

## Complaint, Dispute and Appeal Process

### 1.1 Complaints

VKU Certification implemented and maintains the below procedure for receiving, managing, evaluating and investigating complaints, making decisions on them and taking appropriate corrective actions. VKU Certification makes its complaints procedure publically available through its website. Validation and Verification Project Contract' signed with its client.

#### 1.1.1 Personnel responsible for handling the complaint

Quality Manager is responsible for handling the complaint. Quality manager confirm whether the complaint relates to validation or verification project activities for which he received a complaint. All valid complaints are evaluated and investigated by an established panel 'Complaint, Dispute and Appeal Panel', which constitutes three independent members selected and proposed by Quality Manager (by default) and approved by impartiality committee. In the event, Quality Manager is subject to the complaint he doesn't take part in the complaint handling and establishment of above mentioned panel, and complaint is handled including establishment of panel, by Technical Manager.

In case, the complaint is against the both (TM and QM), it is handled by Director. The tasks with regard to complaint handling are by default written from the perspective that Quality Manager is independent to the complaint. If that is not true, the responsibilities of tasks allocated to Quality Manager are undertaken by alternates as proposed above. Impartiality committee shall be responsible for all decisions at all levels of the complaint handling process.

#### 1.1.2 Receiving complaints

Who so ever at VKU Certification receives the complaint in any form (email, letter etc.) bring it to the notice of Quality Manager for managing it, who;

- (a) Acknowledge the complainant about the complaint
- (b) Send complainant 'Complaint Register' for gathering the required information
- (c) Recorded the complaint in the 'Complaint Register'
- (d) Gather related information and requests the additional information if necessary
- (e) Verify all necessary information for evaluating the validity of the complaints against the criteria set out in section 1.1.3.
- (f) If complaint found valid and genuine, constitute and propose 'Complaint, Dispute and Appeal Panel' to impartiality committee for his approval.
- (g) The panel investigates the complaint and submits its report to Quality Manager who decide the actions to be taken in response to complaint.

#### 1.1.3 Criteria for validity of complaints

Quality Manager determine the validity of the complaints by evaluating it against the below criteria;

- (a) Complainant is a genuine stakeholder

- (b) Identity of complainant is established
- (c) Complaint is formal
- (d) Its related directly/indirectly to the validation and verification function of VKU Certification

#### **1.1.4 Tracking and recording of complaints**

Complaints received by any of the personnel are sent to Quality Manager who handles and record. Complaint Register'. The actions undertaken in response to complaint are also recorded and all such complaints are archived on the server. In case, the complaint is about the Quality Manager it is handled by Technical Manager instead.

#### **1.1.5 Appropriate corrective action**

Quality Manager ensures that appropriate corrective actions are taken against the complaint and record all such actions 'Complaint Register'.

#### **1.1.6 Safeguarding the confidentiality**

Quality Manager ensures that confidentiality of the complainant and subject of the complaint is safeguarded inline to the applicable confidentiality procedure.

#### **1.1.7 Selection of evaluation panel**

Quality Manager while selecting the 'Complaint, Dispute and Appeal Panel' ensures the following;

- (a) The team is independent of those who are part of or carried out the validation or verification/certification activities.
- (b) The person appointed as team member either have the same competency of the subjects to complaint or higher.
- (c) Team members have provided their no conflict of interest and confidentiality declaration. Team Declaration for COI' in advance of taking the job as per relevant VKU Certification s procedures.
- (d) The team is led by Technical Manager and in case he is a subject to the complaint and not independent, this role is taken by Quality Manager himself/herself. In case Quality Manager is subject of complaint it is dealt as per procedure defined in 1.1.1.

#### **1.1.8 Acknowledgement of progress**

The received complaint is acknowledged within three working days by sending the acknowledgement letter through email to the complainant. All complaints are investigated within 30 days of their receiving date. The name of the persons, appointed as panel members are also informed to the complainant through email.

#### **1.1.9 Investigation and out come**

The selected independent panel evaluates and investigates the complaints based on the information made available to them and prepares a report as outcome of the process in the

'Complaint Register'. Taking into account the outcome of the report, Quality Manager proposes the appropriate action and corrective action.

The outcome of the investigation and the final notice at the end of the complaint handling process is send to the complainant.

### **1.1.10 Maintaining record of complaints**

All documents related to complaint handling process are archived on server and all complaints made in a year are recorded in the 'Complaint Record List'

## **1.2 Disputes**

VKU Certification implemented and maintains the below procedure for receiving, managing, evaluating and investigating disputes, making decisions on them and taking appropriate corrective actions. VKU Certification makes its dispute handling procedure available as part of the contract. 'Project Contract' signed with its client.

### **1.2.1 Personnel responsible for handling the disputes**

Quality Manager is responsible for handling the disputes; he also verifies the validity of the dispute and records his observation in 'Complaint Register'. All valid disputes are evaluated and investigated by a panel 'Complaint, Dispute and Appeal Panel' which is constituted of three independent members. The members are selected and proposed by Quality Manager and approved by impartiality committee. In the event Quality Manager is subject to the dispute; he doesn't take part in dispute handling process and establishment of above mentioned panel, and dispute is handled including establishment of panel, by Technical Manager. In case, the dispute is against the both (TM and QM), it is handled by Director. The tasks with regard to dispute handling are by default written from the perspective that Quality Manager is independent to the dispute. If that is not true, the responsibilities of tasks allocated to Quality Manager are undertaken by alternates as proposed above.

### **1.2.2 Receiving disputes**

Who so ever observe/witness/encounter dispute bring it to the notice of Quality Manager who manages it as follows;

- (a) Acknowledge the dispute
- (b) Recorded the dispute in the 'Complaint Register'
- (c) Gather related information and requests the additional information if necessary
- (d) Verify all necessary information for evaluating the validity of the disputes against the criteria set out in section 1.2.3
- (e) Quality Manager constitute and propose a 'Complaint, Dispute Appeal Panel' only if filed dispute found valid to impartiality committee for his approval
- (f) The panel investigates the dispute and submits its report to Quality Manager who decide the actions to be taken in response to dispute

### **1.2.3 Criteria for validity of disputes**

Quality Manager determine the validity of the disputes by evaluating it against the below criteria;

- (a) Dispute is between the agreed parties
- (b) The identity of parties in the dispute is established
- (c) Dispute is formal
- (d) Its related to validation and verification function of VKU Certification

#### **1.2.4 Tracking and recording of disputes**

Disputes received by any of the personnel are tracked by Quality Manager and recorded in 'Complaint Register'. The actions undertaken in response to dispute are also recorded in the same register and all such forms are archived on the server.

#### **1.2.5 Appropriate corrective action**

Quality Manager ensures that appropriate corrective actions are taken against the dispute.

#### **1.2.6 Safeguarding the confidentiality**

Quality Manager ensures the confidentiality of the disputant and subject of the dispute is safeguarded inline to the applicable confidentiality procedure.

#### **1.2.7 Selection of evaluation panel**

Quality Manager while selecting the panel ensures the following;

- (a) The team is independent of those who carried out the validation or verification or certification activities.
- (b) The person appointed as team member either have the same competency of the subjects to dispute or higher.
- (c) Team members have provided their no conflict of interest and confidentiality declaration using 'Team Declaration for COI' in advance of taking the job.
- (d) The team is led by Technical Manager and in case he is a subject to the dispute, this role of team leader is taken by Quality Manager himself/herself.

#### **1.2.8 Acknowledgement and progress**

The received dispute is acknowledged within three working days by sending the acknowledgement letter to the disputant. All disputes are investigated within 30 days of their receiving date.

#### **1.2.9 Investigation and out come**

The selected independent dispute evaluation team evaluated and investigates the disputes based on the information made available to them and prepares a report as outcome of the process in the 'Complaint Register'. Taking into account the outcome of the report, quality manager proposes the appropriate action and corrective action. The outcome of the investigation and the final notice at the end of the dispute handling process is send to the disputant.

