

OP11 Certification Appeals Process

1.0 Description

Standards International Ltd makes decisions to grant certification based upon factual evidence gained during an assessment process. Should a client consider that a decision is flawed, Standards International Ltd operates an appeals process whereby the decision will be independently reviewed.

2.0 What is an 'appeal'?

An appeal is a formal procedure by which a client can appeal against a decision on certification. In such situations the appellants are required to submit their appeal in writing.

2.1 Grounds for appeal

There are three grounds on which a candidate may appeal:

1. Personal or medical grounds
2. Procedural grounds
3. The decision was biased or discriminatory.

All appeals must be made within three months of the certification decision being taken.

Clients must be able to provide clear evidence that the decision against which they are appealing meets at least one of the following criteria:

1. Relevant information of mitigating circumstances received by stated deadlines had not been taken into consideration
2. Substantial procedural irregularity
3. Evidence to suggest that a decision may have been biased or discriminatory.

It is the responsibility of the client to provide Standards International Ltd with clear evidence that one of the grounds listed above is valid.

Clients considering an appeal should take note of the following:

1. Appeals will only be accepted on the grounds listed above and no other grounds will be considered.
2. If appealing on the grounds of circumstances relating to events prior to the scheduled assessment, the Service Delivery and Relationship Assistant (SDRA) must have been informed in writing at least 48 hours prior to the date of the scheduled assessment.
3. If appealing on the grounds of bias or discrimination, any potential risks to conflicts of interest must have been submitted in writing at the application stage or no later than 48 hours prior to the date of the assessment.
4. If a conflict of interest was identified during the assessment then the SDRA must have been informed within 24 hours of the assessment having been completed or prior to the assessment decision having been confirmed to the client, whichever was sooner.

If the above conditions are satisfied then the client has relevant grounds to make an appeal against the certification decision.

3.0 The appeals process

1. Appeals must be submitted in writing (letter, fax or email) to the SDRA within three months of the client being notified of the certification decision.
2. The SDRA must acknowledge receipt of the appeal in writing within two working days of receiving the appeal.
3. The SDRA must send the appeal to the Quality Manager within two working days of acknowledging receipt to the client.
4. The Quality Manager must log the appeal in the Standards International Appeals Log and review the appeal to determine whether the conditions for appeal are satisfied.

If additional information is required, the Quality Manager must inform the client in writing within five working days, clearly stating what additional information he/she requires to proceed with the client's appeal.

If the appeal meets all the requirements to proceed then the Quality Manager must inform the client of the date of the next meeting of the Standards International Best Practice Development Forum, where the appeal will be presented. Additional information explaining the purpose and independence of the Standards International Best Practice Development Forum must also be provided at this point.

5. The appeal, along with all the supporting evidence as sent by the client and collated by the Quality Manager, must be presented at the next meeting of the Standards International Best Practice Development Forum. Members of the Standards International Best Practice Development Forum must declare any conflicts of interest with regards to the appeal immediately and upon request. Any members who have declared a conflict of interest will not be included in the final appeal decision.
6. The appeal will be reviewed by the Standards International Best Practice Development Forum and a ruling will be decided by a majority vote. The decision of the Standards International Best Practice Development Forum is final.
7. The Quality Manager must inform the client of the appeal decision in writing within one working day of the decision being made.
8. If the appeal has been successful then the decision must be applied to the client's account retrospectively with immediate effect.
9. The appeal and corresponding decision must be raised at the next Standards International Management Meeting to review any procedural failures or bias/discrimination.
10. Corrective and disciplinary actions must be processed where necessary and logged in the appropriate workbook, the continual improvement log or individual HR folder.
11. In cases where appeals have been successful, the client must be informed in writing about what corrective or disciplinary actions have been taken within one calendar month of such action being implemented.
12. The Quality Manager must ensure that all the details regarding the appeal are entered in the Standards International Appeals Log before closing the appeal.

13. The Standards International Appeals Log is available to both internal and external auditors for review upon request.

4.0 Impartiality

Appeals are dealt with impartially in a non-discriminatory manner and will not affect a client's standing with Standards International Ltd.