Complaints, appeals and disputes management for certification services

Bureau Veritas Certification Policy - TIQ I&F Division

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to present to any client or stakeholder how Bureau Veritas Certification is managing Complaints, Appeals and Disputes (CAD) received in a professional and responsible manner. A link is normally available on each BV local offices, but in case this procedure is not found, this procedure is available on this link and translated in several languages.

1. Definitions

The definitions used by Bureau Veritas Certification are the following:

Complaint
(ISO/IEC 17000:2020, 8.7): expression of dissatisfaction, other than appeal (8.6), by any person or organization to a conformity assessment body (4.6) relating to the activities of that body, where a response is expected.

Appeal
(ISO/IEC 17000:2020, 8.6): request by the person or organization that provides, or that is, the object of conformity assessment (4.2) to a conformity assessment body (4.6) for reconsideration by that body of a decision (7.2) it has made relating to that object.

Dispute:
Disagreement between BV and its client on any matter pertaining to the validation and/or verification/certification activities excluding decisions subject to appeal.

Requester
Person or organisation raising a CAD

2. CAD reception

CAD can be written (Formal Letter, Email, Website) or verbal (Phone Call, Feedback during sales visit or audit). They have to be sent to the local office where the contract has been signed or to the BV entity managing the accreditation. A message can also be recorded on the Website of Bureau Veritas.

For CAD received from a requester, which is not a BV client, due consideration shall be given whether it is appropriate to answer, considering potential liability. In such cases, content of the answer could be coordinated with client.

This process is subject to requirements for confidentiality. Information about the client that is not publicly available and is obtained from sources other than the client (e.g. from a complainant) shall be treated as confidential, unless the source of information and the client give written consent to disclose it.

Bureau Veritas retains the anonymity of the requester in relation to the client if this is requested by the requester. Anonymous complaints and expressions of dissatisfaction that are not substantiated are treated as stakeholder comments and addressed during the next audit. Whistle-blower's will be protected from retaliation.

The persons engaged in the appeals/disputes-handling process will be different from those who carried out the audits/verification or validation. This approach ensures impartiality and avoids any discrimination against the appellant or complainant.

An internal procedure outlines the systemic approach for managing complaints, appeals and disputes (named CAD) received from Bureau Veritas clients from customers and other external stakeholders, including specific scheme owner requirements. A copy can be made available on request.

3. CAD process of management

The process of management of the CAD is the following:

- Acknowledgment of the CAD sent within 2 working days to the requester
- Registration on BV internal tool
- Intermediate contributions: if needed or required the person or team who investigate the CAD can contact the auditor/decision maker/sales, the requester or any other internal service to understand the issues.
- Formal decision: the appropriate level of Bureau Veritas makes a formal decision responding to each item listed in the CAD.
- Written response to the requester: a structured and written response (included if needed proposed course of actions) is prepared and sent.
- Final response to a requester shall not exceed 30 days
- Decision to open an internal incident: a formal decision is taken in the complaint-appeal tool if a corrective action must be conducted.

For exceptionally complex cases, longer deadlines may be acceptable. In such instance, the requester is periodically informed about the deadlines and the advancement of the treatment.

An audit may be initiated to proceed with investigation, and the client shall be notified with reasons for the audit.

The acceptability of the CAD is based on evidence received. In any case, the complainant will be informed If the CAD is rejected, with the reason why it was not accepted.

The complainant not satisfied with the management of the complaint has the option of making an appeal.

Any instances where failure to publicly disclose the complaint could affect other stakeholders, should be made public.

- Defects that could have catastrophic consequences (injuries, death, etc,).
- Failures in environmental management systems that could cause severe damage to environment and stakeholders.
- Quality of food products; etc.

4. Specific requirements for climate change services

A ‘Complaint’ is defined as “formal expression of dissatisfaction, made verbally, electronically or in writing, regarding the performance of a DOE or its outsourced entities in relation to its validation or verification/certification functions, from any source, such as clients, project participants, the general public or its representatives, government bodies, non-governmental organization, etc.” A complaint received against either Bureau Veritas India Pvt. Ltd. or a Bureau Veritas Certified Organisation within the scope of certified Quality or environmental Management system or Climate change services (UNFCCC/Verra/GS/GCC).

An ‘Appeal’ is defined as an “a request made by a client for a formal review of a decision taken by a DOE in respect of its validation and/or verification/certification activities” Appeal can be against a Certificate Decision or a request made by a client for a formal review of a decision taken by Bureau Veritas in respect of its validation and/or verification / certification activities.

A ‘Dispute’ is defined as "disagreement between a DOE/VVB and its client on any matter related to validation, verification and/or certification activities, excluding decisions that are subject to appeal.”

5. Additional information

In case the appellant is not satisfied with the appeals panel decision, appellant has the option of making a complaint to the concerned accreditation body or the scheme owner.

ASC, MSC, FSC and RSPO

The complainant can refer the complaint to ASI, if the issue has not been resolved through the full implementation of BVCH 's own procedures, in case of disagreement with the conclusions or dissatisfaction by the way BVCH handled the complaint. As the ultimate step, the complaint or appeal may be referred to the scheme owner.

ASC

BVC encourages the complainants to submit copies of their complaints to directly to the ASC

- email: complaints@asc-aqua.org
- Mailing Address: Aquaculture Stewardship Council, Daalseplein 101, 3511 SX Utrecht, The Netherlands

Climate change services

The appellant is informed about the opinion of making a complaint to the Scheme boards.

EN 91xx

Upon request, BVC can inform the appellant that he or she can question decision of Appeal Panel, by raising same appeal to IAQG/EAQG.

FSC

Requester can refer to FSC's dispute resolution process if the issue has not been resolved at the end of the procedure with Bureau Veritas Certification.

IFS

The appeals shall be finalized within 20 working days of receiving information from the assessed site.
An initial response shall be given within ten (10) working days of receiving the complaint.
A full written response be given after the completion of a full and thorough investigation into the complaint.

SA 8000

A CAD can be raised to SAAS via email (saas@saasaccreditation.org) with the details about an issue related to a SA 8000 audit.

SMETA

A "Dispute of Findings" is defined as a disagreement on findings, where the sites believe that some information has been misunderstood. The auditor shall make every effort to resolve disputes whilst on the site. Where the site management doesn't agree with the auditor about the findings, they can dispute the findings in the dispute box of the CAPR and state their reasons why an agreement was not reached. The site management can also dispute the findings after the audit report is published on the Sedex platform.

Sedex members and can raise a complaint or appeal to Sedex via email (grievance@sedex.com) with the details about an issue related to a SMETA audit. The complaint or appeal will be processed by Sedex following the Sedex Grievance Process.