



Complaints and Appeals Handling

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1. Purpose and Scope

- 1.1** This procedure aims to describe the steps adopted by TABSEER for:
- Complaints Handling.
 - Handling of appeal against a taken decision.
 - Handling of request of review an evaluation decision.
- 1.2** This Standard Operating Procedure applies to all parties that are involved in the complaints, appeals and review request procedure, including the concerned staff members.
- 1.3** All TABSEER clients have the right to make a complaint, appeal against any taken decision or request a review of any evaluation decision TABSEER may take if they can bring forward good arguments. This standard operating procedure outlines the principles and responsibilities with regards to complaints, appeals and review requests.

2. Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of CEO and quality manager, to ensure the proper setting, implementation and communication of this document.

3. Definitions

- 3.1** Complaint:
means expression of dissatisfaction by individual(s) or organization(s) with an issue related to TABSEER services in writing.
- 3.2** Certification Decision:
A decision taken by designated staff to grant or deny initial certification, confirm certification after surveillance audit, renew certification, extend a certificate, suspend a certificate, lift the suspension or to decertify. A Certification Decision becomes effective with immediate effect.
- 3.3** Evaluation Decision:
A decision taken by designated staff to confirm non-conformities identified during an audit, confirm corrective measure proposals or objective evidence, verify objective evidence during a follow-up audit without suspension, not to suspend for a major non-conformity. An Evaluation Decision becomes effective with immediate effect.
- 3.4** Appeal:
A request to review and reverse a Certification Decision. Appeals against Certification Decisions are decided on by the Appeal/Review designated staff.

3.5 Requests for Review:

These are requests to review an Evaluation Decision.

3.6 Appeal/Review designated staff:

Is an internal quality control process that objectively supervises the decision-making process within TABSEER considering any raised argument and objection by the involved parties. Thus, it ensures that operations are exercised with due diligence and uniformity in interpreting the Standards. As a company-internal body its role is not that of an external and/or official arbitration body nor a court-like institution Process.

4. Procedure

4.1 Acknowledgement of Complaint/Appeal/Review request receipt by TABSEER

4.1.1 Complaints, Appeal or Review request must submit through written texts that can submit after a reason for complaint has arisen, or after receipt of the Decision or Evaluation Decision.

4.1.2 If no Complaint, Appeal or Review request is received within this timeframe the decision becomes final and may not be appealed against, and the complaint become declined.

4.1.3 TABSEER will not respond to anonymous requests forms without clear contact information.

4.1.4 After receipt of the request in writing, TABSEER investigate whether it relates to the activities and scopes for which TABSEER is responsible and decide the acceptance of it.

4.1.5 Where the request is identified and accepted to be investigated, TABSEER acknowledge the same to the complainant/appellant or the concerned person submitted the request.

4.1.6 In case where the request is not accepted, TABSEER give notice to the complainant of it with the reason(s), and guidance on how to proceed further with this request.

4.1.7 In order to file either a complaint or appeal or review to TABSEER, the affected customer/organization has to submit a completed form to TABSEER via email to info@tabseer.co; the form can be downloaded either from TABSEER's website (www.tabseer.co), or to be requested through the above email or immediately handed by TABSEER quality manager.

4.1.8 If request received by any staff member, she/he will be forwarded to quality manager for his review and action, and then related records will be updated.

4.1.9 Once receiving a form, the quality manager will assure on whether the request contains an actionable Review or Appeal (against either an Evaluation or a decision) or if the request should deal with as complaint.

- 4.1.10** Quality manager who will conduct an initial evaluation of the request and decide if the submission is accepted or denied within 2 working days, based on whether the request contains a valid reason to file the complaint /appeal /review request.
- 4.1.11** An Appeal or Review request does not alter the effectiveness of the Certification, Inspection or Evaluation decision, unless the Appeal/Review has been granted by the Complaint/Appeal/Review Committee in its final decision. All restrictions applicable to a customer as a consequence of a Certification Decision of suspension remain in effect during the period of suspension, regardless of the outcome of an Appeal.
- 4.1.12** The Quality manager maintains a log of all Complaints, Appeals and requests for Reviews and move the process forward.
- 4.2** Reasons of Complaint/Appeal/Review Request:
- 4.2.1** All requests must state the reason(s) in the complaint report form, and need to be supported by information and evidence.
- Note:** *Complaint, Appeal or request for Review will only be accepted if it is accompanied by or based on clear and credible information in accordance with below reasons, in case request does not contain a convincing reason, quality manager will contact the concerned appellant for more clarification on convincing reason for complaining or appealing.*
- 4.2.2** Reasons may include, but are not limited to:
- a) A complaint is about conformity assessment and/or appeals and the way that the conformity assessment system functions.
 - b) A complaint about TABSEER Client, TABSEER Certified product, etc.....
 - c) Level of service quality or delivery.
 - d) Details about the complaints about the conformity assessment activities.
 - e) Dissatisfaction, whether it is from person in the company, or its activities, or administrative processes, finances processes, etc.....
 - f) Decisions based on immaterial information, or information for which there is no credible basis. In general, hearsay is treated as information for which there is no credible basis
 - g) Failure to consider presented, relevant information in reaching a decision
 - h) Reasonable perception of bias against the appellant
 - i) Unreasonable delay in the decision-making process
 - j) Prejudicial procedural irregularities in reaching the decision
 - k) Disputes about facts and interpretations relevant to the decision
 - l) Appeal for certification decision to a specific application
 - m) Request for review for a specific evaluation decision for a specific application
 - n) Other specific reasons.

