

**1 PURPOSE**

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure all complaints, appeals and disputes concerning the audit and certification services at any stage, provided by CERE, Management System Certification Division of CERE S.L. (herein after CERE), are handled consistently and effectively.

**2 SCOPE**

The scope of this procedure applies to the following:

- Complaints/disputes received from CERE certified clients or interested parties concerning the services provided by CERE.
- Complaints/disputes received from interested parties concerning the services provided to them by CERE, misrepresentation or other perceived inappropriate activities of a CERE certified entity.
- Appeals against judgments made by CERE.

**3 RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Quality Manager and the Certification Director are ultimately responsible for oversight of the investigation and response to complaints, appeals and compliance queries concerning of accredited standards Certification provided by CERE.

CERE is responsible for the management and maintenance of the complaints and compliance queries system for receipt, processing and tracking of complaints and compliance queries and for collation of reports.

CERE shall be responsible for all decisions at all levels of the appeals-handling process. CERE shall ensure that the persons engaged in the appeals-handling process are different from those who carried out the audits and made the certification decisions

**4 PROCEDURE**

The complaints and appeals handling CERE process follows the next steps:

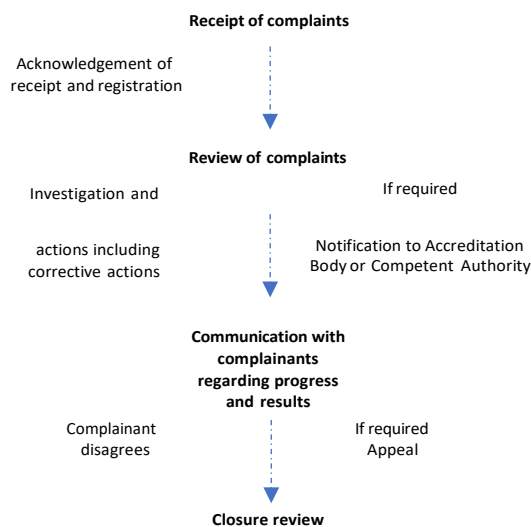


Figure 1. Complaints and appeals handling process

The complaints will be handled differently depending on the content of it. There are three different types of claims:

- Complaint: Request for clarification received both a client or other interested parties, Accreditation Entity or Competent Body.
- Appeal: Complaints received directly from the Client or interested parties disagreeing with the certification activity.
- Appeal: Requirements from the Competent Authority for correction of deviations from strict compliance with the applicable regulations.

To ensure that no conflict of interests exists, staff (including one who acts at management level) who has provided consulting services to a client, or has been employed by a client, should not be used by the certification entity to review or approve the resolution of a complaint or an appeal to that customer during two years after the completion of employment or consultancy.

### **4.1 Receipt of complaints**

The notifications of complaints related to certification services provided should be sent to [certification@cere.com](mailto:certification@cere.com)

### **4.2 Acknowledge of receipt and registration**

The acknowledgement of receipt of complaints is provided by CERE administrative staff within 5 working days of receipt of the complaints. Complaints are entered in the CERE database to provide a narrative record of actions taken to investigate and resolve the complaint, communicate with the complainant and to refer to the relevant documented records throughout the process.

The information recorded in the CERE database includes the following:

- Complaint or appeal
- Date received / by whom.
- Description of the complaint or appeal.
- Action to close out complaint or appeal and by whom.
- Date complaint or appeal is closed.

### **4.3 Review of complaints**

The review of the complaint shall where appropriately include the effectiveness of the clients certified management system, regulatory compliance and the mechanisms considered, an examination of previous assessment documentation, requests to the client for additional information and documentation, and follow up at the next scheduled audit.

### **4.4 Investigation and actions**

Investigation of the complaint or appeal shall commence within 30 days of receipt. The client may be contacted to determine the full nature and extent of the complaint or appeal and any additional information is added to the Client complaint record.

The Certification Director and/or Quality Manager collects all information deemed necessary to carry out an assessment of the claim or appeal received from the Client in order to clarify the facts. The investigation may consider it necessary to check other sources (such as clients and files) that may have been affected by related problems or previous similar appeals, and initiate further corrective/remedial action, as necessary.

### **4.5 Communication with complainants**

The Certification Director shall provide sufficient progress information to the complainant as necessary except for the cases where CERE is unable to provide such information due to confidentiality reasons.

The Certification Director shall notify the complainant when the complaint is considered to be closed whenever possible.

### **4.6 Closure review**

When the required actions are taken by the relevant parties and the complainant does not request an appeal, the Certification Director shall request the closure review of complaints.

### **4.7 Terms**

Once received the corresponding claim, the response to the claim shall be made in the minimum possible time, not longer than 45 days.