

Handling of Complaints and Appeals

CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. vision and mission statements are linked with the objectives of the complaint management system. Every complaint and/or appeal is reviewed and addressed within the context of CertX SA (Pty) Ltd.' core values, mission and strategic direction to determine if any change is required. CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. is responsible for all decisions at all levels of the complaint and appeal handling process and shall ensure that the submission, investigation and decision on complaints or appeals does not result in any discriminatory actions.

Complaints are considered as opportunities for improvement. CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. understands the link between complaint resolution and customer loyalty and satisfaction and aims to address problem areas promptly. In an endeavour to improve on our services, CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. needs to know where its processes can be improved on, and where improvement is evident. Clients are encouraged to submit feedback via the CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. website, the "Customer Satisfaction Survey Form", telephonically or by email.

Positive feedback is used as a measure of the effectiveness of our systems, whereas negative feedback is registered as a complaint and managed accordingly.

Non-conformances as identified through the complaints system are managed and addressed, taking corrective action appropriate to the impact of the problem, and eliminating the causes of nonconformities to prevent recurrence.

CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. ensures that complaints against the services of its applicant or certified organisations (Certified Client) are first addressed by the Certified Client through their own complaint procedure.

Clients are also afforded the opportunity to appeal against an adverse certification decision made by CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. Appeals are managed by an independent panel.

Regular trend analysis of complaints is done, where main areas of concerns are highlighted, and the effectiveness of the corrective actions can be assessed.

Client satisfaction is measured through various means, such as external customer surveys by independent service providers, feedback received, and types and numbers of complaints raised. This is critical to the success of the complaint management and client satisfaction processes.

1. Handling of Complaints

1.1. Submission of Complaints

1.1.1. Complaints relating to the activities of CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. or its Certified Clients or any other third party must be submitted in writing to the CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. Managing Director at info@certx.co.za, either via the CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. website or directly, and within 1 month (30 calendar days) after the event that led to the complaint. The Managing Director must ensure that the complaint includes all necessary information to verify the validity of the complaint, and if so, conduct a thorough investigation.

1.1.2. Complaints against Certified Clients:

Where appropriate, CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. will ensure that an applicant or Certified Client can first resolve a complaint raised against them, by advising the complainant to approach the Certified Client directly. If the Certified Client has not satisfactorily resolved the complaint within a reasonable length of time (e.g., 3 months), the complainant has the right to refer the matter to CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. Once the validity has been confirmed, CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. will then investigate the matter within its own procedures.

Where the complaint against a Certified Client indicates non-compliance with CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. certification requirements, then CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. will address the issue directly with the Certified Client at an appropriate time.

Information about a Certified Client obtained from sources other than the Certified Client shall be kept confidential between the Certified Client and CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. The provider (source) of this information shall be kept confidential to CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. and not shared with the Certified Client, unless agreed by the source.

1.1.3. Complaints against CertX SA (Pty) Ltd.

Complaints against CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. may be lodged for any dissatisfaction relating to the activities of CertX SA (Pty) Ltd., our committees, personnel, or auditors.

1.1.4. Complaints against a Third Party

Complaints against a third party are those relating to non-certified organizations or individuals, who falsely claim to be certified by CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. or using the CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. Certification Mark or logo.

These complaints must be lodged with CertX SA (Pty) Ltd., who will address the issue immediately on receipt and directly with the organization or person against which the complaint is raised.

CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. reserves all its rights to exercise its legal recourse should the perpetrator fail to address the wrongdoings fully and satisfactorily.

1.2. Validity of Complaints

1.2.1. A complaint against CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. activities will only be considered if received within one month (30 calendar days) after the event that led to the complaint. Under exceptional circumstances that may pose a high risk to CertX SA (Pty) Ltd., the Managing Director may waive this time period, however the maximum time lapse shall not be more than 12 months from the date that led to the complaint.

1.2.2. The validity of each complaint will be determined by the Managing Director in consultation with the relevant Manager, as applicable.

1.2.3. Where a complaint has been found to be invalid, the Managing Director will provide reasons to the complainant.

1.2.4. The Managing Director acknowledges receipt and registers each valid complaint with a unique reference number on the Complaint Management System, which must be used in all correspondence relating to the complaint. The Managing Director will appoint an investigator(s) who have not previously been involved in the subject of the complaint. Where the Managing Director is conflicted, the Certification Committee shall handle the complaint and may appoint a competent member(s) of CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. management / audit specialist, who is/are not directly involved in the subject of the complaint to investigate the matter.

1.3. Investigation of Complaints

1.3.1. The Managing Director or Certification Committee as applicable, will inform the complainant of the appointed investigator(s), selected for their competence and independence from the activities in question.

1.3.2. CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. will track and endeavour to resolve its complaints within 1 month (30 calendar days) of receipt. Where not possible, the Managing Director or Certification Committee as applicable, shall liaise regularly with the complainant regarding the progress of the complaint until such time as it has been resolved.

