

Appeals Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define the process for the handling of appeals received by ICB International Certification Body LLC. This policy ensures that appeals are addressed in a fair, transparent, and timely manner, and in compliance with Clauses 9.7.1, 9.7.2, 9.7.3, 9.7.4, 9.7.5, 9.7.6, 9.7.7 and 9.7.8 of ISO 17021.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all appeals submitted by clients in relation to certification decisions made by ICB International Certification Body LLC, including decisions to grant, suspend, reduce the scope, or withdraw certification.

3. General Rule and Submitting an Appeal (Clause 9.7)

This policy contains our documented process to receive, evaluate and make decisions on appeals.

Clients have the right to appeal any certification decision made by ICB International Certification Body LLC. Appeals must be submitted in writing, using the provided webform on our website, and include:

Details of the Appeal: A clear description of the certification decision being appealed, along with any supporting documentation.

Grounds for the Appeal: The client must provide specific reasons for the appeal, outlining why they believe the certification decision should be reconsidered.

3.1 Timeframe for Submitting Appeals

Clients must submit their appeal within 10 days following the appealed certification decision. Appeals submitted after the deadline may not be considered or reviewed unless extenuating circumstances are demonstrated.

4. Responsibility, Segregation of Duties, and Receiving and Acknowledging Appeals

We are responsible for all decisions at all levels of the appeals handling process. By this policy and our actions, we ensure that the people engaged in the appeals handling process are different from those who carried out the audits and made the certification decisions.

Upon receipt of an appeal, ICB International Certification Body LLC acknowledges the appeal in writing and initiates the appeals process. The acknowledgment includes:

Confirmation of Receipt: The client is informed that their appeal has been received and is being reviewed.

5. Non-Discrimination and Appeals Handling Process

We make sure that the submission, investigation and decision on appeals will not result in any discriminatory actions against the appellant.

Additionally, we will not discriminate against anyone on the grounds of gender, race, skin color, ethnic or social origin, genetic characteristics, language, religion or ideology, political or other beliefs, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age, sexual orientation, nationality or any other legally defined grounds.

ICB International Certification Body LLC follows a structured process for handling appeals to ensure impartiality and fairness. The process includes:

Independent Review: The appeal is reviewed by individuals who were not involved in the original certification decision or audits. These individuals shall be free from conflicts of interest with the client.

Evaluation of Evidence: The appeals committee reviews the evidence submitted by the client, along with any relevant records related to the certification decision. Where a member of the appeals committee was involved in auditing the client, or made the appealed certification decision, the member shall be excluded from the appeals committee for the specific decision on appeals.

5.1 Confidentiality

All information related to the appeal is treated confidentially. Only personnel directly involved in the appeals process have access to the details of the appeal.

6. Appeals-Handling Process and Decision on the Appeal

Our appeals-handling process includes 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, considering the results of previous similar appeals, and the tracking and recording of appeals, including actions undertaken to resolve them, and ensuring that any appropriate correction and corrective action are taken.

Following a thorough review of the appeal, ICB International Certification Body LLC issues a formal decision. The decision includes:

Outcome of the Appeal: A clear statement of whether the appeal has been upheld or rejected, along with the reasons for the decision.

Actions to be Taken: If the appeal is upheld, any actions to be taken by ICB International Certification Body LLC to rectify the situation (e.g., modifying the certification decision) are clearly outlined.

6.1 Notification of the Client

The decision on the appeal is communicated to the client in writing, along with a detailed explanation of the reasoning behind the decision. Clients are also informed of any further actions they may take if they are dissatisfied with the outcome.

7. Responsibility, Gathering Information, Validate the Appeal

As the receiver of the appeal, we are responsible for gathering and verifying all necessary information to validate the appeal. After we have received an appeal, we gather all evidence regarding the appeal, including but not limited to Stage 1 and Stage 2 audit reports, documented evidence provided to us during, before and after Stage 1 and Stage 2 audits and the certification decision, including (if applicable)

former certification decisions, and review this information. Furthermore, we verify if all information was gathered. When we are satisfied with the gathered evidence, and after a thorough review, we validate the appeal.

8. Acknowledge the Receipt and Updating the Appellant

We acknowledge receipt of the appeal within 10 days after receiving the appeal and provide the appellant with a progress report every 30 days thereafter and the result of the appeal within 10 days after the appeals decision was made.

9. Decisionmaker, and Ensuring Impartiality

The decision to be communicated to the appellant will be made by, or reviewed and approved by, individual(s) not previously involved in the subject of the appeal.

ICB International Certification Body LLC ensures that all individuals involved in the appeals process are impartial and free from conflicts of interest. This includes:

Appeals Committee: An appeals committee was established to review all appeals. The appeals committee consists of one or more members. Members of the committee must not have been involved in the audits or original certification decision and must have no vested interest in the outcome of the appeal. Where a member of the appeals committee was involved in auditing the client, or made the certification decision, the member shall be excluded from the appeals committee for the specific decision.

The general members of the appeals committee are:

Prof. Dr. iur. Tinatin Erkvania, LL.M., Managing Director, info@cert-authority.com

Gevorg Tovmasyan, VP Certification, info@cert-authority.com

Prof. Dr. h.c. Heiko Maniero, LL.B., LL.M. mult., M.L.E., Main Shareholder, info@cert-authority.com

9.1 Conflict of Interest

Any potential conflicts of interest are identified and addressed before individuals are assigned to the specific appeals committee. This ensures that the appeals process is conducted impartially and objectively.

10. Formal Notice and Communication of the Appeals Process

We give formal notice to the appellant regarding the end of the appeals-handling process by communicating the results of the appeal within 10 days after the appeals decision was made.

ICB International Certification Body LLC ensures that all clients are informed of their right to appeal certification decisions and the process for doing so. This includes:

Client Awareness: The appeals process is communicated to clients by information available on ICB International Certification Body LLC's website.

Transparency: Clients are provided with clear and transparent information about the steps involved in the appeals process and their rights during the process.

11. Documentation and Record Keeping

ICB International Certification Body LLC ensures that all documentation related to appeals is maintained and retained as part of the certification record. This includes:

Appeal Submission: Documented evidence about an appeal, detailing the grounds for the appeal and supporting documentation.

Appeals Decision: Documented evidence used to communicate the outcome of the appeal and any actions required by ICB International Certification Body LLC.

12. Supervision

Overall Supervision is carried out by the following person:

Prof. Dr. iur. Tinatin Erkvania, LL.M., Managing Director, info@cert-authority.com

Supervision over responsiveness to complaints and appeals is carried out by the following person:

Nare Petrosyan, Lead Auditor and CFO, info@cert-authority.com

13. Review and Updates

This policy is reviewed annually by top management to ensure compliance with ISO 17021 and to reflect any updates regarding the appeals handling process. Any changes to the policy are communicated to relevant personnel.

14. References

ISO 17021 – Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems