1 Purpose

This document establishes the procedures for receiving, evaluating and taking decisions on appeals, complaints and disputed issues regarding the activities of Certification body IMS INTERNATIONAL GmbH (hereinafter - CB) in accordance with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015, ISO 22003-1:2022, ISO/IEC 27006-1:2024, ISO 50003:2021 taking into account the requirements of ISO/IEC 17021-3, ISO/IEC 17021-2, ISO/IEC 42006, Global ACI-TECH-3-001, Global ACI-TECH-3-002, Global ACI-TECH-3-003, Global ACI-TECH-3-004, Global ACI-TECH-3-007, Global ACI-TECH-3-008, Global ACI-TECH-3-009, Global ACI-TECH-3-012, Global ACI-TECH-3-013, Global ACI-TECH-3-016, Global ACI-TECH-3-017, Global ACI-TECH-3-011, ACCREDIA policies.

2 Scope

This documented procedure is used by all personnel of CB.

3 Terms, definitions and abbreviations

The following terms and definitions apply to this procedure:
Complaint - Written or verbal dissatisfaction of the customer regarding the type of services offered by CB, or the manner in which these services were provided.
Appeal - Written dissatisfaction of the customer with the result of the service provided (for example, the decision of CB regarding the scope of certification)
"Substantive" complaints are:

- complaint from the accreditation body regarding customers of CB
- complaint from third parties (third-party companies, organizations or private individuals) regarding customers of CB
- rejection of standard contracts
- failure to make certificate decisions (objections/claims)
- incorrect entry in the database
- certificates that are not issued 3 months after corrective actions

All other complaints are considered to be "minor".
The following features are used as a basis for analyzing the reasons or grounds for complaints in the annual statistics:

- a third-party complaint against customers of CB (accreditation body, state institutions, state authorities, owners of the standard)
- difficult accessibility of employees of the CB
- overly long duration of processing requests or commercial offers
- providing inadequate or unacceptable proposals for the price or the contract
- criticism regarding the agreement on dates, appointment of auditors, time of audit
- shortcomings of general indicators (results/audit reports)
- overly long duration of certificate issuance
- errors in the certificate, damaged certificates
- database input errors
- errors or excessively long processing time of financial and tax reporting documents
- others
- lack of responsibility

4 Responsibility

Head of CB is responsible for:

- approval of the rules related to the complaints and appeals management
- ensuring the functioning of the complaints and appeals management process
- interaction and informing of interested parties
- confidential consideration of complaints

- involvement of lawyers, mass media, insurance companies if necessary

Deputy Head of CB is responsible for:
- introduction, control, management and further improvement of the complaints and appeals management procedure in CB
- registration and processing of complaints and involvement of the personnel of CB to process complaints
- interaction and informing of customers of CB
- analysis of complaints and appeals regarding weaknesses and potentials for improvement of CB, initiation of corrective and preventive actions

5 Description of actions

Appeals/complaints from the same appellant/complainant on the same issue are not subject to consideration, if a decision has already been made on this appeal or complaint.

The appellant/complainant can withdraw the submitted appeal/complaint at any time. In this case, consideration of the appeal or complaint is terminated. Consideration of the issue raised in this appeal or complaint for the second time is not conducted.

The procedure for managing complaints and appeals is divided into 3 stages:
- Receipt and registration (cl. 5.1.1)
- Processing (cl. 5.1.2)
- Temporary archiving, anonymous evaluation, deletion (cl. 5.1.3).

5.1 Complaints management

The complaints-handling process includes the following elements and methods:
a) an outline of the process for receiving, validating, investigating the complaint, and for deciding what actions need to be taken in response to it;
b) tracking and recording complaints, including actions undertaken in response to them;
c) ensuring that any appropriate correction and corrective action are taken

CB is responsible for all decisions at all levels of the complaints handling process.

Submission, investigation and decision on complaints shall not result in any discriminatory actions against the complainant.

5.1.1 Receiving and registering complaints

Complaints can be received in writing (official letter by post or e-mail) or verbally (phone call). Each employee upon receiving a complaint must inform the Deputy Head of CB, who will consider the complaint and organize its further processing.

After receiving a complaint, the Deputy Head of CB checks whether the complaint received meets the criteria specified in this documented procedure. In case of compliance, within 1 working day, the Executive Director registers the complaint, and any documents received.

5.1.2 Complaint processing

After registering a complaint, the Deputy Head of CB analyzes whether the complaint is valid (whether the complaint relates to certification activities that it is responsible for), if not, then records the relevant reasons and closes the complaint.

If the complaint relates to a certified client, then examination of the complaint shall consider the effectiveness of the certified management system.

If the complaint is valid, Deputy Head of CB analyzes whether it has an impact on the public or legal consequences related to insurance or information protection. If there is a corresponding influence, the Deputy Head of CB immediately informs the Head of CB.

The Deputy Head of CB organizes the processing of the complaint and, if necessary, involves employees of CB in the processing of the complaint.

