



Zolabix (Pty) Ltd Quality Procedure

No.	QP07
Revision No.	1
Date.	13/05/2024

Procedure for Complaints and Appeal

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to describe the handling of incidents, complaints, and appeals received from the client, in-house, and or from other parties.

2.0 Scope

This procedure covers all complaints and appeals received by the organisation by any means be it, written, verbal, email, etc. It may also include adverse findings during audits.

3.0 Responsibility

3.1 The Managing Director is responsible for receiving complaints and appeals from the clients and other parties. They in consultation with the Quality Manager, office staff, and auditors are responsible for handling, validating, and analysing the complaints and appeals to the satisfaction of the clients and other parties.

3.2 The overall responsibility to execute this procedure is set out below:

Activity	Responsibility
Completion and submittal of incident report records for entry into the Corrective Action System	All Zolabix (Pty) Ltd staff members
Incident investigation and analysis	Quality Manager
Handling of appeals and submission to appeal sub-committee (for appeals)	Managing Director
Appeal review, analysis, and decision	Appeal Sub-committee

4.0 Description of Activity

4.1 Quality System Incidents

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4.1.1 For this document “Quality System Incidents” are defined as complaints, suggestions, observations, and opportunities for improvement. Quality System Incident data is entered into the Corrective Action System for proper treatment (QP 04). This procedure describes the methodology by which Zolabix (Pty) Ltd collects and processes incident reports and communicates the impact on staff members.

4.1.2 Zolabix (Pty) Ltd recognises that incidents occur in daily operations and that collectively they have an impact on the Quality Management System. To correctly analyse and address system issues, a consistent and thorough process for the collection of information is vital.

4.2 Complaints

Complaints are incidents or grievances or dissatisfaction with Zolabix (Pty) Ltd.’s service. Complaints may be:

- Internal in nature, raised by a Zolabix (Pty) Ltd employee with regards to internal service, operation, or employee performance,
- External in nature, raised by a Zolabix (Pty) Ltd client, supplier, or another affiliated organisation,
- Written
- Verbal
- Complaints raised by a client’s customer or stakeholder

4.3 The terminology used in the procedure for incidents

4.3.1 Suggestions

Zolabix (Pty) Ltd recognises that positive feedback is as valuable as negative feedback. Suggestions are vital in identifying risks or opportunities for improvement. As with complaints, suggestions may be internal or external, written or verbal. All suggestions should be brought to the attention of the Managing Director.

4.3.2 Appeals

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Zolabix (Pty) Ltd recognises that clients may have some reservations or may not agree with the conduct of an auditor, the audit findings, the certification committee decision, and/or overall interaction with Zolabix (Pty) Ltd.'s staff. The client is encouraged to communicate the same to the Zolabix (Pty) Ltd Appeal sub-committee and the Managing Director, and this will be treated as an appeal from the client.

4.3.3 Observations

Observations are witnessed incidents of service or operational deficiency, malfunctions, and or failure. Observations are often made by individuals, independent of the activity witnessed, and therefore are objective in nature. Observations also play an essential role in the identification of risk and system improvements.

4.3.4 Opportunities for Improvement

Opportunities for improvement are incidents where the system has not failed, yet greater operational efficiency may be obtained in assessing the current practices. Opportunities for improvement are often collected internally, however, input from external sources is also beneficial.

4.4 Receipt of Incidents

4.4.1 The quality incident may be reported by any means, verbal or written. In the case of an external source, the incident report may be received by any employee. The employee shall file the incident report, recording all the information and details of the complaint. The completed report shall be submitted to the Managing Director for further action. In the case of an internal filled report, such reports will be submitted to the Quality Manager for further action.

4.4.2 The Managing Director shall contact the external source to acknowledge the receipt of the information within five working days of receipt thereof, (telephonic or email). The MD shall gain an understanding of the issues raised by the source, to avoid an error in writing the report. They may decide to personally meet the initiator, depending on the gravity and seriousness of the issue.

