

SOP 07:

Procedure for Complaints and Appeals



Global Sustainability
Certification & Inspection
Services

A. Identification Number: SOP 07

B. Title: Procedure for handling complaints and appeals

C. Purpose: To establish procedure for handling complaints and appeals.

D. Pertinence:

1. All projects/ products/ operations and services under certification control of GSCI Services are subject to this SOP.

E. Responsibility:

1. **Head of Certification** is responsible for acknowledgement of the complaint/ appeal received, initiate evaluation of root cause, plan and execute required action to resolve the complaint/ appeal with the help of concerned staff/ department, record the results of root cause analysis, action taken and communicate the same to interested parties.
2. Concerned person or department is responsible for identifying the root cause of the complaint/ appeal, plan and execute required action and report to the **Head of Certification**

F. Procedure for handling complaints

- i. Complaints are normally received from the applicants, certified clients, or any interested parties.
- ii. In event of any complaint to be made to GSCI Services, the complaint shall be made in writing with the valid justification, detailed nature and extent of the complaint. The complainant may send the complaint to global@gsciservices.net, or by using the **Feedback-Complaints-Appeals Format (F23)**.
- iii. Any such complaints received by any staff member (internal or external) shall be communicated and registered in the **Complaint Processing Format (F51)**.
- iv. Such complaint may be regarding the services provided by GSCI Services, products/ systems certified by GSCI Services.
- v. Upon receipt of the complaint, **Head of Certification** is responsible to verify whether this complaint relates to the activities under control of GSCI Services or not, if found related, **Head of Certification** acknowledges the receipt of complaint to the complainant as soon as possible or at the latest within 5 working days and update the progress of evaluating the complaint from time-to-time. The **Head of Certification** writes to the complainant to confirm receipt of the complaint and to provide an overview of the proposed course of action to follow up on the complaint (refer to **Complaint Acknowledgement Letter (F49)**).
- vi. **Head of Certification** register the complaints on the **Complaint Log Book (F50)** and initiates the investigation of the root cause of the complaint with the help of concerned department head or person.
- vii. Concerned department head, upon identification of the root cause, plan for the suitable action, which may be corrective as well as preventive in nature and get it approved from the **Head of Certification** for its effectiveness.
- viii. The complaint is duly investigated in consideration of the facts provided, data in the project file as well as additional information obtained of the staff members concerned and/or third party experts, if relevant. Further information is requested from the complainant, if necessary. If found effective, suitable action is initiated to resolve the issue and close the complaint.
- ix. Based on the result of the investigation, the **Head of Certification** specifies all proposed actions in conclusion to the complaint as soon as possible or at the latest within three (3) months of receiving the complaint.
- x. The measures to be taken are based on the requirements of the case:

- a. The measures shall be reasonable with regard to necessary efforts/ expenses as well as timely clarification of the matter.
 - b. The measures shall be determined by relevant laws, regulations and standards.
- xi. Upon completion of investigation and implementation of suitable action, the complainant **shall be** informed **within three months** the results of investigation and subsequent action taken in writing
- xii. In case the complainant is a third party asking for anonymity in relation to the GSCI Services client, against which he is filing the complaint, GSCI Services will retain the anonymity. This means, GSCI Services will not disclose the name and address of the complainant to the GSCI Services client concerned.
- xiii. GSCI Services will not respond to anonymous complaints. GSCI Services will treat anonymous complaints and expressions of dissatisfaction, which are not substantiated as complaints, as stakeholder comments and address these during the next audit.
- xiv. GSCI Services, together with the certified client, determine whether and, if so to what extent, the subject of the complaint and its resolution shall be made public.
- xv. **Internal communication**
 1. Complaints / appeals and the action taken shall be discussed during the management review meetings **and impartiality committee meetings**.
 2. The learning/ outcome of the complaint/ appeal in the form of changing policy, procedure, format, and document shall be communicated to all the concerned within GSCI Services.
- xvi. **External communication**
 1. The complaint handling procedure is available to any interested party upon request as well as this is uploaded in the GSCI Services website as a downloadable document.

G. Procedure for handling appeals

1. Any client (whether an applicant, certified, suspended, withdrawn, and decertified) of GSCI SERVICES can appeal against the decision on certification taken by GSCI SERVICES.
2. The appellant shall address the appeal and associated records to the **Head of Certification** of GSCI SERVICES as per **Feedback-Complaints-Appeals Format (F45)**.
3. Such appeal shall be submitted within 10 working days from the date of receipt of said decision along with intention of appeal, grounds of appeal and justification documents as proof. If the appellant failed to submit grounds of appeal and related justification documents/ records as proof as per given timeline, the appeal will be considered as closed case.
4. **Head of Certification** first reviews the appeal submitted in order to decide whether this appeal is related to the work done by GSCI SERVICES or not. If found related, **Head of Certification** will record and acknowledge the receipt of appeal **within 5 working days** as per **Appeal Acknowledgement Letter (F46)**
5. Each appeal case will be registered in the **Appeals Processing Format (F48)** by the recipient and forwarded to the **Head of Certification** for registration in the **Appeals Log Book (F24)**.
6. After first review, **Head of Certification** will gather and verify all necessary information pertaining the appeal.
7. As soon as possible, at the latest within 2 weeks (10 working days) the **Head of Certification** acknowledges the appellant to confirm receipt of the appeal and to provide an overview of the proposed course of action to follow up on the appeal and update the progress of evaluating the appeal from time-to-time.
8. In order to ensure that there is no conflict of interest, the decision of resolving the appeal is taken by, or reviewed and approved by, person(s) who shall not be involved in the activities related to the

appeal. This means, the person responsible shall not be involved in the certification decision questioned in the appeal.

9. The person responsible shall investigate the appeal and the certification decision re-assessed in consideration of the new evidence or additional justification provided, as well as additional information obtained by other staff members and/or third party experts, if relevant. Further information is requested from the appellant if necessary.
10. Based on the result of the investigation, the person responsible specifies all proposed actions in conclusion to the appeal as soon as possible or at the latest within two (2) months from the date of receipt of the appeal.
11. The appeal is closed once GSCI Services management has gathered and verified all necessary information, assessed the evidence provided, and taken a decision on the appeal. If applicable, the certification decision needs to be revised and updated certification documents need to be issued according to scheme requirements.
12. The person responsible informs the **Head of Certification** upon the completion of the appeal procedure, and forwards respective documentation for final assessment.
13. On completion of verification of documentation of the appeal the **Head of Certification** updates the **Appeals Log Book (F24)** and communicates the outcome to the appellant.

14. Internal communication

1. Appeals and the action taken shall be discussed during the management review meetings **and impartiality committee meetings.**
2. The learning/ outcome of the appeal in the form of changing policy, procedure, format, and document shall be communicated to all the concerned within GSCI Services.

15. External communication

- a. The appeal handling procedure is available to any interested party upon request as well as this is uploaded in the GSCI Services website as a downloadable document.

Associated Records/ Formats:

Sr. No	Description	Format Number	Version Number
1	Feedback-Complaints-Appeals Format	F23	1.0
2	Appeals Log Book	F24	1.0
3	GSCI Services Appeals Processing Format	F48	1.0
4	Appeal Acknowledgement Letter	F46	1.0
5	Complaint Log-Book	F50	1.0
6	Complaint Acknowledgement Letter	F49	1.0
7	Complaint Processing Format	F51	1.0