- 1.4. Corrective Actions and Verification of their Effectiveness
 - 1.4.1. Where the results of the investigation have identified a non-conformance that requires corrective action, the responsible person will be required to conduct a root cause analysis and implement corrective actions. The corrective actions taken must be appropriate to the impact of the problem and eliminate the causes of nonconformance to prevent recurrence.
 - 1.4.2. The corrective action taken, together with any supporting evidence of clearance shall be recorded on the Complaints Management System. The Managing Director or Certification Committee as applicable, will verify whether a proper root cause analysis has been conducted and that the corrective actions taken have satisfactorily addressed the complaint.
- 1.5. Response to the Complainant
 - 1.5.1. The outcome of the complaint or decision to be communicated to the complainant will be reviewed and approved by the Managing Director or Certification Committee as applicable.
 - 1.5.2. The Managing Director or Certification Committee as applicable, or investigator will communicate the conclusions of the investigation to the complainant in writing and where applicable, to any other party that may require the results of the investigation, subject to the confidentiality requirements.
 - 1.5.3. The conclusion communicated will include notice of the end of the complaint handling process.
 - 1.5.4. Where the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of a complaint investigation or any corrective actions implemented, the complainant may refer the matter back to the Managing Director or Certification Committee as applicable, for further consideration. The outcome of this reconsideration will be final.
- 1.6. Investigations of Complaints against a Certified Client
 - 1.6.1. CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. may conduct an unannounced visit to a Certified Client to follow up on an investigation and/or resolution of a complaint against a Certified Client.
 - 1.6.2. The CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. shall determine, together with the Certified Client and the complainant, whether and, if so to what extent, the subject of the complaint and its resolution shall be made public.
 - 1.6.3. Should a Certified Client fail to assist in the investigation and satisfactory resolution of an certification related complaint against them referred to it by CertX SA (Pty) Ltd., and/or fail to address it within the CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. stipulated timeframes, the relevant Certification Manager (CM) shall notify the Certified Client of the requirements being violated, and the appropriate action to be taken by CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. in line with the CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. 1.1.F04 document "Suspending, Withdrawing or Reducing the Scope of Certification and Re-Instatement of Certification".

2. **Handling of Disputes against Non-conformances**
 - 2.1. Disputes may be lodged because of a disagreement by the Certified Client with the validity of a non-conformance raised during an audit.
 - 2.2. Disputes shall be submitted in writing to the relevant Certification Manager within 5 working days after the audit and shall include detailed information and evidence supporting the disputes.
 - 2.3. The Certification Manager or his/her representative shall rule on the validity of the dispute and may consult with the audit team or any other competent individual before making a final ruling.

- 2.4. If the non-conformance is found to be valid, the Certified Client will be required to take the appropriate corrective action.
- 2.5. If the non-conformance is found to be invalid, the Certification Manager in consultation with the Managing Director, shall withdraw the non-conformance and inform the Lead Auditor and, where applicable, the relevant audit team member of the reasons.

3. Handling of Appeals

- 3.1. Appeals are requests made by a client for the reconsideration of any adverse certification decision made by CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. related to its desired certification status.

Note: Appeals cannot be made against recommendations made or non-conformances raised by the audit team during an audit. Appeals will only be accepted against final certification related decisions made by CertX SA (Pty) Ltd.

- 3.2. The appellant shall address the appeal in writing to the Managing Director within 1 month (30 calendar days) of the event that resulted in the appeal. The Managing Director shall acknowledge receipt of the appeal after ensuring that the appeal includes all necessary information in order to verify its validity.
- 3.3. The appeal will be registered in the same manner as complaints, with a unique reference number on the Complaint Management System, which must be used in all correspondence relating to the appeal.
- 3.4. The Managing Director will inform the appellant of the appointed investigator(s), selected for their competence and independence from the subject matter of appeal.

3.5. Validity of Appeals and Investigation

- 3.5.1. The Managing Director may either investigate the appeal himself or appoint a competent member(s) of CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. management / audit specialist, who is/are not directly involved in the subject of the appeal. Where the Managing Director is conflicted, the Impartiality Committee shall handle the appeal and may appoint a competent member(s) of CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. management / audit specialist, who is/are not directly involved in the subject of the appeal to investigate the matter. The appointed investigator(s) shall advise on the validity of the appeal and where required, investigate the appeal and provide the Managing Director or Impartiality Committee, as applicable, with a report on the outcomes of the investigation.
- 3.5.2. Where an appeal has been found to be invalid, the Managing Director or Impartiality Committee as applicable, will provide adequate reasons to the appellant in writing.
- 3.5.3. The appeals, should as far as reasonably possible, be satisfactorily resolved and appropriate action taken within 3 months (90 calendar days) of receipt of the appeal. Where not possible, the Managing Director or Impartiality Committee as applicable, shall track the progress and liaise regularly with the appellant regarding the progress of the appeal until such time as it has been resolved.
- 3.5.4. The outcome of the appeal, including any appropriate corrective actions to be taken in response to it, shall be reviewed and approved on by the Managing Director or an Impartiality Committee Member that is not involved in the activities in question as applicable. The decision shall be formally communicated to the appellant through the office of the Managing Director and will include notice of the end of the appeals handling process.

3.5.5. Where the appellant does not accept the outcome of the appeal, within reason, the appellant may refer the matter back to the Managing Director or Impartiality Committee as applicable, for further consideration. The outcome of this reconsideration will be final.

4. Preventing discriminatory actions during and after the complaints and appeals process

4.1. Where reasonably possible, CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. will endeavour not to assign the same auditor to a client if that client has lodged a complaint or appeal relating to the auditor. If the complaint or appeal concerns members of the Certification Committee, CertX SA (Pty) Ltd. will similarly endeavour to assign different committee members for the client's certification decision.

4.2. If it is not possible to assign a different auditor or Certification Committee member due to insufficient competency among available personnel, the following measures may be implemented:

- Provide coaching to the personnel involved to help prevent similar complaints or appeals in the future;
- Appoint an additional lead auditor to work alongside the scoped auditor;
- Appoint an additional Certification Committee member, with the originally scoped member participating only as a technical expert.

Approved by:

Hein Jonck

Managing Director


Signature

2025/12/02

Date