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4.4.3 In the case of Complaints and Observations, that may be raised against the Zolabix (Pty) Ltd systems, procedures, or employees/sub-contractors or certified clients of Zolabix (Pty) Ltd, the Managing Director shall contact the external source to acknowledge the receipt of the information within five working days of receipt thereof, (telephonic or email). The MD shall gain an understanding of the issues raised by the source, to avoid an error in writing the report. They may decide to personally meet the initiator, depending on the gravity and seriousness of the issue.

In the case of suggestions and opportunities for improvement, the Quality Manager will evaluate the suggestion, whereby the merit of the suggestion or opportunity for improvement will be discussed with the Managing Director.

4.4.4 All such incidents received by any means or by anyone are first recorded onto the Incident Report register and after that on an Incident Report, with the details set out below:

- Complaints and Appeals SR. NO.;
- Mode of Receipt;
- Received by;
- Name of Client and other Parties;
- Description of Complaint and Appeal;
- Reference of services against, which complaints and appeals are raised along with the reference, date, and other details.

4.4.5 Client / other party complaints and appeal incident reports are issued to the Managing Director and Quality Manager or analysing and establish the root cause.

4.4.6 The Quality Manager validates the complaints after verifying the necessary backup records and conducting personal interviews with the auditors and or employees who were involved in the interaction with the client.

4.5 Handling of Client Complaints and Observations

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4.5.1 In case of a complaint or observation raised against Zolabix (Pty) Ltd, the Quality Manager analyses the issue to determine if there is a system error or personnel error. They, in conjunction with the Managing Director, shall determine the root cause and determine corrective action. The possible complaints are:

- Administration, problems with appointments, certification files, certificates issued or issued late.
- Auditors or sub-contractors, who have failed to complete audit or surveillance documentation.
- Agents, problems with general compliance with Zolabix (Pty) Ltd administration or audit procedures.

4.5.2 The correction is affected immediately to satisfy the complainant. This may include training or counseling the person involved. The complaint or observation is discussed with management during the next Management Review. Appropriate action is taken based on discussions (change in procedure/formats, training to all personnel, etc.). An email is sent out to all staff detailing the issue and remedial action (for information purposes). A copy of the complaint and investigation is filed in the respective individual personnel file for reference as the performance appraisals.

4.5.3 In the case of a complaint or observation raised against a certified client, the Managing Director will study the complaint and discuss this with the auditor who conducted the last audit. If the complaint is found to be genuine and valid, i.e. indicates a system failure, the complaint is sent to the client in writing for a response. No confidential reports or information is sent to the complainant without written permission from the client. Adequate time is given to the client for a response. Depending on the response, the Managing Director may decide to:

- Write to the complainant about the response received from the client;
- Ask further clarification from the client;
- Raise a dispute and opt to visit the client to investigate the system failure personally. Such visits shall be considered special visits and will be at a cost to the client.

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- Request a joint meeting with the client, complainant, and Zolabix (Pty) Ltd.

4.5.4 The Managing Director shall communicate with the complainant at the end of the process detailing the findings and formally close the complaint. A copy of the correspondence is kept in the client's file for records, and the same is passed to the auditor of the next audit. The details of all complaints and actions are taken and discussed in the Management Review and IC meeting.

4.6 Handling of Appeals

Any company or organisation that fails to satisfy an audit or surveillance may appeal against the decision. Where an appeal is received, the following procedure will be followed.

4.6.1 The Managing Director will appoint the members of the Appeals Committee under the leadership of the MD who will hear the appeal and determine the outcome. In the case where the MD played a role in the audit or certification team, the MD shall decide to appoint an investigating officer to oversee the appeals process. In such a scenario, the MD shall approach the Impartiality Committee and or the Zolabix (Pty) Ltd team to provide a decision on the appeal. The decision on the appeal shall be taken based on the decision by the Zolabix (Pty) Ltd committee and the Impartiality Committee. The results of the appeal will be reported to the Board of Directors.