### **1.2.10 Maintaining record of disputes**

All documents related to dispute handling process are archived on server in the related folder.

## **1.3 Appeals**

VKU Certification implemented and maintains the below procedure for appeals made, by any existing or old client, against any decision. The appeal procedure is made available to clients as part of the contract. 'Project Contract' signed with its client. The appeal can be filed using the 'Complaint Register' and is submitted to Quality Manager who is responsible for handling the appeal and communicate with the client for the decision on appeal or any other reason on behalf of VKU Certification.

### **1.3.1 Establishment of independent panel**

Quality manager constitute and an independent three member panel and request the impartiality committee for the approval. He ensures and record that appointed member engaged in the appeal process differs from those who conducted the validation or verification/certification, including in the technical review and final decision making. The names of the appointed members are recorded in 'Complaint Register'. In the event Quality Manager is subject to the appeal he doesn't take part in appeal handling and establishment of above mentioned panel, and appeal is handled including establishment of panel, by Technical Manager. In case, the appeal is against the both (TM and QM), it is handled by Director. The tasks with regard to appeal handling are by default written from the perspective that Quality Manager is independent to the dispute. If that is not true, the responsibilities of tasks allocated to Quality Manager are undertaken by alternates as proposed above.

### **1.3.2 Avoidance of discrimination against the appellant**

Impartiality committee ensure by taking the below measures that the submission, investigation and decision on appeals do not result in any discriminatory action against the appellant.

- (a) By appointing an independent panel
- (b) Maintaining the confidentiality about the appellant and subjects to appeal
- (c) Avoiding conflict of interest of the panel

### **1.3.3 Handling of appeal**

Any client can file an appeal using the 'Complaint Register' and submit it to Quality Manager through email or online portal, post or any other lawful means of communication. In case the appellant has not used the appropriate form, Quality Manager sends him the correct and records the information in it before handling the appeal. On receipt of the appeal Quality Manager acknowledges it and informs the client about the next steps. He ensures the validity of the appeal on the following points;

- a) Appellant is a genuine client
- b) Identity of appellant is established
- c) Appeal is formal and related to any of VKU Certification's opinion/decision

Quality Manager can request the additional information from the appellant if required and record it in 'Complaint Register'. After establishing the validity of the appeal he constitutes a panel and request impartiality committee for the approval. He put all received and relevant information through the panel to be taken into account for the investigation. The panel can also request Quality Manager for additional information, if necessary. The outcome of the investigation which includes any gaps, observation, non-conformity and decision are recorded and used as appropriate for implementing the correction action. In the event, Quality Manager is subject to the appeal, Technical Manager handles the appeal instead.

### **1.3.4 Records and archiving**

The 'Complaint Register' is used to record appeals including actions undertaken to resolve them. The information received from appellant and made available to the panel, is recorded and archived on the server. Quality Manager tracks the appeal process and ensures the final decision within 30 days of the receipt of the appeal.

### **1.3.5 Correction and corrective action**

In case the investigation points towards non-conformity, appropriate correction and corrective action are taken to eliminate the gaps in the system, especially if investigation points towards any gaps in the system. Quality manager is responsible for the implementation of such correction and corrective action and their effectiveness.

### **1.3.6 Confidentiality**

The members of panel provide, during their appointment, declaration for maintaining the confidentiality before starting the investigation to Quality Manager.

### **1.3.7 Communication with appellant**

Quality Manager acknowledges the appeal, inform on the progress of investigation and provide information/notice on the final decision to appellant. In cases the applicant is not satisfied with the decision; he is informed by Quality Manager on the option of appealing to the registry.

### **1.3.8 Final decision**

Impartiality committee ensures by endorsing the final decision in the related 'Complaint Register' that the decision is made by the independent appeal panel and communicated to appellant as appropriate.

If you have any complaints, disputes or appeals, please feel free to write us at

[complaint@vkucertification.com](mailto:complaint@vkucertification.com)



### Document Revision History

| Version | Date       | Prepared By | Approved By   |
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| 1.0     | 11/07/2021 | Ayushi Garg | Vikas Aharwal |