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1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to establish a procedure for the efficient handling of complaints to enable consistent application to comply with ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015, ISO/IEC 17065:2012, ISO 22003:2013, FSSC 22000 vs 5.1, GlobalG.A.P. IFA V5.3 General Regulations and SANAS F147-02 requirements.

This document shall:

- Describe the process to receive, evaluate and make decision on complaints;
- Propel the process to ensure that each complaint is addressed in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner;
- Dictate procedure to be followed should there be a complaint;

2. References

Standard	Applicable Clause
ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015	9.8
ISO/IEC 17021-2:2016	
ISO/IEC 17021-3:2017	
ISO/IEC 17021-10:2018	
ISO/IEC 17065:2012	7.13

Standard	Applicable Clause
FSSC vs 5.1	
GlobalG.A.P. IFA v5.3 GR Part III	3.1
IAF	
JAS-ANZ Accreditation Manual	7.4
SANAS F147-02	7.1.7

3. Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Certification Manager to ensure that the certification body adheres to requirements of the procedure. Aspirata Certification shall be responsible for all decisions at all levels of the complaints handling process.

4. Definitions and Abbreviations

Complaint	Any expression of dissatisfaction or concern made to an organisation by an individual client that relates to the organisation's products or service, or the performance, behaviour and conduct of staff.
CAR	Corrective Action Request
CRM	Client Relation Management
eQMS	Electronic Quality Management System

5. Complaints

a) This procedure maps the process operated by Aspirata Certification to receive, evaluate and make decisions on complaints lodged by a third party (member from the public or a company). This process shall be publicly available at least through the Aspirata website.

b) Submission, investigation and decision on complaints shall not result in discriminatory actions against the complainant.

c) When a complaint is lodged with Aspirata Certification, it shall be confirmed whether the complaint relates to certification activities that Aspirata Certification is responsible for and if so the complaint will be dealt with by Aspirata Certification.

d) Aspirata Certification shall inform the party implicated about the lodged complaint at the earliest time if the complaint is deemed valid.

e) Aspirata shall register all complaints received on the Aspirata eQMS system.

f) All complaints investigated shall be subject to requirements for confidentiality, as it relates to the complainant, the implicating party and the subject of the complaint.

g) It is acknowledged that complaints could be lodged against a client certified by Aspirata or a staff member or sub-consultant representing Aspirata during the Certification process. This procedure shall be equally applicable.

h) As a general requirement all complaints shall be lodged in writing and shall be accompanied with relevant supporting evidence provided by the complainant.

i) If the complaint relates to a certified client, the investigation regarding the complaint shall consider the effectiveness of the certified management system.

j) Aspirata Certification shall take responsibility for the complaint resolution process, which shall include the following actions:
   i. registering all received complaints (Aspirata eQMS system)
   ii. acknowledging receipt of the complaint
   iii. inform the complainant of the process that will be followed
   iv. informing the implicating party of the complaint and process that will be followed
   v. validating and investigating the complaint will be done by a person other than the person conducting the audit or any person involved in the subject.
   vi. deciding what actions are to be taken in response to the complaint
   vii. tracking and recording complaints including actions undertaken and response to them
   viii. ensuring that any appropriate correction and corrective action are taken by the implicating party
   ix. informing the complainant about the progress with the complaint investigation
   x. informing the complainant of the complaint resolution and outcome.

k) Aspirata Certification shall review the validity, extent and importance of the complaint by considering the following elements:
   i. Lack of service
   ii. Commercial dispute
   iii. Product safety;
   iv. Mis-use of marks and logos;

v. Certified management systems;
vi. Potential to undermine the reputation of Aspirata Certification or its associated Accreditation providers.

l) Aspirata Certification shall be responsible for gathering and verifying all necessary information to validate the complaint and institute appropriate correction and corrective action to resolve the complaint.

m) Aspirata Certification shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint, and shall provide the complainant with progress reports and the result of the complaint.

n) Aspirata Certification shall ensure that the persons engaged in the complaint resolution process are different from those who were part of the audit process or were involved in the certification decision.

o) To ensure no conflict of interest, personnel including those in a managerial capacity, shall not be involved in the resolution of the complaint or appeal for a minimum of 2 years if they have provided consultancy services to or worked for the client.

p) Aspirata Certification shall give formal notice of the end of the complaints-handling process to the complainant.

q) The following action could apply where appropriate. Where the nature of the complaint is identified as system related:
   i. The implicating client shall be informed of the complaint in writing
   ii. A short notice audit will be conducted on the certified company at their expense, to obtain objective evidence related to the processes, products or areas of the complaint
   iii. Identified non-conformances shall be actioned by the implicated company, who will submit a complete action plan indicating by when, by whom and what action will be taken to address the non-conformances

r) Aspirata Certification will not be held responsible for any financial claims because of poor services or products delivered by the certified company.

