

Complaints, Disputes and Appeals Process

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Operations and Technical Manager		Director, Operations

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1. Purpose

This process document describes how KQ Certification Limited manages Complaints, Disputes, Appeals related to provision of its Certification Services. It is implemented under the principles of the Client feedback policy (P008).

2. Scope

This process applies to the full scope of KQ Certification operations, certification activities and geographies in which it operates.

The Certification process offered by KQ Certification is applicable to manufacturing and service organisations, in public and private sectors, it is administered in a non-discriminatory and impartial manner no matter what the commercial arrangements and interests are.

The Certification process is designed to provide the client service of system assessment and Certification by assessing and monitoring the client's definition and implementation of their management System in an objective and impartial manner, against the audit criteria defined.

It is recognised that the Certification process can be demanding and applied in challenging circumstances, giving rise to negative feedback, including complaints, disputes and appeals, when the outcome is not as the client anticipates. This process describes the steps KQ Certification will implement when such feedback is received.

KQ Certification's management system is maintained in accordance with, the current requirements of the following documents, for the handling of Complaints, Disputes and Appeals:

- ISO/IEC 17021 series, including the management system requirements of 17021-1 - option A.
- IAF Mandatory and Guidance Documents
- IAF Decisions
- Accreditation body specific requirements
- Guidelines from ISO 10002 Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organisations

3. Definitions

Please refer to the KQC Quality Manual (M001) Annex 01 for the current definitions that relate to KQC Management System.

Term	Definition
General Client feedback	General information about the organisation's performance during the planning, delivery, and support of its client Certification service.
Complaint	Expressions of dissatisfaction made to KQ Certification with regards to its Certification process, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.
Dispute	A dispute is where an interpretation of the requirements of the KQ Certification process and the Standard(s) utilised results in a difference of opinion between the KQ Certification representative and a client representative as to which is correct. Note: Where a dispute cannot be resolved within 30 days it shall progress to an appeal.
Appeal	An appeal is a formal request against a decision that has been made in the KQ Certification Body process.

4. Responsibility and authority

Responsibility	
Director, Operations	The Director, Operations has ultimate responsibility for approval of the Complaints, Disputes and Appeals process and decisions related to it.
Operations and Technical Manager	The Operations and Technical Manager has responsibility for the definition of the Certification Body's Complaints, Disputes and Appeals process and the controls related to it.
Employees, Sub- contractors	In addition, the Operations and Technical Manager has responsibility for coordinating the implementation of decisions made related to this Complaints, Disputes and Appeals process.
Clients	Employees and contractors are each individually responsible, relative to their role, for ensuring that this process is implemented for all Complaints, Disputes and Appeals that KQ Certification receives.
All Stakeholders	All stakeholders are encouraged to channel and direct potential Complaints, Disputes and Appeals that they become aware of to our website here or email to: info@kqcertification.com
Independent dispute investigator	The independent dispute investigator is responsible for reviewing the dispute(s) allocated to them and recommending to the Operations and Technical Manager further action to be taken.
Appeals panel	The Appeals panel, established by the Operations and Technical Manager, has responsibility for reviewing the appeal(s) allocated to them, making an Appeal decision, and determining any further action required.
Impartiality Committee	The Impartiality Committee has responsibility to meet, review client feedback that relates to matters of impartiality and make recommendations related to impartiality under its agreed Terms of Reference.
Authority	
Director, Operations	The Director, Operations has ultimate authority for the definition of the Complaints, Disputes and Appeals process (this document SP508) and implementation of processes and controls that this process defines. This authority may be delegated to the Operations and Technical Manager as required.
Operations and Technical Manager	The Operations and Technical Manager, under the authority of the Director, has operational authority for the implementation of the Complaints, Disputes and Appeals processes and controls that it contains. The Operations and Technical Manager has the authority to implement or take alternative actions to that recommended by the Independent dispute investigator.
Impartiality Committee	The Impartiality Committee has authority for reviewing matters of impartiality and making recommendations to the Management Board of the Certification Body, that relate to Complaints, Appeals and Disputes received. Where the management has referred a matter of impartiality to the Impartiality Committee for decision the Impartiality Committee's decision will be implemented by the Management Board of the Certification Body. If the decision is implemented the rationale will be recorded together with a risk assessment of the particular case.
Appeals panel	The Appeals panel has authority to hear and review an appeal then make a decision to be implemented by the Management Board of the Certification Body.

