

QUALITY PROCEDURES			Doc. Issue Date: 10/27/2017
Title: WQS COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCESS			
Objective: Establish the systematic and criteria for record, analysis and treatment of complaints and appeals.			
Standards: ISO/IEC 17065 -CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT - REQUIREMENTS FOR CBS			
References: WQS LLC. QUALITY MANUAL;			
Reasons for review: Change on the appeals flow and addition of underlined items: 3.3.5, 3.4.11, 3.5.1, 3.5.7 and 3.5.8.			
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1. RESPONSABILITIES

1.1. Impartiality Committee

Periodically evaluate WQS' management of impartiality risks.

1.2. Quality Department

Record, investigate, conclude, and manage appeals and complaints.

1.3. Auditor/Inspector team

Investigate complaints, when needed.

Provide information to Quality Dept. when requested.

1.4. Other Departments

Treat the complaints and appeals under their responsibility when assigned for that.

2. Definitions

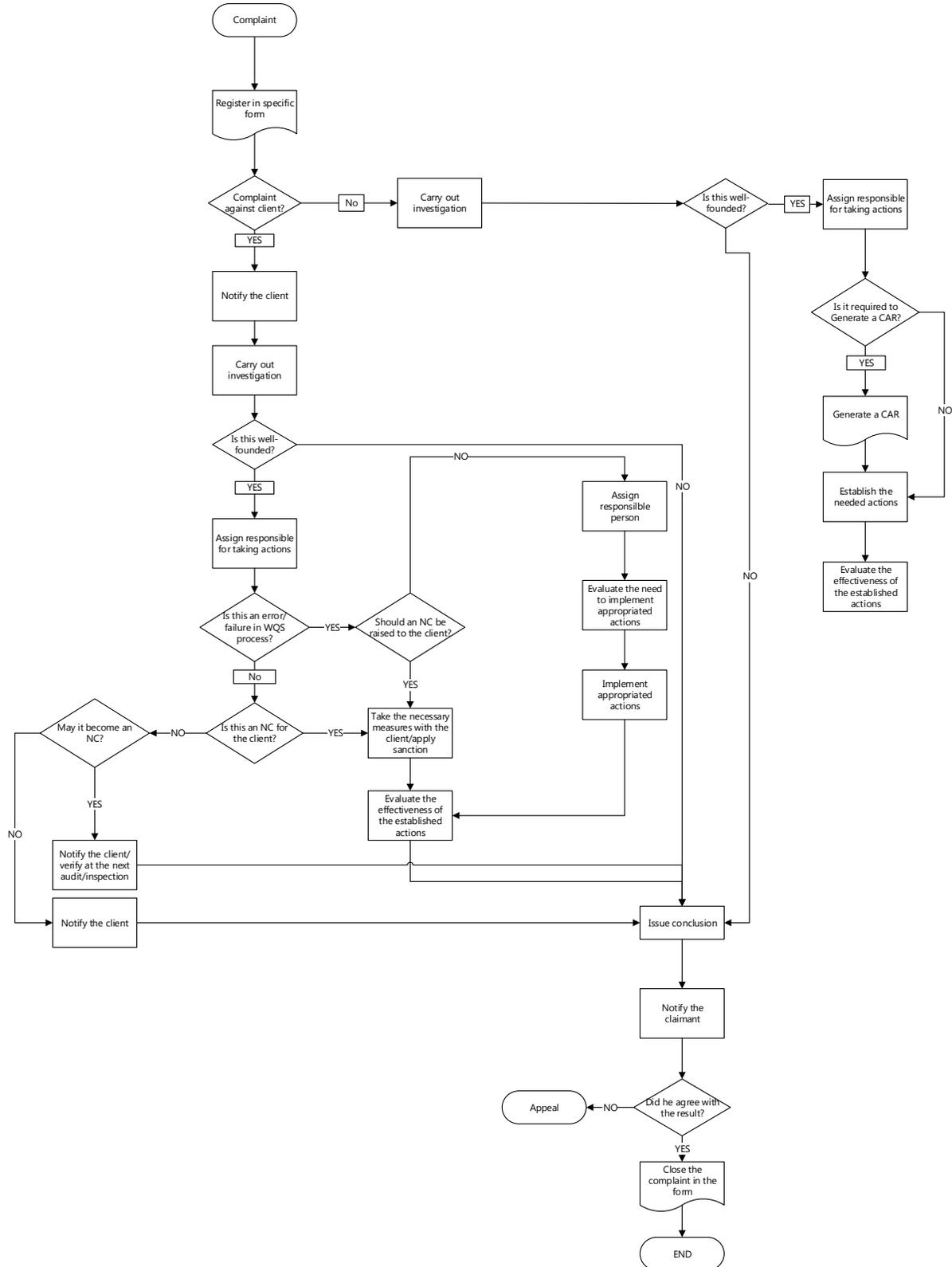
2.1.1. Complaint: action and effect of complain, protest, oppose to something, verbal or formally in writing;

2.1.2. Appeal: request from an applicant to reconsider any WQS decision about its certification situation or audit result opposite to the applicant's own interests.

