

DISPUTE RESOLUTION

PURPOSE

To provide a procedure to clarify the process by which a customer and the AGA may formally resolve certification-related disputes in a transparent and timely manner, where possible, to the satisfaction of the customer.

SCOPE

This procedure does not cover the informal process that seeks to resolve any queries or concerns held by the customer. Such an informal approach would be a natural precursor to a formal dispute resolution process and consist mainly of general discussions and clarifications. This procedure will apply only to formal disputes such as those relating to technical interpretations and judgements made by the Certifying Body and where such informal processes have failed to satisfactorily resolve any disagreements.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Any employee may record a dispute.

The Chief Executive and Manager, Industry & Support Services (as appropriate) are responsible for ensuring investigation and, where possible, resolution of a dispute.

The staff of the Certifying Body will treat all disputes as a priority and co-operate fully in any action required to resolve such a dispute.

PROCEDURE

1. Receiving and Registering Formal Notification of a Dispute

- a) Where a customer formally advises a dispute, the details are recorded on a Corrective Action Report (CAR) Form, which is immediately lodged with the Manager, Industry & Support Services together with the supporting customer documentation
- b) The CAR Form and the supporting documents are urgently copied to the Chief Executive for review and consideration.

2. Investigation and Actions

- a) The Chief Executive or Manager, Industry & Support Services (as appropriate) may investigate the dispute personally or delegate the investigation to a suitable person.
- b) The investigation will be conducted as a priority and any associated responses or actions on the part of the Certifying Body will be completed in a timely, thorough and fair manner.
- c) The person handling the dispute gathers sufficient information and data to enable a thorough investigation and response - and ensures that action agreed with the customer is carried out and recorded.
- d) The Certifying Body will reasonably consider any specific customer request with respect to the urgency of the issue.
- e) The Certifying Body will give consideration to any underlying causes that might contribute to disputes and take appropriate action to avoid repeat claims.
- f) Where the investigation and subsequent discussions between the Certifying Body and the customer achieve a mutually agreed resolution, the CAR Form is suitably endorsed and the dispute closed out.

3. Formal Dispute Unable to be Resolved

- a. In the event that the two parties are unable to reach a satisfactory resolution to the dispute, the customer may seek to have the outcome referred to the AGA Board (The Board), which will attempt to resolve the dispute.
- b. As necessary, the Board will appoint from their number a review panel comprising independent and technically/legally experienced persons, none of whom would have recent attachments or inappropriate commercial connections with the customer.
- c. To register a dispute with the Board, the customer completes and forwards a Dispute Referral Form (DRF) along with the Dispute Lodgement Fee (as listed in the Fee Schedule), to the Chief Executive. The customer is provided with formal acknowledgement of receipt of the Form.
- d. The Chief Executive copies the relevant CAR Form, all supporting documentation and the formal decision of the Certifying Body as issued to the customer, and attaches them to the DRF, which is then forwarded to the Chairman of the Board.
- e. The Board will consider the issue, as defined by the documentation submitted, and recommend a course of action to resolve the issue, taking into account recommendations of any Board review panel. The customer is not bound by the recommended action but is expected to seriously consider the Board advice.
- f. The customer can formally respond to the Board recommendation within seven days and advise acceptance or otherwise of the recommended course of action.
- g. If still unresolved, the customer is advised that it will need to contact the appropriate regulatory authority for further certification/approval advice.
- h. In addition to the preceding, if the customer is dissatisfied with the outcome of AGA's dispute/complaints handling process the customer should be informed that it has the option to refer the matter to AGA's Accreditation Body, JAS-ANZ.
- i. If the dispute remains outstanding three-months after any formally agreed date for its resolution, JAS-ANZ is to be so informed by AGA.

4. Communication Issues

The customer is informed of progress on dispute investigation and rectification at stages judged appropriate by the person handling the dispute or as agreed with the Chief Executive or Manager, Industry & Support Services. To ensure the progress of a dispute can be monitored at call, the customer is also provided with direct contact details of the investigating officer.

5. Dispute Records

Copies of appropriate correspondence and information related to a dispute for which a CAR has been raised, are retained on file with the completed CAR. Copies may also be retained in the appropriate Certification and/or Central Office files. The Manager, Industry & Support Services, maintains a register summarising CAR forms.

FORMS

Corrective Action Report – QF802
Corrective Action Report Register - QF801
Dispute Referral Form - QF809

RECORDS

Corrective Action Reports
Complaint correspondence
Data analyses
Initial record of dispute
Corrective Action Report Registers
Dispute Referral Forms