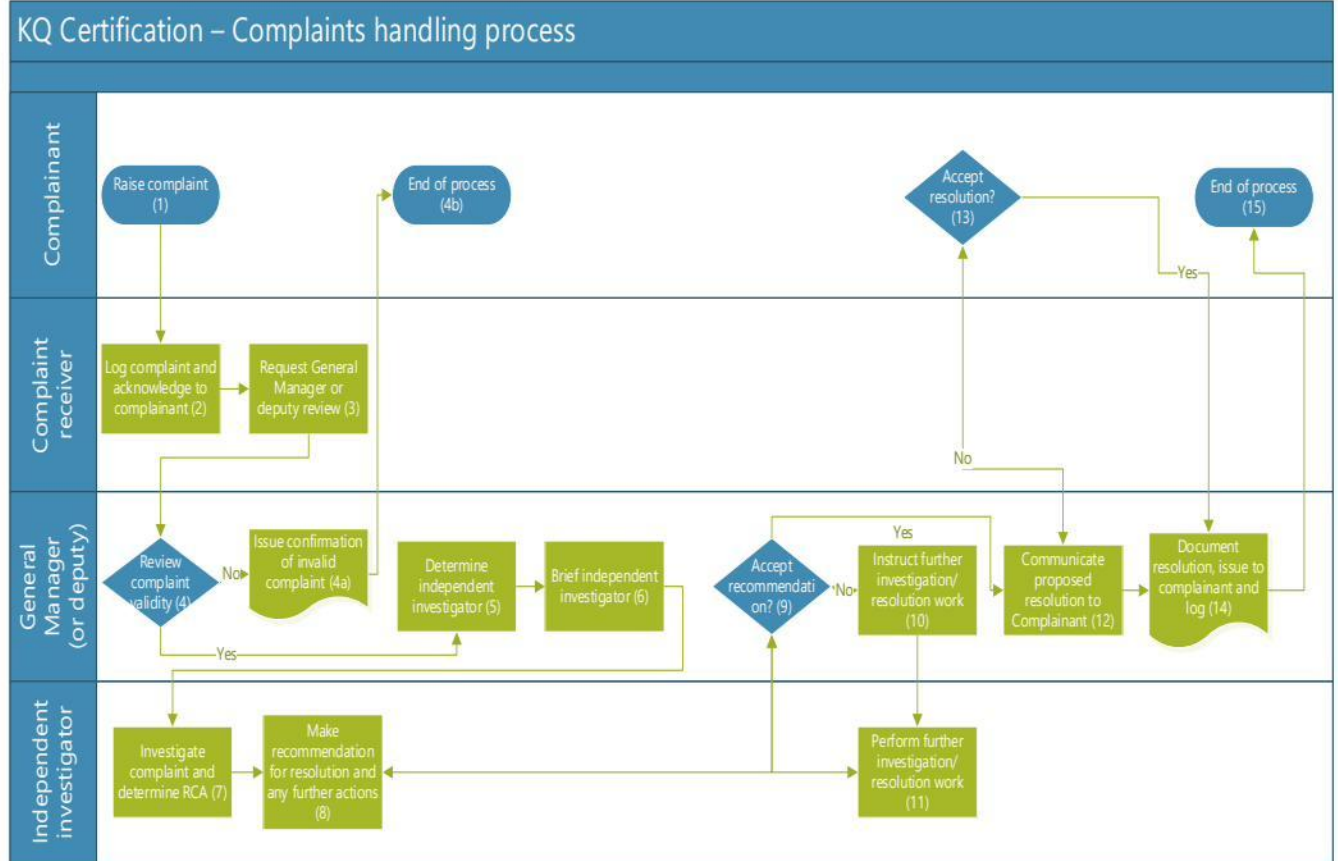
5. Reference documents

Document number	Document title
ISO 17021-1:2015	Conformity assessment — Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems — Part 1: Requirements
IAF Mandatory and Guidance documents	as applicable
IAF Decisions	as applicable
Accreditation body specific requirements	as applicable to the accreditation held
ISO 10002	Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organisations.

6. Complaints

- 6.1 This process describes the complaint handling process, including receiving, validating, investigating, and deciding what actions are to be taken in response to the complaint.
- 6.2 The designated investigator must not have been involved in any assessment or decision making related to the client organisation or stakeholder making the complaint, within the last two calendar years.
- 6.3 The submission, investigation and decision on complaints shall not result in any discriminatory actions against the complainant.
- 6.4 KQ Certification will take any necessary corrective actions related to the complaint, whether against the KQ Certification Body, or against an KQ Certification Certified client or stakeholder.
- 6.5 A complaint against a KQ Certification Certified organisation or their client will remain confidential unless disclosure needs to be made:
- For the KQ Certification Body sanctions process
 - Accreditation or regulatory requirements
 - In the public/society's interest as decided by a Director, Operations of KQ Certification, following the Independent Panel's decision of the complaint outcome.
- 6.8 The process flow for complaint handling and the associated process step descriptions to be followed are below:

KQ Certification – Complaints handling process



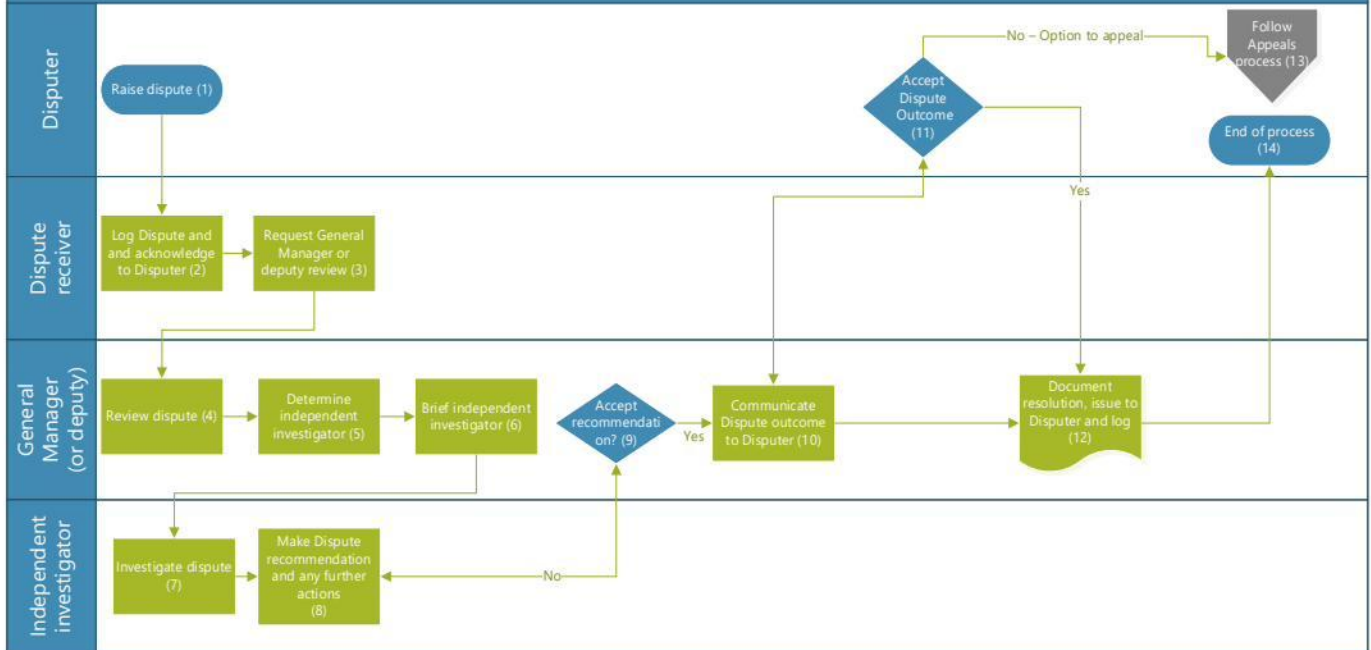
Step #	Step name	Responsibility	Step description
1	Raise Complaint	Complainant	The complainant is asked to document their complaint and forward to KQ Certification for investigation.
2	Log complaint and acknowledge to the complainant	Complaint receiver (KQC)	The person who receives the complaint within KQ Certification is required to log the complaint on the Certification Body's log for Complaints and acknowledge the complaint to the complainant.
3	Request KQCC Operations and Technical Manager (or their appointed deputy) to review the complaint	Complaint receiver (KQC)	The Complaint receiver (KQ Certification) requests the Operations and Technical Manager (or their appointed deputy) to review the complaint for validity and next steps.
4	Review Complaint validity	Operations and Technical Manager (KQC)	The Operations and Technical Manager (KQC) reviews the complaint's validity e.g., if it is within the scope of KQ Certification's remit.
4a	Issue confirmation of invalid complaint	Operations and Technical Manager (KQC)	When the complaint is adjudged to be invalid e.g., if it is outside of the scope of KQ Certification's remit a confirmation that the complaint is invalid, and the reason why is issued to the complainant.
4b	End of process	Complainant	The complaint process is closed with issue of confirmation that the complaint is invalid and the reason why.
5	Determine independent investigator	Operations and Technical Manager (KQC)	The Operations and Technical Manager (KQ Certification) determines an independent investigator, from the KQ Certification staff, who has not been involved in the Certification for the client.
6	Brief independent investigator	Operations and Technical Manager (KQC)	The Operations and Technical Manager (KQ Certification) briefs the independent investigator of the complaint received and any special considerations that need to be accounted for in the investigation.
7	Investigate complaint and determine the Root Cause Analysis	Independent Investigator	The Independent Investigator investigates the complaint received, conducts a root cause analysis, using a suitable tool (e.g., Five whys etc.), allowing a recommendation to be made for complaint resolution and any further improvement actions that may be required.
8	Make recommendation for resolution and any further actions	Independent Investigator	The Independent Investigator makes a recommendation for complaint resolution and any further improvement actions that may be required.
9	Accept recommendation	Operations and Technical Manager (KQC)	A decision is made whether to accept the recommendation made.
10	Instruct further investigation/resolution work	Operations and Technical Manager (KQC)	When the recommendation is not accepted the Operations and Technical Manager (KQ Certification) instructs further investigation by the Independent Investigator and works on the complaint resolution.
11	Perform further investigation/resolution work	Independent Investigator	The Independent Investigator completes further complaint investigation/resolution work to submit any

