Procedure for Handling Appeals

DOCUMENT CONTROL

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NOTES

1. The Management Representative is responsible for the issue and distribution of this document, including amendments.
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1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

1.1 The purpose of this procedure is to establish the process for the receipt, review, evaluation and resolution of appeals.

1.2 This procedure applies to appeals submitted by any party who believes that it has been adversely affected by a certification-related decision of the Certification Body.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY
Management Committee / CEO	• Overall responsibility for ensuring the satisfactory resolution of appeals. • Providing a detailed written statement and response on the decision under appeal.
Certification Body	• Receiving and acknowledging appeals. • Ensuring that all necessary information is collected, investigated and verified to validate and evaluate the appeal. • Keeping the appellant informed and maintaining records of appeals.
Chairman of the Advisory Board	• Constituting the Appeal Committee and nominating its Chairperson. • Taking the final decision on the appeal.
Appeal Committee	Hearing the appeal, evaluating the evidence and recommending appropriate action.

3. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

DOCUMENT NO.	DOCUMENT TITLE
AIMS/AA-01	VISTA APEX Manual
AIMS/AA-02	AIMS Manual (Scheme)
AIMS/AA-03	AIMS Procedure Manual

4. DEFINITIONS

4.1 For the purposes of this procedure, the terms and definitions given in ISO/IEC 17021-1, ISO/IEC 27006-1:2024, ISO/IEC 42006 and ISO 9000, together with those given in the VISTA APEX Manual (AIMS/AA-01), apply.

5. PROCEDURE

5.1 Right to Appeal

5.1.1 Any party who believes that it has been adversely affected by a decision of the Certification Body may submit an appeal against that decision to the Advisory Board.

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5.2 Submission of Appeal

5.2.1 The appellant shall submit a formal written notice of appeal to the Advisory Board within **six (6) weeks** of the date of the decision being appealed.

5.2.2 The notice of appeal shall clearly state the grounds and basis on which the appellant considers the decision to be incorrect or unacceptable.

5.3 Initial Review and Response

5.3.1 On receipt of an appeal, the Certification Body shall acknowledge receipt to the appellant and refer the matter to the Management Committee/CEO for review.

5.3.2 The Certification Body shall ensure that all necessary information is collected, investigated and verified to validate and evaluate the appeal.

5.3.3 The Management Committee/CEO shall provide a detailed written response to the appellant, with a copy to the Advisory Board, explaining the basis and rationale for the decision being appealed.

5.3.4 If the appellant wishes to pursue the appeal further, the appellant shall submit a written statement to the Advisory Board within **four (4) weeks** of receiving the response, setting out the grounds for continuing the appeal.

5.4 Appeal Committee

5.4.1 The Chairman of the Advisory Board shall constitute an independent Appeal Committee of **three (3) members**. The members shall be impartial and shall not have been involved in the audit, evaluation, certification decision or any other activity related to the subject of the appeal.

5.4.2 The Chairman of the Advisory Board shall nominate one member of the Appeal Committee as its Chairperson.

5.4.3 The composition of the Appeal Committee shall be acceptable to both parties, as applicable, and shall ensure that there is no conflict of interest.

5.5 Hearing and Evidence

5.5.1 Each party shall be given the opportunity to present its case before the Appeal Committee and may nominate up to **two (2) representatives** to appear on its behalf.

5.5.2 All relevant written evidence and supporting documents shall be submitted to the Appeal Committee at least **one (1) week** before the scheduled hearing, unless otherwise permitted by the Appeal Committee.

5.6 Evaluation and Recommendation

5.6.1 The Appeal Committee shall review and evaluate all relevant information and evidence and shall recommend the appropriate action in response to the appeal. In doing so, the Appeal Committee may take into consideration the outcomes of previous similar appeals, where relevant.

5.7 Final Decision

5.7.1 The recommendation of the Appeal Committee shall be submitted to the Chairman of the Advisory Board for consideration and decision.

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5.7.2 The decision of the Chairman of the Advisory Board shall be final and binding, subject to applicable statutory, regulatory or accreditation requirements.

5.8 Communication with the Appellant

5.8.1 The Certification Body shall keep the appellant informed of the progress of the appeal.

5.8.2 On completion of the appeal process, the appellant shall be formally informed in writing of the outcome, the final decision and any action taken in response to the appeal.

5.9 Impartiality and Non-Discrimination

5.9.1 Appeals shall be handled in an impartial, objective and transparent manner. Persons involved in the appeal process shall not have been involved in the subject of the appeal or in the original certification decision.

5.9.2 The submission, investigation and decision on an appeal shall not result in any discriminatory or retaliatory action against the appellant.

5.10 Records

5.10.1 All appeals, including their status, investigation, decisions and actions taken, shall be tracked, documented and retained by the Certification Body.

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