Any valid complaint about a certified client is referred by CB to the certified client in question at an appropriate time.
The process to receive, evaluate and make decisions
on complaints is subject to requirements for confidentiality, as it relates to the complainant and to the subject of the complaint.
CB is responsible for gathering and verifying all necessary information to validate the complaint.
Whenever possible, CB shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint and shall provide the complainant with progress reports and the result of the complaint.
The waiting period for further actions, such as waiting for the customer's response, should not exceed 3 months.
The decision to communicate to the complainant is made by, or reviewed and approved by, individual(s) not previously involved in the subject of the complaint.

Whenever possible, CB gives formal notice of the end of the complaint-handling process to the complainant.

The complaint is closed if the customer responds positively to the procedure proposed to resolve the complaint or in the case of a complete lack of response that should have been expected from the customer within 3 months. If necessary, complaints should be accepted again and processing should be continued, in case of repeated application of the customer to CB.
CB determines, together with the certified client and the complainant, whether and, if so to what extent, the subject of the complaint and its resolution shall be made public.
If the Deputy Head of CB cannot reach an agreement with the customer, he can apply directly to the Board of CB, which acts as an arbitration body. In this case, the Deputy Head of CB sends a letter with the content of the complaint and its own statement, which agrees with the head of CB, to the members of the Board of CB. The Board of the certification body processes the appeal during the next general meeting, otherwise consideration of such an appeal can be carried out remotely. A customer description of this process is also available online.

5.1.3 Archiving
Complaint documentation is kept by the Deputy Head of CB with limited access for CB staff.

Documentation of complaints received during the year is kept by the Deputy Head of CB for 18 months after the end of the current year. After the expiration of the specified period, outdated documents are deleted and destroyed.
5.2 Appeals Management
5.2.1 General
In case of disagreement with the procedures and results of certification or technical supervision by CB, the applicant or another party may file an appeal with CB. Filing an appeal does not suspend the effect of the decisions made.
CB is responsible for all decisions at all levels of the appeal-handling process. CB ensures that the persons engaged in the appeals-handling process are different from those who carried out the audits and made the certification decisions.
Submission, investigation and decision on appeals shall not result in any discriminatory actions against the appellant.
The appeals-handling process includes the following elements and methods:
a) an outline of the process for receiving, validating and investigating the appeal, and for deciding what
actions need to be taken in response to it, taking into account the results of previous similar appeals;

b) tracking and recording appeals, including actions undertaken to resolve them;
c) ensuring that any appropriate correction and corrective action are taken.
5.2.2 Procedure for submitting appeals
The appeal must be submitted in writing to the head of CB within one month after the applicant receives the decision or information about the actions or inaction of CB that the applicant wishes to appeal.

The deadline for filing an appeal should not exceed one month from the date of receipt of CB's decision or CB's refusal to restore the violated rights.
The appeal is submitted if the applicant has a decision of CB or if CB takes actions that, in the opinion of the applicant, lead to a violation of his rights and interests in the certification area.
The appeal must clearly state its essence. All documents and materials that confirm and explain the facts contained in the appeal are attached to the appeal, as a rule:

- correspondence regarding a disputed issue between the applicant and CB;
- copies of the decision on the refusal to issue a certificate for the management system/ reduction of the scope/suspension/cancellation of the certificate for the management system, etc.

CB may require the provision of other documents necessary for consideration of the appeal.

5.2.3 Registration of appeals

All appeals, except for those received in violation of the requirements specified in clause 5.2.2 of this procedure and those for which it is impossible to establish authorship, are subject to mandatory registration in the electronic register (DF-IMS03-008).

5.2.4 Procedure for consideration of appeals

The appeal registered in the prescribed manner and other materials received together with it are handed over to the head of CB for analysis.
CB receiving the appeal is to be responsible for gathering and verifying all necessary information to validate the appeal.
The Deputy Head of CB and the head of CB consider the appeal within a period not exceeding one month from the date of its registration. If it is impossible to resolve the issues raised in the appeal within a month, the head of CB sets an additional deadline for its consideration, which the appellant is informed about. The total term of consideration of the appeal cannot exceed 45 (forty-five) working days.
The decision to be communicated to the appellant is made by, or reviewed and approved by, individual(s) not previously involved in the subject of the appeal.
Based on the results of the review of the appeal, the head of CB makes a decision:

- if the actions or decisions of CB are found to be illegal, a decision is made on the validity of the appeal and the need to eliminate the committed violation and/or cancel the decision made by it.

- if the actions or decisions are recognized as legitimate, a decision is made to reject the appeal.

The decision must be signed by the head of CB and all participants who participate in the appeal.
The decision is delivered in writing to the parties who participated in the appeal.
If one of the parties disagrees with the decision of CB, it may appeal to the Ministry of Economy and Development of Ukraine, the National Accreditation Agency of Ukraine or to the court in accordance with the current legislation.
The documentation regarding the review of appeals is kept by CB for ten years from the date of the decision.

Head of Certification body
IMS INTERNATIONAL GmbH — Anton SYNIATO

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