



AREAS

Certificazioni

TITLE	HANDLING PROCEDURE FOR COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS
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NOTE: in case of discrepancies, the Italian version of this document prevails

5	10.02.2023	Quality Manager	Director technician	Resolution internal recommendation
4	07.04.2022	Quality Manager	Director technician	General review
3	25.02.2022	Quality Manager	Director technician	Resolution internal recommendation
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1	10.09.2021	Quality Manager	Director technician	General review
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Rev.	Date	Issued by	Approved by	Description of changes

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1. PURPOSE

This procedure regulates the processing of appeals, complaints and disputes presented by Certified Organizations or other parties, regarding the operational activities of AREAS Certificazioni Srl (hereafter AREAS), such as the behavior of the auditors and / or inspectors in charge, methods of management of certification practices, alleged unequal treatment, decisions taken by the Technical Management or the Certification Committee, etc.

This procedure is made public on the website www.areassrl.it.

2. REFERENCES

SGQ-M-01-01_Quality Management System Manual

SGQ-E-10-04_List of documents of internal origin

SGQ-P-02-10_Procedure for drawing up, coding and archiving documents and certificates

SGQ-E-10-05_List of documents of external origin

SGQ-D-10-09_Job Description

SGQ-F-10-03_Complaint and Appeals Form

3. NORMATIVE REFERENCES

ISO/IEC 17000:2020 Conformity assessment - Vocabulary and general principles

ISO/IEC 17065:2012 Conformity assessment - Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services

ISO/IEC 17021:2015 Conformity assessment - Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems

ISO/IEC 17020:2012 Conformity assessment - Requirements for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspection

ISO/IEC 17024:2012 Conformity assessment - General requirements for bodies operating certification of persons

4. DEFINITIONS

- Complainant: Person, organization or representative of the same, who submits a complaint to AREAS.
- Complaint: Expression of dissatisfaction addressed to AREAS, in relation to its services or to the complaint processing process itself, where a response or solution is explicitly or implicitly awaited.
- Appeal: Request or demand addressed against an act or decision of AREAS, taken in the context of or at the conclusion of the provision of certification / control / inspection, in order to obtain its modification and / or cancellation.
- Litigation: this is a judicial process activated when the parties fail to resolve the object of the dispute, normally initiated by appeal.
- Interested party: Person or group of persons having an interest in the performance or success of an organization.

- Customer Satisfaction: Customer perception on the fulfillment of their requirements.

5. GENERAL

The process of handling both complaints and appeals is managed by AREAS under the constraint of confidentiality, both as regards the person who submitted the complaint or appeal, and as regards the content of the complaint itself.

On the website of the Body www.areassrl.it, this procedure is published, which is part, together with the general contractual conditions SGQ-D-08-01 and the Specific Regulations of the Scheme, to the contract applied either by the Body and accepted or by the customer who countersigns the technical and economic offer.

AREAS Certificazioni S.r.l.

- will confirm the reception of the appeal/complaint;
- will provide, to those who filed the appeal/ complaint, reports on the relative progress and results;
- will formally communicate, to those who filed the appeal / complaint, the conclusion of the process of processing the appeal / complaint itself.

AREAS guarantees that no form of discrimination will be implemented against those who have lodged a complaint or appeal.

The function handling the complaint or appeal must not have taken part in the trial in question and must guarantee technical competence at least equal to that of the person who conducted the trial.

If the complaint is not addressed to the Body but to a product, process, system, customer or certificate, AREAS establishes together with the customer and the person who lodged the complaint, whether, and if so to what extent, the content of the complaint and its resolution must be made public.

6. COMPLAINTS

Only complaints that reach AREAS in writing, if they refer to service provision activities / certification / control / inspection of responsibility of the Body itself, and that present elements of validity (supporting evidence) are examined and treated in order to adopt all the necessary corrections and / or corrective actions. Complaints that arrive anonymously are not taken into account.

The function responsible for handling the complaint is the quality manager who is in charge of collecting and verifying all the necessary information relating to the subject of the complaint, in order to validate the complaint itself and draw the necessary elements of evaluation.

The Quality Manager is assisted in this by the Technical Director and, together, analyze the complaints in order to establish the validity. For complaints that are deemed unfounded, the complainant will be contacted in order to inform him of the evaluation and closure of the case.

There are three types of complaints:

- Administrative complaint
- Operational complaint
- Product Complaint

In the first case it is a complaint concerning either administrative or procedural aspects. In this case, the complaint is managed by the Technical Director in agreement with the quality manager who will evaluate the information provided by the complainant and, at the end of the file, the need to make corrective and / or preventive measures.

In the second case, this is an ethical complaint relating to the conduct of the inspectors and staff of AREAS. In this case, the complaint is managed by the Sole Director with the help of the quality manager unless they themselves are the subject of the complaint. The information provided by the complainant will be evaluated and, at the end of the case, the need to make corrective, preventive or other actions against the person subject to the complaint.