Step #	Step name	Responsibility	Step description
			updated recommendation for resolution and any further actions required.
12	Communicate proposed resolution to complainant	Operations and Technical Manager (KQC)	The Operations and Technical Manager (KQ Certification) communicates the proposed resolution to the complainant.
13	Accept resolution?	Complainant	The complainant is asked to accept the complaint resolution. If the complaint resolution is not accepted the Operations and Technical Manager (KQ Certification) reviews the feedback and can instruct further investigation by the Independent Investigator and work on the complaint resolution (Step 11).
14	Document resolution, issue to complainant and log.	Operations and Technical Manager (KQC)	On acceptance of the complaint resolution the Operations and Technical Manager (KQC) documents the resolution and issues to the complainant. The KQ Certification SharePoint log for Complaints is updated in parallel with the documented resolution and supporting details.
15	End of process	Complainant	On acceptance of the complaint resolution, by the complainant, the process ends.

7. Disputes

- 7.1 This process is to be used as the process for receiving, evaluating, and making decisions on disputes. A dispute can arise from subjects, including:
- Improvement actions raised.
 - Certification decisions
 - Sanction decisions.
- 7.2 If the Dispute cannot be resolved, the Disputer has the option to initiate an appeal within 30 working days of the dispute outcome.
- 7.3 The submission, investigation and decision on complaints shall not result in any discriminatory actions against the Disputer.
- 7.4 KQ Certification will take any necessary corrective actions related to the dispute, whether the Dispute is against an KQ Certification Certified organisation or against a KQ Certification Certified organisation's client.
- 7.5 The process flow for Dispute handling and the associated process step descriptions to be followed are below:

KQ Certification – Dispute handling process



7.6 KQ Certification - Dispute handling process description

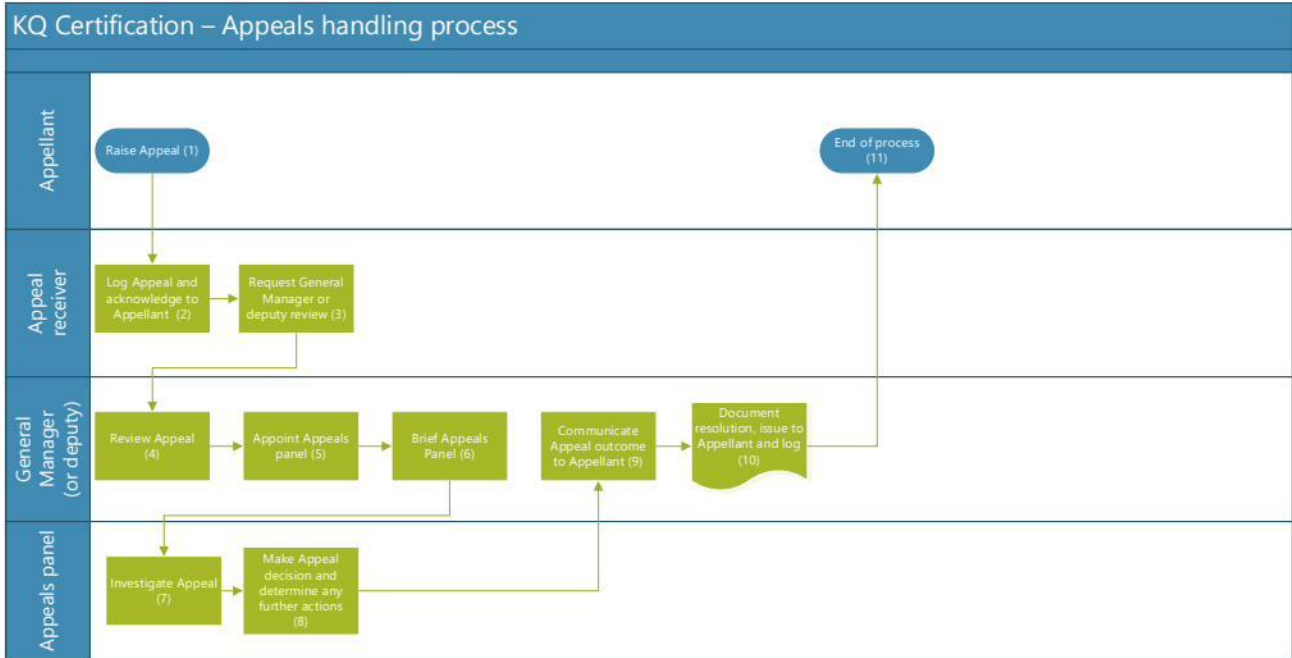
Step #	Step name	Responsibility	Step description
1	Raise Dispute	Disputer	The Disputer is asked to document their dispute and forward to KQ Certification for investigation.