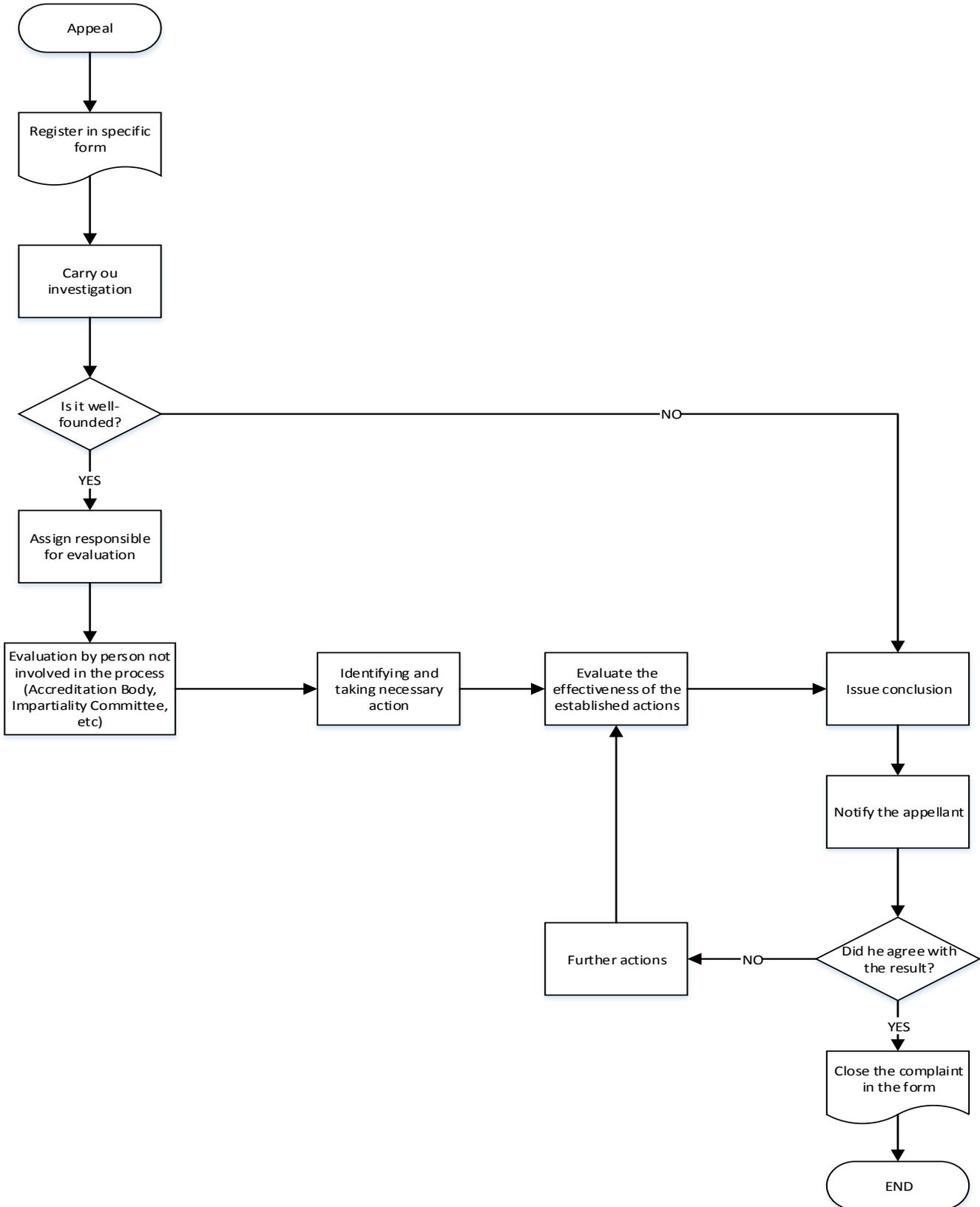
3. DESCRIPTION / FLOWCHART

3.1. Flowchart

3.1.1. Complaint



3.1.2. Appeal



3.2. Complaints

3.2.1. Once a formal complaint is received, WQS acknowledges receipt within 5 calendar days.

3.2.1.1 If audited companies identify the need to complain about a nonconformance raised during their audit, WQS recommends clients to do it within 5 days after the audit.

3.2.2. WQS splits its complaints in 2 categories:

- Complaints against WQS;
- Complaints against the certificate holder (client).

3.2.3. The complaints are registered in a specific internal form and receive a four-digit identification which includes the year and the numerical sequence of its receipt (yynn). For example: 1701 = first complaint of 2017. The archiving system is electronic.

