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|  | ***prOCEDure No 12Issue 4*** |

**COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS AGAINST THE CERTIFICATION BODY**

**And**

**COMPLAINTS AGAINST SN REGISTRARS REGISTERED CLIENTS**

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# 1 Purpose

 To define the manner in which Complaints & appeals against SN Registrars and SN Registrars registered clients or sites are recorded and processed.

 All complaints will be dealt with locally but at all times the Head office in the UK will be informed of all such complaints and copies of all complaints received and actions taken together with any associated appeals shall be submitted electronically to the scheme manager.

 A SN Registrars global complaints file will be created and held by the SN Registrars Head Office to ensure that a global perspective of the running of SN Registrars is available to ensure that appropriate global corrective & preventive actions regarding SN Registrars processes continue to be monitored and improved.

# 2 Scope

 All appeals and complaints received by any SN Registrars Managing Agent, Agent or SN Registrars in relation to its recognised activities and certificated customers.

 All complaints against SN Registrars registered organisation/sites related to their recognised registered QMS/EMS/OHSAS/ISMS/BCM activities.

# 3 References

 ISO 17021 Clause 4.7

# 4 Definitions

None

Note: SN Registrars clients that rely on certification expect to have complaints investigated and, if these are found to be valid, should have confidence that these complaints will be appropriately addressed and that a reasonable effort will be made by SN Registrars to resolve them. Effective responsiveness to complaints by SN Registrars is an important means of protection for SN Registrars and its clients of certification against errors, omissions or unreasonable behaviour. Confidence in certification activities is safeguarded when complaints are processes appropriately.

Appropriate balance between the principles of openness and confidentiality, including responsiveness to complaints, will be applied by SN Registrars to demonstrate integrity and credibility to all clients.

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

# 5 Complaints against SN Registrars (CertifIcation body)

 Upon receipt of a written or verbal complaint, it shall be recorded on Form P12/01 Complaints/Appeals record and a file opened. Any correspondence connected with the complaint shall be attached to this form / file. Complaints received will be analysed to determine the nature of the complaint and decide :

* Does the complaint relate to SN Registrars activities? if yes proceed to deal with the complaint.
* Does the complaint relate to an SN Registrars certified client? if so an internal investigation will take place to determine the effectiveness of the SN Registrars certification process and what actions to take. The certified client will be informed of the complaint at an appropriate time for their consideration and response to SN Registrars.

 All verbal complaints will be requested in writing / email with any supporting documentation if necessary to the local SN Registrars Managing Agent / Agent a copy in English will be forwarded to the SN Registrars Head Office.

 All complaints will be acknowledged within 48 hours by email to the complainant by the local agent.

 Prior to a complaints panel being formulated SN Registrars shall endeavour to obtain all necessary information (copy of reports, Team Leader responses in writing etc) to ensure the complaint can be sufficiently validated.

 The complaints panel consisting of SN Registrars local senior management shall jointly review the complaint and decide on the appropriate remedial action and the person(s) responsible for that action, which shall be recorded on Form P12/01.

 When the remedial action has been satisfactorily completed the SN Registrars local senior manager shall sign the close out on Form P12/01.

 The complainant shall be informed in writing of the outcome or the ongoing situation within one month of receipt of the complaint.

 Generally all complaints shall be satisfactorily closed-out within two months of receipt of the original complaint being received.

 In addition to the above, an unscheduled audit may be carried out if the complaint concerns a Supplier or Contractor.

 All complaints received locally by Managing Agents and Agents will be reviewed at least 3 monthly to determine any trends that may lead to further corrective & preventive actions being considered, information regarding such possible improvements shall be forwarded to the SN Registrars Head Office. The SN Registrars Head Office will also analyse all received complaints and other received improvement suggestions and determine possible global corrective / preventive actions.

 At meetings of the Governing Board of SN Registrars the SN Registrars scheme manager will present his report and a full and frank discussion will take place regarding all complaints / appeals received globally and again recommend any necessary corrective & preventive actions.

 The SN Registrars Head Office will forward on to all SN Registrars offices either improvement instructions via briefing notes or revised / new operating procedures subsequent to the outcome of SN Registrars Governing Board meetings or at any other time he feels it is necessary.