2	Log dispute and acknowledge to the Disputer	Dispute receiver (KQC)	The person who is receives the dispute within KQ Certification is required to log the dispute on the KQ Certification SharePoint log for disputes and acknowledge the dispute to the Disputer.
3	Request Operations and Technical Manager, KQ Certification (or their appointed deputy) to review the dispute	Dispute receiver (KQC)	The dispute receiver (KQ Certification) requests the Operations and Technical Manager (or their appointed deputy) to review the dispute for validity and next steps.
4	Review dispute	Head of Compliance (KQC)	The Operations and Technical Manager reviews the dispute so that an independent investigator can be appointed.
5	Determine independent investigator	Operations and Technical Manager (KQC)	<p>The Operations and Technical Manager (KQC) determines an independent investigator, from the KQ Certification staff, who has not been involved in the Certification of the KQ Certification Certified organisation, or dealing with the stakeholder, concerned.</p> <p>The independent investigator shall also have competence in the subject that the dispute is raised to support a safe decision on the dispute.</p>
6	Brief independent investigator	Operations and Technical Manager (KQC)	The Operations and Technical Manager (KQC) briefs the independent investigator of the dispute received and any special considerations that need to be accounted for in the investigation.
7	Investigate dispute	Independent Investigator	The Independent Investigator investigates the dispute against the relevant requirements, allowing for a recommendation regarding the dispute and any further improvement actions that may be required.
8	Make recommendation for resolution and any further actions	Independent Investigator	The Independent Investigator makes a recommendation for the dispute outcome and any further improvement actions that may be required.
9	Accept recommendation	Operations and Technical Manager (KQC)	<p>A decision is made whether to accept the dispute recommendation.</p> <p>If the dispute recommendation is not accepted further investigation may be required.</p>
10	Communicate proposed resolution to Disputer	Operations and Technical Manager (KQC)	The Operations and Technical Manager (KQC) communicates the dispute outcome to the Disputer and the reasons for the outcome.
11	Accept resolution?	Disputer	The Disputer is asked to accept the dispute outcome.

Step #	Step name	Responsibility	Step description
			If the dispute outcome is not accepted the Disputer has the option of following the appeals process.
12	Document resolution, issue to Disputer and log.	The Operations and Technical Manager (KQC)	On acceptance of the Dispute outcome the Operations and Technical Manager (KQC) documents the outcome and issues to the Disputer. The KQ Certification SharePoint log for Disputes is updated in parallel with the documented outcome and supporting details.
13	Follow the Appeals process	Disputer	When the Disputer does not accept the outcome of the dispute, they have the option of following the appeals process, within 30 days of the outcome of the dispute.
14	End of process	Disputer	On acceptance of the dispute outcome by the Disputer, the process ends.

8. Appeals

- 8.1 This process is to be used as the process for receiving, evaluating, and decision making on appeals.
- 8.2 KQ Certification is responsible for all decisions at all levels of the appeals-handling process and ensures that the persons engaged in the appeals-handling process are different from those who carried out the audits and made the certification decisions
- 8.3 Appeals can arise from any decision that is made in the KQ Certification process, including:
- Improvement actions raised
 - Certification decisions
 - Sanction decisions
- 8.4 The submission, investigation and decision on appeals shall not result in any discriminatory actions against the Appellant.
- 8.5 The management of the appeal will be assigned to an individual who was engaged in neither the audit process nor the certification decision making process for the concerned certification. This person will be responsible for informing the appellant of the receipt of the appeal, progress of the process and eventually end of the process.
- 8.6 If the appeal cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the parties, it may be escalated within KQ Certification Ltd, and referred to the appropriate Accreditation Body and/or sector authority for resolution, or go through litigation in accordance with the laws of the nation and/or state or province in which KQ Certification Ltd resides.
- 8.7 KQ Certification will take any necessary corrective actions related to the Appeals, whether it concerns an KQ Certified organisation, or their client. The organisation's Corrective and Preventive action process will be utilised for this purpose.
- 8.8 KQ Certification is responsible for gathering and verifying all necessary information to validate the appeal.
- 8.9 The receipt of the appeal will be acknowledged by KQ Certification who will provide the appellant with progress reports and the result of the appeal. It is the responsibility of Operations and Technical Manager or nominated deputy.
- 8.10 The decision to be communicated to the appellant will be made by, or reviewed and approved by, an individual(s) not previously involved in the subject of the appeal.
- 8.11 KQ Certification will give formal notice to the appellant of the end of the appeals handling process via appropriate means
- 8.12 The process flow for appeals handling and the associated process step descriptions to be followed are below:

