

	SUSTAINABLE STEWARDSHIP PRIVATE LIMITED	Doc. No. PCP-20
	PROCEDURE FOR RESOLUTION OF APPEAL, COMPLAINTS AND DISPUTES	Rev. No: 00; Rev Date:
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1.0 Purpose:

To document, establish, implement and maintain the documented process to receive, evaluate and address the Complaints and Appeals received by SSPL as per requirements of ISO/IEC 17065, applicable scheme criteria and reference documents along-with other applicable international standards for certification bodies certifying products, processes and services.

2.0. Scope:

This procedure is applicable to all complaints and appeal received by SSPL related to its certification.

2.0 Responsibility:

Certification Manager

3.0 Procedure:

4.1 Appeals

4.1.1 Any client shall make an appeal to the Certification Manager of SSPL in respect of the following,

- (a) Non acceptance of client's application for certification
- (b) Granting, suspending, withdrawing or denying of certification
- (c) Any other relevant appeal

4.1.1.1 SSPL shall communicate to the appellant within 7 working days of receipt of the appeal about a provision for providing an opportunity to formally present their case.

4.1.2 SSPL shall record all appeals in document ***FT-35 Register for Complaints & Appeals*** and acknowledge the receipt of the appeal.

4.1.3 All appeals are reviewed by the appeal panel constituted by Certification Manager for each appeal. The appeal panel shall contain at least two members from SSPL's auditor panel who have not been part of the audit and also not involved in certification decision or involved in the subject of the appeal. For appeal against the decision of the Certification Manager the matter shall be referred to the chairman of the impartial committee for constituting the panel and taking the decision.

4.1.4 The appeal panel shall investigate the appeal by looking into the records and / or talking to the appellant and SSPL and shall take a decision taking into account the results of any previous such appeals. SSPL gathers and verifies all necessary information to validate the appeal.

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4.1.5 SSPL shall ensure that there is no conflict of interest, personnel (including those acting in a managerial capacity) who have provided consultancy for a client, or been employed by a client, shall not be used by SSPL 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.

4.1.6 SSPL shall be responsible for all decisions at all levels of the appeal handling process. The decision on the appeal is reviewed and approved by Certification Manager and is communicated to the client. This completes the appeal process and SSPL shall also inform the appellant at this time about the closure of the appeal.

4.1.7 Based on the decision of the appeal panel SSPL shall initiate appropriate correction and corrective action and the same recorded in ***FT-35 Register for Complaints & Appeals***. Whenever possible appeals, complaints shall be addressed within 30 working days from the receipt of the appeal and SSPL shall provide the client with progress reports and the outcome.

4.1.8 SSPL shall ensure that the submission, investigation and decision on appeals shall not result in any discriminatory action against the appellant.

4.2 Complaints

4.2.1 SSPL shall receive, evaluate and make decisions on complaints while taking utmost care for confidentiality, as it relates to the complainant and to the subject of the complaint Information about complaint handling process of SSPL is made publicly available through website. The complaints handling process includes the following:

- a) An outline of the process for receiving, validating, investigating the complaint and for deciding what actions to be taken in response to it
- b) Tracking and recording complaints, including actions undertaken in response to them;
- c) Ensuring that any appropriate correction and corrective action are taken.

The Certification Manager is responsible for gathering and verifying all necessary information to validate the complaint and all decisions at all levels of the complaints handling process.

Submission, investigation and decision on complaints do not result in any discriminatory actions against the complainant. Any valid complaint about a certified client shall also be referred by SSPL to the certified client in question at an appropriate time.

4.2.2 The complaint can be made to the Certification Manager by the client or any other interested party in writing giving details of the complaint. The complaint shall either relate to the certification activities of SSPL or to the certified client and its activities.

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4.2.3 The complaints received are recorded in ***FT-35 Register for Complaints & Appeals*** and is acknowledged to the complainant. The Certification Manager shall review the complaint to ascertain the seriousness and the genuineness of the complaint. SSPL shall provide the complainant with progress reports and the outcome.

4.2.4. The complaint redressal process:

4.2.4.1. Complaints against SSPL from the client or third party

- (a) Depending on the nature of the complaint, *Chairman of the Impartiality Committee* shall decide to conduct the investigation himself or appoint a complaint panel for each complaint. The complaint panel shall contain at least two members from SSPL's auditor panel who have not been part of the audit and also not involved in certification decision or involved in the subject of the complaint. Further, the complainant shall be given an opportunity to present the case to the panel in person if he so desires.
- (b) The complaint panel shall investigate the complaint by looking into the records and / or talking to the complainant and SSPL and shall take a decision taking into account the results of any previous such complaints.
- (c) The details of investigation and the correction and the corrective actions identified are recorded in the complaint register. Upon verification on the effectiveness of corrective action taken, SSPL shall inform the complainant about the correction and corrective action taken and if the complainant is satisfied with the actions taken the complaint is treated as closed. *The final Decision on the resolution of complaint shall be taken by the chairman of the impartiality committee.*

4.2.4.2. Complaints against the certified client from its customers or any other third party:

- (a) SSPL shall inform the client about the complaint received and ask the client to investigate the complaint and report the findings to SSPL within two weeks from the date of receiving the complaint by the client.
- (b) If SSPL does not receive any response from the client or the action taken by the client is not found effective, SSPL shall inform the client accordingly and ask for a special audit at the client site by SSPL. On confirmation from the client SSPL shall conduct a special audit as per SSPL procedure, ***PCP-13 Procedure for Special, Surprise & Short Notice Audit*** and investigate the complaint.
- (c) If the complaint is of serious nature SSPL shall initiate the special audit directly with the client
- (d) As its policy, SSPL shall not disclose the identity of the complainant to the client.
- (e) If any action is needed to be taken by the client SSPL shall verify the effectiveness of such action by suitable means appropriate to the gravity of the problem.

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(f) If the corrective action taken by the client is found effective SSPL shall inform the complainant accordingly and the complaint shall then be treated as closed.

4.2.5. SSPL shall decide to make public the complaint and its resolution if agreed with client and complainant.

4.3 All Specific requirements of the applicable scheme for complaints shall be complied with by implementing scheme specific document (e.g. section 8 of ***PCP- 23 RMC Protocol*** ,***section 2.15 of PCP-24 VCSLSP Protocol*** ,section 11 ***of PCP-25 BEMC Protocol***, section 9 ***of PCP-26 HEALTEXPROF Protocol***).

4.4 Disputes- The agreement for certification between SSPL and its client shall be governed by prevailing law in India. Any dispute, which cannot be settled by private negotiations between the said parties, shall be referred to arbitration as per the Indian Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 subject to Delhi jurisdiction. The decision of the arbitration shall be binding for the both parties

5.0 Records

(a) ***FT-35 Register for Complaints & Appeals***

6.0 References

- a. ***PCP-13 Procedure for Special, Surprise & Short Notice Audit***
- b. ***PCP- 23 RMC Protocol***
- c. ***PCP- 24 VCSLSP Protocol***
- d. ***PCP-25 BEMC Protocol***
- e. ***PCP-26 HELTEXPROF Protocol***