s) Where a complaint is raised or make known by public media (newspaper, radio or television), implicating a certified company of Aspirata Certification:
   i. Specific scheme requirements shall be considered by Aspirata Certification in determining the required appropriate action. This refers particularly to the applicable scheme specific requirements related to FSSC and GLOBALG.A.P. schemes.
   ii. Aspirata Certification shall determine, together with the client and the complainant, whether and to what extent, the subject of the complaint and its resolution shall be made public.

t) Aspirata Certification undertakes to assist in the investigation and resolution of any accreditation-related complaints about Aspirata Certification referred to it by SANAS.

u) Aspirata Certification undertakes to actively cooperate with GLOBALG.A.P. during management of complaints related to Aspirata Certification or to the producers contracted by Aspirata Certification.

5.1 Aged Complaints (JAS-ANZ Manual)

a) Complaints that has not been completed in the stipulated time frame will be submitted to JAS-ANZ within 3 months of the complaint being raised.

b) Aged complaints referred to JAS-ANZ will include:
   i. original complaint
   ii. records of the review of the complaint
   iii. response to the complainant
   iv. any other records that inform the background to the complaint.

c) JAS-ANZ may at its discretion deal with any complaint that is referred to it at the level of the secretariat, the Accreditation Review Board or, if the matter is sufficiently grave, the Governing Board.

d) Failure to refer an aged complaint would result in a major Non-conformity.

e) Suspension of accreditation may apply to any accredited body which:
   i. fails to maintain a complaints system
   ii. suppresses or conceals records of complaints
   iii. or fails to abide by any direction arising from a valid referred complaint.

6. Complaints Handling Process

The complaints handling process can be summarised as follows:

<table>
<tr><td>Receipt of Complaint</td><td colspan="2">• Complaints can be received via email, telephone, meetings, or in person, but shall be lodged in writing.
• When a complaint is received, the person receiving the complaint must ensure that the following information is obtained from the complainant:
✓ Name and surname
✓ Company name
✓ Telephone number / Cell phone number
✓ E-mail
✓ Date of the incident
✓ Details of the complaint
• The receiver of complaint must forward the complaint to the Certification Manager and the Quality Manager via email or eQMS.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Evaluation of Complaint</td><td colspan="2">• The Quality Manager or delegate will evaluate the validity/significance of the enquiry (query or complaint)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Complaint</td><td>Query</td></tr>
</table>

	• The Certification Manager or delegate will contact the complainant, **within 24 business hours**, and acknowledge receipt of complaint and assure them that the investigation is underway.	• Respond to the client within 48 business hours.

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Assignment and Investigation	• The Quality Manager or delegate will forward a request the complaint be investigated to the relevant person (email / form). • A formal investigation is carried out and recorded on the complaint investigation form or letter head and attach all supporting documents (where applicable).

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Review, Validation and approval	• The Certification Manager will review and approve the investigation, validate the complaint and approve corrective action in a case of a valid complaint. • The completed investigation form must be forwarded to the Quality Manager before assigned due date (**7 working days**).

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Feedback	• The Certification Manager or delegate will then communicate with the client and inform them of Corrective Action taken (where applicable) before assigned due date (**7 working days**).

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Verification and Closure	• It is the responsibility of the Certification Manager to ensure that approved corrective action is implemented effectively.

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Record Keeping	• The Quality Manager/Coordinator will update the database/eQMS and ensure that all records are maintained.

7. Records

Doc No	Document Name	Record Storage
n/a – Electronic System	eQMS	Website

8. Document Approval

Date Approved	Approved By	Position
	W Burger	National Operations Manager Auditing

9. Document Control

Ref no	Date Approved	Date Published	Author	Approver	Publisher
	Previous document Procedure ACB900_1				
0	6 September 2015	30 September 2015	Certification Manager	Managing Director	Certification Manager
1	15 April 2016	15 April 2016	Certification Manager	Managing Director	Certification Manager
2	13 October 2016	13 October 2016	Certification Manager	Managing Director	Certification Manager
3	8 February 2017	8 February 2017	Certification Manager	Managing Director	Certification Manager
4	4 August 2017	4 August 2017	Certification Manager	Managing Director	Certification Manager
5	8 November 2017	9 November 2017	Certification Manager	Managing Director	Certification Manager
6	23 November 2019	25 November 2019	Certification Manager	Managing Director	Certification Manager
7	09 October 2020	09 October 2020	Quality Coordinator	National Operations Manager Auditing	Quality Coordinator
8			Quality Coordinator	National Operations Manager Auditing	Quality Coordinator