- o)** An allegation against TABSEER policy or company compliance with standards.
- 4.2.3** For complaint(s) related to certified product, a direct approach to the organization(s) in question is recommended.
- 4.2.4** A confidentiality agreement with the organization(s) may not allow TABSEER to reveal documents or sensitive information to the complainant, however clear information and response should be provided to complainant.
- 4.2.5** TABSEER does not disclose any personal information without consent of the person(s) in question but may refer the matter to the organization concerned at an appropriate time to proceed with the complains-handling process further. Any specific person of the organization concerned may be identified during the process.
- 4.3** Investigation and preparation of actions to be taken and response

 - 4.3.1** After accepting the complaint/appeal/review request, quality manager shall nominate the individual(s) previously not involved in the subject of the request complaint and instruct him/her (them) to investigate and validate the subject of the complaint.
 - 4.3.2** In case where the complaint is related to an organization product certified by TABSEER, the company shall refer the matter to the organization at an appropriate time in order to collect and verify all the necessary information.
 - 4.3.3** The nominated individual (s) shall investigate the matter and decide actions to be taken by TABSEER and a response to the complainant/Appellant/ or person requesting the review. If applicable and found obligatory, quality form will be filled by quality manager in case of any detected departure, to evaluate the situation, analyze the cause and proposing C.A. and P.A. the form will be handed over to the concern person/unit responsible on causing the Complaint/ Appeal.
- 4.4** Communication of decision

 - TABSEER shall communicate the decision on the response to the complainant.

Where the complainant agrees with the decision, TABSEER shall give notice to the complainant/Appellant of the end of the complaints handling process.
- 4.5** Request of re-examination

 - 4.5.1** In case where the complainant/appellant/person requesting review disagrees with the decision, he may request TABSEER to re-open the investigation of the matter within 30 days after the receipt of the decision. Such a request can only be accepted if the request is accompanied with additional information, such as new findings of the fact.
 - 4.5.2** After receipt of such a request, TABSEER shall re-open the investigation of the matter and give notice to the complainant/appellant/person requesting review of further decision(s) in accordance with the above-mentioned process.

4.6 Convocation and deliberation

4.6.1 If the complainant disagrees with further decision(s) based on the first investigation or after investigation is re-opened, and requests further investigation, quality manager shall convoke the CEO and general manager for meeting.

4.6.2 At the meeting, deliberation shall be made on the results of the investigation/re-investigation and on actions to be taken, and response based on the decision of the meeting shall be communicated to the complainant/appellant/person requesting review. This is the end of the process.

Note: *The decision will be made within 30 working days after receiving the disagreement of the last decision communicated by TABSEER quality manager to the concerned person.*

4.7 The composition of the Complaints/Appeals/Review Request meeting is the following:

4.7.1 General manager.

4.7.2 CEO.

4.7.3 The TABSEER Quality Manager.

4.7.4 Department Manager (or their delegate if she/he is involved in the process).

4.7.5 TABSEER staff member(s) who have the information about the details of the specific case under complaint will be present to demonstrate the case details in front of meeting members.

4.7.6 The CEO may invite other external consultants to meeting if they deem it necessary (case by case).

4.7.7 Meeting terms and conditions:

- a) Any member involved in the certification decision will be excluded from the key meeting members in order to avoid any conflict of interest. His delegate will be replacing him in attending the committee and participating in the decision.
- b) At the discretion of the staff member responsible for decision or evaluation decision in front of the meeting members, the case should present to the members either by the responsible of the case analysis or the involved person in the original process.
- c) During a process, only information which existed and was presented at the time the decision was made will be considered.
- d) Additional credible information presented and accepted during a process, which was not present at the time the original decision was taken and could have led to a different outcome in the original decision, will result in a recommendation to the certification unit to re-open the case and take into consideration the new information for a decision (within the time frame mentioned above for accepting a complaint/appeal/Review Request).

4.7.8 Outcome of decisions:

a) Original decision overturned:

This means that the decision taken against a complaint will change, department manager and quality manager will act as indicated by the decision. The effect of this changed decision is explained to the complainant with the communication of the decision.

b) Original decision confirmed:

This means that the decision taken against a compliant or decision being complaint against is confirmed and will not be changed. The CEO will recommend to the department manager and quality manager if any deadlines of the consecutive workflow need to extend due to the proceedings of the appeal/review.

4.8 Publication of Complaints/Appeals/Review Requests:

TABSEER shall determine, by mutual consent between the concerned person (complainant/appellant or requesting review) and TABSEER, whether and, if so to what extent, the subject of the complaint/appeal and its decision(s) shall be made public.

4.9 Correction and corrective action:

TABSEER shall take appropriate corrections and corrective actions regarding the complaints accepted in accordance with the actions determined by TABSEER to be taken. All these actions shall be documented by the quality manager in the related forms.

5. Related Forms

- 5.1 GE-QF-02-01 Client Feedback
- 5.2 GE-QF-02-02 Complaint report
- 5.3 GE-QF-02-03 Client Complaint Appeal Register