



# Appeals and Complaints Procedure

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**SCOPE**

The scope of this document is to describe the process for handling suggestions and complaints related to the Accreditation Programme of ISTA and appeals against accreditation decisions; to ensure that suggestions, complaints and appeals are followed-up in a systematic way in order to enhance customer satisfaction and enable continuous improvement.

**RELATED DOCUMENTS**

Acc-D-01-Procedures for Termination, Suspension and Withdrawal of ISTA Accreditation

Acc-F-01-Complaints and Corrective action

**GENERAL***Suggestions*

Suggestions with the potential to improve any aspect of the accreditation programme of ISTA may be proposed by any interested party. They shall be recorded accordingly in respective form ('Acc-F-01-Complaints and Corrective Action').

*Complaints*

If an interested party considers procedures, criteria, assessments or action taken by ISTA staff or volunteers inappropriate, this party may file a formal complaint with ISTA. A formal complaint must be made in writing.

Issues are recorded on the pertinent form ('Acc-F-01-Complaints and Corrective Action') and transferred to the Secretary General for further consideration and action. Consultation with competent collaborators may be required, with due regard for confidentiality requirements. Consultation with the people concerned is crucial.

There shall be an evaluation if the complaint is warranted. Where there is no basis for further action, the complainant shall be notified. In case of a justified complaint, relevant corrections shall be taken in order to remedy the problem which occurred including feedback to the complainant. A period of thirty days from first recording to defining appropriate action shall not be exceeded.

A root cause analysis shall follow in order to investigate the source of error and initiate corrective action. Corrective action shall aim at preventing recurrence of the problem encountered.

All relevant records shall be filed together with the completed form ('Acc-F-01-Complaints and Corrective Action') under 'Complaints'. A regular review of the cases shall take place in order to assess effectiveness of measures taken.

*Appeals against suspension and/or withdrawal of accreditation*

An organisation has the right to appeal decisions related to the accreditation process within 30 days of receiving the notice if it feels the assessment process was not carried out fairly and properly in accordance with the published criteria in operation at the time of the original application. Appeals against accreditation related decisions shall be submitted in writing giving arguments and evidence.

Appeals are handled by the Executive Committee or by a panel appointed by the Executive Committee to deal with specific issues. The appeal must be dealt with within a period of sixty days, starting from the date of submission of related documents to the Executive Committee.

Any appeals panel shall consist of at least the following members:

- The ISTA Secretary General
- A member of the Accreditation Working Group of the Executive Committee
- A member from an ISTA accredited laboratory who is not currently serving on the ISTA Executive Committee
- Any further member as appointed by the Executive Committee

No member of the audit team concerned shall be a member of this panel. A staff member of the ISTA Secretariat may be required to join the panel as observer to advise on details of the case. All correspondence shall be addressed to the Secretary General.

The panel will make a recommendation to the Executive Committee within 30 days. The Executive Committee shall reach a decision based on the panel's recommendation and notify the appealing organisation in writing within two weeks of receiving the recommendation. The panel shall be disbanded. The decision of the Executive Committee is final.

The terms of suspension or withdrawal remain in effect until a decision on the appeal is reached.

The accredited organisation acknowledges and agrees that ISTA or any of ISTA's employees shall not be liable to an accredited organisation for any claims, damages, expenses, demands, losses, including lost revenue or profits, or any special, consequential or indirect damages whatsoever, arising from or incidental to the suspension or withdrawal of accreditation by ISTA, including, without limitation, in the event where, following an appeal instituted by an organisation, the accredited status of that organisation is reinstated by ISTA.

When an appeal is not upheld, the organisation which made the appeal is liable for any costs incurred by the Executive Committee or appeals panel, based on an hourly rate determined by the Secretary General. The Secretary General shall inform the organisation making the appeal of the hourly rate to be applied; this information will be supplied once the appeal has been received at the Secretariat, and before the Executive Committee or appeals panel begin their consideration of the appeal.

**ANNEXE TO THE APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