3.2.4. Every complaint received is submitted to an in-depth investigation to gather and verify all relevant information (as far as possible) to evaluate if it is well-founded. The Quality Department is responsible for this investigation.

3.2.5. All evidences needed to demonstrate the complaint investigation will be attached in each complaint folder.

3.2.6. The decision resolving the complaint is approved by person not involved in the certification activities related to the complaint.

3.2.7. To ensure that there is no conflict of interest, personnel who have provided consultancy for a client, or been employed by a client will not be used by WQS to review or approve the resolution of a complaint for that client within two (2) years following the end of the consultancy or employment.

3.3. Complaints against WQS

3.3.1. Once the complaint is considered well founded, a responsible is assigned to establish/take actions.

3.3.2. Well-founded complaints may generate a Corrective Actions Report (CAR). If there is no need to generate a CAR, the actions are established, implemented and registered in the form LC-FR-012.

3.3.3. After taking these actions, their effectiveness is evaluated, and the result is issued and addressed to the complainant.

3.3.4. Whenever possible, the complainant is formally notified of the outcome and the end of the complaint process.

3.3.5. The complainant shall inform if he agrees or not with the result. If the complainant agrees, the complaint is closed and recorded. If the complainant does not agree, WQS will take subsequent actions to resolve the complaint, including to start an appeal.

3.3.5.1: If there is no answer from the complainant in 3 (three) working days, WQS considers the result accepted and closes the complaint.

3.4. Complaints against the certificate holder

- 3.4.1. The complaints received by WQS against a certificate holder are informed to the certified company as soon as they are received.
- 3.4.2. If the complaint is related to a client that has its Management System certified, the evaluation of the complaint will also cover the effectiveness of the certified Management System.
- 3.4.3. If the complaint is well-founded, Quality Dept. verifies if there was a failure in WQS' process.
- 3.4.4. If there was a failure in WQS' process, a responsible is assigned to evaluate the need to implement actions according to specific procedure. The actions will be implemented, and its effectiveness evaluated before issuing the complaint final result.
- 3.4.5. If the complaint did not come from a failure in WQS' process, WQS evaluates which actions shall be taken including sanctions and raising nonconformances to the client.
- 3.4.6. After the implementation of actions and/or sanctions, a conclusion is issued, and the complainant informed.
- 3.4.7. If the complaint is not a nonconformance to the client, WQS evaluates if it can become a nonconformance in the future that could compromise the certification. On this case, the client is notified, and the event informed to the audit team to be assessed in the next audit/inspection. After client notification, the conclusion is issued.
- 3.4.8. If the complaint does not have the potential to become a nonconformance, the client is notified, and the conclusion issued and addressed to the complainant.
- 3.4.9. WQS will determine, according to standard and legal requirements, if the complaint, as well as its solution, shall be made public and in which extension.
- 3.4.10. Whenever possible, the complaint result is formally addressed to the complainant.
- 3.4.11. The complainant shall inform if he agrees or not with the result. If the complainant agrees, the complaint is closed and recorded. If the complainant does not agree, WQS will take subsequent actions to resolve the complaint, including the need to start an appeal.
- 3.4.12.1: If there is no answer from the complainant within 3 (three) working days, WQS considers the result accepted and closes the complaint.

3.5. Appeals

- 3.5.1. Once a formal appeal is received, WQS acknowledges receipt within 5 calendar days.
- 3.5.2. The applicant has the right to appeal against the result of a decision taken by WQS. The submission, investigation and decision do not lead to any discriminatory act against the applicant.
- 3.5.3. The appeals are coded with a six-digit ID of 2 letters (AP) and 4 numbers (year and sequence of its receipt) e.g. AP1701 = first appeal of 2017.
- 3.5.4. Every appeal received is submitted to an in-depth investigation to gather and verify all relevant information (as far as possible) to evaluate if it is well-founded. The Quality Department is responsible for this investigation.

- 3.5.5. The decision resolving the appeal is approved by a person not involved in the certification activities related to the appeal. Appellant's identity is kept confidential.
- 3.5.6. To ensure that there is no conflict of interest, personnel who have provided consultancy for a client, or been employed by a client will not be used by WQS to review or approve the resolution of an appeal for that client within 2 years following the end of the consultancy or employment.
- 3.5.7. WQS gives formal notice of the outcome and the end of the appeal process to the appellant.
- 3.5.8. The appellant shall inform if he agrees or not with the result. If the appellant agrees, the appeal is closed and documented. If the appellant does not agree, WQS will take subsequent actions to resolve the appeal.
- 3.5.8.1 If there is no answer from the appellant within 3 working days, WQS considers the result accepted and closes the appeal.

4. Appendix

LC-FR-012 –COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS RECORD
LC-FR-012A – CONTROL OF COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS
LC-FR-019 – CORRECTIVE / PREVENTIVE ACTION REPORT