In the third case it is a complaint relating to a product, person, system certified by AREAS. In this case the complaint is managed by the Technical Director in agreement with the quality responsible who will appoint of the analysis of the certification a technician who has not taken part in the procedure subject to complaint. The evaluation conducted by the inspector in charge will be managed by the Head of the Scheme(RS) which could possibly proceed with the suspension of certification in the manner and within the times described in the General Contractual Conditions (if the RS is involved in the certification subject of the complaint, the assessment will be entrusted to the Deputy RS or directly to the TD if competent).

In the event that the complainant is different from a certified Customer, he is informed of the content of the complaint. The examination of the complaint in this case may include the verification of the effectiveness of the service provided; the Customer may be subject to additional checks, if necessary, even at short notice.

The results of these checks are communicated to the complainant and, when applicable, to the Supervisory / Accreditation / Authorization / Authorization / Notification bodies, in compliance with the confidentiality constraints and the specific provisions in force applicable.

Whenever possible, AREAS confirms to the complainant the receipt of what has been submitted within 5 days of receipt and informs about the progress of the processing process (if requested), the results and the related conclusions within 30 days of sending the confirmation of receipt.

7. APPEALS

Any Customer, who has entered into a certification/control/inspection contract with AREAS, or a certification/control/inspection applicant may lodge a written appeal against the Institute's decisions, such as suspension/revocation of certification or non-acceptance of the certification request. Any written appeal, which reaches AREAS, within 15 days of receipt of the act against which you want to appeal, is examined and processed in order to adopt all the necessary corrections and / or corrective actions, without resulting in discriminatory actions against those who file the appeal.

AREAS confirms receipt of the appeal within 5 days of receipt, provides the submitter with information about the progress of the processing process, the results and their conclusions within 60 days of sending the confirmation of receipt.

The examination of appeals is carried out by the Head of the Scheme concerned unless he himself has taken part in the evaluation process object of the appeal, in this case another inspector will be appointed by the Technical Director external to the evaluation performed.

An analysis of the evaluation carried out by the inspector in charge will be carried out and will then be managed by the Head of the Scheme (RS) or by the Technical Director which could accept the appeal by changing the outcome of the initial evaluation.

The examination of the appeal is carried out by the RS, the analysis of the evaluation by the DT; if these two figures have been involved in the case under investigation, the deputies of each figure will be appointed.

If the appeal is upheld, the scheme manager and the quality manager will have to assess the need to make appropriate corrective and/or preventive measures. If there is insufficient evidence for the acceptance, the appeal shall be dismissed, giving reasons for the decision on the applicant.

If the appeal relates to economic and administrative treatment or procedures which are considered inappropriate by the user, the review will be carried out by the administration office together with the quality manager.

All appeals are recorded in a special file under the responsibility of the quality office.

8. LITIGATION

The solution of a dispute, generated or not by an appeal, if not amicably resolved, is referred to the Judicial Authority: Competent Court of Pavia. At the opening of the litigation, AREAS orders the immediate withdrawal of the certificate in order to avoid the improper use of the certificate, as it is not ensured the possibility of proceeding regularly with the certification process (surveillance, additional or renewal audits) and therefore to verify the operational correctness of the system and compliance with the reference standard.

In the absence of agreement on the name of the arbitrator, considering that the competent court is that of Pavia, the president of the court of Pavia, will have the right to choose or not among the names proposed by the parties.

The costs of arbitration, whose seat is Pavia, are borne by the loser.

9. CONFIDENTIALITY

AREAS guarantees the confidentiality of the data of those who filed the complaint / appeal and of the facts claimed / challenged, unless otherwise authorized by the complainant. In the event of a complaint against the certified customer, the parties (AREAS, complainant and Certified Organization) agree on whether and to what extent the content of the complaint and its resolution should be made public.

10. RECORDINGS

AREAS keeps a register of complaints and appeals submitted, where the times and methods of resolution undertaken are also transcribed, as well as any references to corrective and / or preventive actions taken. Each action implemented must be evaluated subsequently with regard to its effectiveness.

For each case, the following information is retained, as far as applicable:

- identification of the person who advances the complaint/ appeal/litigation;
- summary description of the complaint/appeal/litigation with reference to the documents submitted in support;
- documents of AREAS concerned;
- function responsible for the analysis carried out;
- reasoned outcome of the examination (with reference to any decisions of the CID) and consequent actions;
- any non-conformities or deficiencies detected in AREAS and related corrections and / or corrective or preventive actions taken (with indication of the relative times and responsibilities);
- approval of the Management;
- closure of the actions undertaken. This documentation shall be kept for a minimum period of 10 years. For registration, the model SGQ-E-10-08 is used.

11. REVISIONS

Rev.0	15/07/2021	First issue
Rev.1	10/09/2021	General review for graphics and spelling
Rev.2	12/27/2021	Insertion of the reference to ISO 17020 and modification of the CDA name
Rev.3	25/02/2022	Revision following internal audit to change the scope and replacement of the term CDA with the term CDD.
Rev.4	07/04/2022	General review
Rev.5	10/02/2023	Revision following an internal recommendation with amendment to par. 6 and 7 in which the CDD for the analysis and evaluation of complaints has been eliminated.