- All appeals shall be received by the Technical Manager, and details of appeals shall be recorded in the Appeals Register, maintained by the Technical Manager.
- The Technical Manager shall investigate the appeal and inform the client of its plan of action for investigation and action thereupon.
- An investigation report (Incident Report) for each appeal shall be maintained by the Technical Manager. In case any further corrective action is required, post-actions are identified and taken based on the incident report. The corrective action procedure, QP04 is implemented.
- A copy of the investigation report shall be sent to the client.
- In case the issue remains open, the same shall be intimated to the accreditation board for its valuable comments.

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- All appeals made are collated and analysed on an annual basis.
- Necessary corrective actions shall be taken based on the appeal trend.
- Appeal trends and corrective action taken shall be reviewed as part of the Management Committee meeting and Impartiality Committee Meeting.
- The Technical Manager shall ensure the details concerning the appellant and actions thereupon are not shared with the audit team members.
- The technical Manager shall ensure that no disciplinary action is taken against the appellant.
- The client is made aware of the appeal process and is available to him on request.

4.6.2 In the case of an appeal made by a client against a decision made by the auditor, the lead auditor, or the certification committee, the appeal shall be recorded by the Managing Director and forwarded to the Appeal Subcommittee. The Appeal Subcommittee shall review the appeal, and investigate, (which may include a discussion with the concerned client, respective auditor/lead auditor, and review of the audit report). The Appeal subcommittee may also direct any other lead auditor to visit the site and determine the validity of the appeal. The decision taken by the Appeal subcommittee shall be communicated to the client and the Managing Director for necessary action. The case will also discussed during the next MRM and ICM. In special cases, the case may be discussed with the Impartiality Committee members on a one-to-one basis.

4.7 Handling of Suggestions / Opportunity for Improvement

- In case of suggestions or opportunities for improvements, the source is predominantly internal, and the concerned staff members fill out the incident report and submit the same to the Quality Manager. The other sources may be internal or external.
- Quality Manager studies the suggestion to determine any conflict with ISO 17021, Zolabix (Pty) Ltd Policies. In that case where the suggestion conflicts, the same is communicated to the initiator. The suggestion is also discussed in the

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MRM. In the case whereby the suggestion is not found to conflict, the suggestion is studied for benefits and the impact on other processes.

- The suggestion is accepted if found to be beneficial and does not adversely impact on any other process. The Quality Manager determines the changes in existing documentation and implements them through the Document Change process (QP01).
- If any certified client or interested party requests the appeal/complaint handling process, then such a request is to be forwarded to the Quality Manager. The QM will inform the certified client and or any other interested party of the appeals and complaint handling process of Zolabix (Pty) Ltd.

4.8 Closing of Complaint and Appeals

4.8.1 Depending on the nature of the non-conformity, the Managing Director / Quality Manager and or Technical Manager may follow up with requests for corrective actions. When the investigation of client complaints and appeals determines that a remote operation or other external organisations contributed to the complaint or appeal, the Technical Manager or his/her delegates contact these organisations and provide them with all the relevant information.

4.8.2 Every client complaint and appeal is recorded. The records are maintained by the Quality Manager/ Technical Manager. When there are copies of written communication, reports, and other document related to a complaint and appeal, these records are organised into a file and are identified with the complaints and appeal numbers and have records of the corresponding corrective action. The records of investigation that concern product quality or other test characteristics are maintained by the Technical Manager. Based on the analysis of clients and or other party complaints or appeals, necessary action is taken, and the client is replied to for closing of the complaint or appeal. The Quality Manager identifies the need for taking corrective action does not prevent such complaints and appeals in the future, and accordingly, the concerned person (s) is informed.

4.8.3 All the complaints and appeals received by the organisation will be closed within seven working days after receipt of a complaint and appeal. The Operations Manager or Technical Manager is authorised for the closing of complaints and appeals.

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4.9 References

4.9.1 QP01 Procedures for control of documents

4.9.2 QP02 Procedures for corrective action

4.10 Enclosures Nil

4.11 Formats / Exhibits

4.12 F23 Incident Report

4.13 F24 Incident Log

5. RECORD OF AMENDMENTS

RECORD OF CHANGES, REVISIONS AND CANCELLATIONS		
DATE	NATURE / DETAIL IN CHANGE	REV NUM:
13.05.2024	Document review	Rev: 01

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