

## 1. General

The “Appeals and Complaints” process applies to all **qualityaustria** services, such as system and product certifications, certification of persons, verifications, validations, SURE, CoC audits and assessments.

### **Appeal**

Appeals can only be filed by respective clients about the services provided by Quality Austria, including certification decisions.

### **Complaint**

Complaints can also be submitted by third parties. For example, complaints can refer to the performance of management systems or persons. Furthermore, complaints can also refer to very general areas of Quality Austria.

### **Confidentiality**

Complaints and appeals are subject to the strictest confidentiality by Quality Austria and shall in no way have any discriminatory effect on the complainant or appellant. Complainants shall remain anonymous to the client if this is requested by the complainant.

The Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and the QM evaluate, together with the complainant and the client, if necessary, with the involvement of the responsible Executive Vice President, the extent to which individual content from the complaint and its solution are made publicly accessible.

## 2. Handling an Appeal or Complaint

### 2.1 Responsibilities

The handling of complaints and appeals lies within the responsibility of the QM. Where necessary, the responsible Executive Vice President may also handle appeals and complaints in close cooperation with the QM, provided that s/he was not involved in the certification process and is therefore impartial.

Any additional requirements of special standards or models (for example, IATF 16949) must be taken into account and the respective internal managers must be involved.

Automotive: The handling of complaints by an IATF OEM member, by its responsible IATF Oversight Office or by a client from the automotive industry is carried out by the Sector Management Automotive.

The QM decides who generally carries out the communication with the complainant. If necessary, communication may be carried out by the CEOs or by an Executive Vice President.

The ultimate responsibility for the complaint process lies with the CEOs of Quality Austria. It is informed about the status of the process and involved in the decision-making process.

### **Impartiality**

When handling complaints and appeals, it is ensured that the persons commissioned for this purpose are impartial. This refers to the audit process as well as the certification decision-making process. If the QM was involved in the processes, the responsible Executive Vice President takes over the tasks of handling appeals and complaints.

In the field of Automotive, this involves assessing the situation and identifying possible weaknesses in the audit process and/or the auditors.

The submission, investigation and decision on complaints shall not lead to a disadvantage for the complainant.

### **2.2 Confirmation of Receipt of the Appeal / Complaint**

The receipt of appeals / complaints will be confirmed to the appellant / complainant immediately (within two days). If necessary, the language to be used for subsequent communication must be clarified with the appellant / complainant.

### **2.3 Preliminary Clarification on Justification**

Quality Austria checks to what extent the appeal / complaint refers to its own certification activities.

If the appeal / complaint dealt with is judged to be unjustified, the appellant / complainant will be informed in writing stating the reasons for the decision. Top management must be informed of this procedure in writing.

### **2.4 Handling of Justified Appeals / Complaints**

#### **2.4.1 Investigation**

An investigation is carried out, whereby all necessary information is collected and verified to assess the complaint.

If the complaint concerns a certified client, the investigation of the complaint must take into account the effectiveness of the certified management system.

Quality Austria will forward complaints about certified clients to the certified client within 14 days.

If Quality Austria considers it appropriate to carry out short-term inspections at the client's premises (in the event of a complaint), a corresponding audit must be carried out within 90 days and the results must be documented accordingly. The QM must commission a suitably qualified and independent auditor. (In the field of Automotive, this is a Special Audit).

If required, the impartiality committee of Quality Austria may be consulted.

Auditors, examiners, verifiers, validators or trainers affected by the complaint/appeal will be informed.

If necessary, a detailed root cause analysis is carried out and, if needed, internal corrective and preventive actions are defined and implemented in accordance with the internal CIP process of Quality Austria.

#### **2.4.2 Decision / Definition of Actions**

The decision as to which actions must be taken is made by the CEOs of Quality Austria and is formally communicated to the complainant.

## 2.5 Documentation

The Quality Manager (QM) keeps the necessary documentation on the appeals / complaints handled, which is kept in the customer file and is additionally stored in a separate folder "Appeals / Complaints" at Quality Austria. This is also used to check whether there have been similar cases in the past, and it ensures that these cases are taken into account. Note for Automotive: The Sector Management Automotive keeps a separate list (KPI matrix) containing Feedback from clients, stakeholders and IATF OEMs.

## 2.6 Special Product- and Sector-specific Time Requirements

When processing appeals / complaints, it must be ensured that the product- and sector-specific time requirements are met, e.g.:

- **IATF** Rules: Nonconformity management, section 5.11 and Decertification process, section 8).
- **IFS**: For **complaints** received by the **IFS** offices, a statement on the cause and the measures identified to rectify the problem, will be provided
  - o for administrative errors within 1 week
  - o for qualitative errors within 2 weeks
- **IFS**: For complaints received from the companies or other relevant parties, an initial response shall be given within 10 working days,
- **IFS**: Appeals shall be finalized within 20 working days