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

# 6 Complaints against SN Registrars registered clients

 Complaints regarding registered clients may be received by SN Registrars from the public i.e. customers of a SN Registrars registered client or from other sources, SN Registrars shall register the complaint in the complaints/ appeals register Form P12/01 and acknowledge receipt of the complaint and advise the registered client of the complaint, the scheme manager will decide if an unannounced audit is necessary or not.

 If so a competent auditor(s) shall be sent to the registered clients premises and after advising the client of the reason and an audit on the scope of the complaint shall be conducted, recorded and reported to the SN Registrars Director/ Scheme manager for investigation, review and approporiate actions.

 If not the registered client will be asked to provide sufficient evidence to SN Registrars to enable investigation, review and approporiate actions to be taken. The complainant and registered client shall be advised of the decision and actions to be taken, and on completion of the actions.

 During any audits the audit team shall review the SN Registrars *Registered organisation/sites complaints register* for compliance to requirements as;

i) Complaints represent a source of information as to possible non-conformity. On receipt of a complaint the organisation should establish and where appropriate report on the root cause of the non-conformity (e.g. using 5S), including any predetermining (or predisposing) factors within the management system.

ii) Such investigation enables the planning of corrective action, which should include measures for:

* notification of clients, public or appropriate authorities if required by regulation;
* restoring conformity as quickly as practicable;
* preventing recurrence;
* evaluating and mitigating any adverse environmental effects;
* ensuring satisfactory interaction with other components of the management system such as OHSAS / EMS / ISMS /BCMS and QMS;
* assessing the effectiveness of the above measures.

The implementation of the corrective action should not be deemed to have been completeduntil the effectiveness of all the above has been demonstrated *and verified* and and the necessary changes made in the procedures, documentation and records.

iii) Auditors should check that, where any such non-conformity or failure to meet the requirement is revealed, the organisation has conducted a root cause analysis of its own management system and taken appropriate corrective/preventive action and the complainant advised of the outcome by persons not previously involved in the complaint.

 Any non-compliance shall incur a CAR.

# 7 Appeals Procedure

 Anyone has the right of appeal against any decision made by SN Registrars. The appeals process is independent of the certification process. The purpose of Appeals procedures is to assist SN Registrars with its aim to continually improve its working methods. All appeals will be thoroughly analysed looking for the root cause (e.g. using 5S) of either individual or trends to ensure that appropriate Corrective and associated preventive actions are taken.

 SN Registrars offices and SN Registrars Head Office together with the Governing Board of SN Registrars will strive to ensure that “customer perception” is always considered fact and the purpose of this procedure is to establish actual facts to enable an appropriate response to be made to the appellant and then appropriate action taken to prevent reoccurrence.

 In the event of a Customer (organisation/site) appealing against any decision made by the certification body, they shall be asked to send a letter / email with any supporting documentation to give formal written notice of their appeal.

 Upon receipt of the written appeal and supporting documentation shall be registered and an acknowledgment of receipt by SN Registrars sent immediately to the appellant, copies of all correspondence to be maintained. Any correspondence connected with the appeal shall be attached to P12/01 and shall be passed to the SN Registrars Scheme manager for urgent action.

 (Note: The appellant must have ovided factual information giving grounds for appeal within the specified time scales agreed with SN Registrars which will normally be one month or less depending on the severity of the complaint / appeal. Provided this criteria is met the appeal will be dealt with by the SN Registrars Scheme manager without delay).

 In the case of an appeal relating to the actions of an SN Registrars employee or contractor both the appellant and the relevant (Lead Auditor) shall be entitled to state their case in confidence. The decision of the SN Registrars Scheme manager shall be final and the results recorded on form P12/01 signed as closed out by SN Registrars Scheme manager. SN Registrars Scheme manager shall write to the appellant informing them of the appeal panel decision. If the appellant does not accept the decision then they may revoke the conditions of contract i.e., arbitration. All appeal information will be discussed at regular SN Registrars management meetings for review and to consider any other related corrective /preventive actions.

 *Submission, investigation and decision on appeals shall not result in any discriminatory actions against the appellant.*

# 8 Quality Records

**(Note: all records shall be electronic to facilitate ease of transfer and storage)**

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| **Quality Record Number**  | **Quality Record Title:** | **Type of File** | **Retention Time** |
| Form P12/01 | Complaints/Appeals Register | Operations | 6 years |
| Form P12/02 | International Complaints/appeals register | Record | Indefinite |