal. If the complaint/appeal involves a violation of the law, regulations, circulars or any internal policy, the GCMS Group may treat this matter as a compliance incident which may entail further internal investigation. Where the outcome of the investigation is insufficient to resolve the complaint/appeal, the GCMS Group's top management may decide to use the services of external third parties, for example lawyers or auditors. GCMS Group's top management or the top management of the relevant GCMS subsidiary shall take any subsequent action needed to resolve the complaint or appeal and has to ensure that the complaint/appeal is resolved in the best possible manner.

Complaints by consumers regarding a certified product are evaluated by the GCMS Group, which is responsible for making the necessary investigations. As a result of such evaluations, the complaint is found to be justified then the certificate holder shall be required to compensate for the damage(s) caused under the relevant provisions of the Agreement.

7. CLOSURE OF COMPLAINTS/APPEALS

The answering letter to the Complainant/Appellant shall always be sent via registered mail with confirmation of delivery or by a courier and shall contain a statement which details when tacit acceptance of the proposed remedy will be deemed. Furthermore, the answering letter shall provide the Complainant/Appellant with the non-judicial alternative dispute resolution process. There are two possible outcomes upon the Complainant's/Appellant's receipt of the answering letter:

- a. the Complainant/Appellant is satisfied with the proposed remedy and has confirmed in writing his/her acceptance thereof. Alternatively, the Complainant/Appellant failed to reject the proposal in writing in the stipulated time period. The complaint/appeal will also be considered 'closed' upon the Complainant's / Appellant's express or tacit acceptance of the proposed remedy. The GCMS Group's appointed responsible employee will update the Complaints/Appeals register accordingly, or,
- b. the Complainant/Appellant rejects the proposed remedy in writing. If no new factual information is provided by the Complainant/Appellant with his written rejection, the complaint/appeal will most likely escalate to an external dispute resolution mechanism.

GCMS Group shall determine, together with the client and the complainant/Appellant, whether and, if so to what extent, the subject of the complaint/appeal and its resolution shall be made public.

8. DOCUMENT HISTORY

Version number	Description	Date
01	First release	2025-04-30
02	Updated the chapter (2) Process and responsibilities.	2025-09-02
03	Added history of the document.	2025-12-02