8.5 KQ Certification – Appeals handling Process



8.6 KQ Certification – Appeals handling process description

Step #	Step name	Responsibility	Step description
1	Raise Appeal	Appellant	The Appellant is asked to document their Appeal and forward to KQ Certification for investigation.
2	Log Appeal and acknowledge to the Appellant	Appeal receiver (KQC)	The person who receives the appeal within KQ Certification is required to log the Appeal on the KQ Certification SharePoint log for appeals and acknowledge the appeal to the Appellant.
3	Request Operations and Technical Manager (KQC) or (appointed deputy) to review appeal	Appeal receiver (KQC)	The Appeal receiver (KQC) requests the Operations and Technical Manager (or their appointed deputy) to review the appeal for validity and next steps.
4	Review appeal	Operations and Technical Manager (KQC)	The Operations and Technical Manager (KQC) reviews the appeal so that an independent Appeals panel can be appointed.
5	Determine independent Appeals Panel.	Operations and Technical Manager (KQC)	<p>The Operations and Technical Manager (KQC) determines an independent Appeals Panel of three people who have not been involved in the Certification of the KQ Certified organisation, or with the stakeholder concerned.</p> <p>The appeals panel shall be independent of the Certification for the KQ Certified organisation or stakeholder and be competent in the relevant requirements.</p>
6	Brief independent Appeals panel.	Operations and Technical Manager (KQC)	The Operations and Technical Manager (KQC) briefs the Appeals Panel impartially and objectively with the information available to support the appeal.
7	Investigate appeal	Independent Appeals Panel	<p>The Panel is responsible for investigating, validating, and documenting the resolution of the appeal.</p> <p>Members of the Appeals Panel will make judgments based on facts, evidence provided and the relevant requirements.</p> <p>The Appeal's Panel may elect to hear oral representation from both parties. If necessary, the client is provided with progress reports.</p>
8	Make a decision on the outcome of the appeal and further actions required.	Independent Appeals Panel	The Independent Appeals Panel makes a decision on the outcome of the appeal and any further actions required.
9	Communicate Appeal decision to Appellant	Operations and Technical Manager (KQC)	The Operations and Technical Manager (KQC) communicates the Appeal outcome to the Appellant and the reasons for the outcome.
10	Document resolution, issue to Disputer and log.	Operations and Technical Manager (KQC)	The Operations and Technical Manager (KQC) documents the Appeal decision and issues to the Appellant.

Step #	Step name	Responsibility	Step description
			<p>The KQ Certification SharePoint log for appeals is updated in parallel with the documented outcome and supporting details.</p> <p>Any further improvement actions are processed in accordance with the Corrective and Preventive Action process.</p>
11	End of process	Appellant	The decision of the Independent Appeals Panel is full and final, with issue of the Appeal decision the process ends.

9. Timescales and Key Performance indicators

9.1 The performance indicators associated with this process are not only quantitative but qualitative associated with the nature of Complaints, Disputes and Appeals raised and the analysis of their impact on the performance and integrity of KQ Certification, Certification process, and any risk to it.

9.2 The responsiveness KPIs that KQC seek to achieve are as follows:

Circumstance	Acknowledgement (within)	Communication of outcome (within)
Complaint	2 working days	30 working days
Dispute	2 working days	30 working days
Appeal	2 working days	30 working days

9.3 The KPIs associated with this process and its sub processes will be monitored and analysed by the KQ Certification Management team and be an input the organisation's Management Review Process.

10. KQC Contact details

10.1 Where a client has a query on the information contained within this document, they are encouraged to contact us. Our contact details are as follows and detailed on our web site

Email:	info@kqcertification.com
Tel.	+44 (0) 7885 377 456
Website:	kqcertification.com
Address:	KQ Certification Ltd., Office 3, Unit 1, Haggwood Quarry Industrial Estate, Honley, Holmfirth, United Kingdom, HD9 6PW.

11. Records

Records in relation to the Complaints, Disputes and Appeals process are maintained for a minimum of 7 years, in accordance with P023 Control of Records Policy.

Revision Log		
Version #	Description of Change	Release Date

1.0	Initial issue	5 th September 2024
1.1	Reviewed and updated to latest format and job titles, new document number (from SP508 to SP506). Updated information within Appeals section from ISO 17021-1	31 st January 2025
1.2	Updated for process clarity and contact information	14 th August 2025