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1 Objective

This procedure is implemented to register, evaluate and verify complaints and appeals. LACON considers complaints and appeals as an indication of weak points in the quality management system. Elimination of the reasons for the complaints and appeals shall avoid repetition in the future.

2 Scope

This procedure description is valid for all employees of LACON at all locations.

Complaints regarding announced rise of cost or regarding costs that are defined in the cost breakdowns are not recorded, because they are not related to the quality management system.

Appeals regarding formal errors in certificates (e.g. address deviation) exclusively are not registered according to this described procedure. The first contact person evaluates them directly, if necessary involving the responsible scheme supervisor, team leader or management of the certification body. The documentation happens in the consumer database. Appeals regarding deviations from scope, type or designation of products in certificates are handled according this described procedure

3 Definition

Complaint: expression of dissatisfaction, other than appeal, by any person or organization to LACON, relating to the activities of that body, where a response is expected

Appeal: request by the person or organization that provides, or that is, the object of conformity assessment to LACON for reconsideration by that body of a decision it has made relating to that object

4 Execution

4.1 General execution

LACON can receive complaints/appeals via telephone, e-mail (also via the online contact form), fax or in writing.

- 4.1.1 The first contact person registers the complaint/appeal with the form U-QM-03 (part A) and forwards it and any attachments (e.g. e-mail correspondence) to the responsible manager of the certification body (direct mail recipient) and to the quality management officer (QMO) as cc-recipient.
- 4.1.2 The responsible manager of the certification body verifies that the complaint/appeal is in fact directed to LACON. If this is not the case, the manager determines the further procedure and documents this in U-QM-03 (part B) continuously.
- 4.1.3 The responsible manager of the certification body decides together with the QMO, if it is a major complaint (e.g. fraud, blackmailing, appeal) or not. The manager documents this decision in U-QM-03 (part B) continuously.

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The responsible manager of the certification body informs the CEO of the certification body about all major complaints (and therefore all appeals). This information is documented in U-QM-03 (part B) continuously.

Scheme owner are informed about all major complaints that are directly related to them and are included in the complaint procedure. This information is documented in U-QM-03 (part B) continuously.

4.1.4 The responsible manager of the certification body designates, if necessary together with the QMO, the responsible person for the procession of the complaint/appeal. The manager documents this decision in U-QM-03 (part B) continuously.

If the designated responsible person is involved in the certification activities related to the complaint/appeal, the decision resolving the complaint or appeal shall be reviewed and approved by person(s) not involved in the certification activities related to the complaint or appeal.

If the complainant/appellant is a client of LACON, personnel who have provided consultancy for that client, or been employed by that client, shall not be used by the certification body to review or approve the resolution of a complaint or appeal for that client within two years following the end of the consultancy or employment.

For major complaints, the CEO and the responsible manager the certification body designate the responsibilities and processing of the complaint.

4.1.5 If necessary, the responsible manager of the certification body sets a deadline, if necessary together with the QMO, for the procession and the termination of the complaint/appeal. The deadline is documented in U-QM-03 (part B) continuously.

4.1.6 If the form U-QM-03 with the filled in parts A and B is not available to the QMO at that time, the responsible manager the certification body forwards it to the QMO.

4.1.7 The QMO creates the process in the complaints summary with a continuous process number and notes this number in the form U-QM-03 (part C). The QMO creates a new folder with the same process number in the complaints folder within the QMS and files the form U-QM-03 and all existing attachments.

The QMO notes the information to the CEO of the certification body about major complaints and appeals in the complaints summary.

4.1.8 The QMO informs the designated responsible person mentioning the process number and gives the work assignment.

4.1.9 The responsible person acknowledges receipt of the formal complaint or appeal to the complainant/appellant in written form as well as the opening of the complaint/appeal procedure. This is documented in U-QM-03 (part D) continuously. The writing of acknowledgment is filed at the process number in the correspondent complaints folder.

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4.1.10 The responsible person conducts the root cause analysis and defines, conducts and documents measures to solve the complaint/appeal. This is documented in U-QM-03 (part D) continuously.

4.1.11 The responsible person files all corresponding documents (correspondence, e-mails, telephone notes, reference to entries in databases, newly created documents, change of decisions) at the process number in the correspondent complaints folder.

4.1.12 At the end of the complaints procedure, the QMO verifies the effectiveness of the conducted measures. This is documented in the summary of complaints.

For major complaints (and therefore all appeals) the responsible manager of the certification body verifies the measures, additionally.

4.1.13 Whenever possible, the responsible person shall give formal notice of the outcome and the end of the complaint process to the complainant.

4.1.14 The responsible person shall give formal notice of the outcome and the end of the appeal process to the appellant.

4.2 Handling of complaints/appeals concerning the CEO of the certification body

If complaints/appeals come in, that concern the CEO of the certification body or that cannot be processed with this complaint procedure because of other reasons, the CEO of the certification body forwards them to the committee for safeguarding impartiality. This committee gives a statement, that the CEO of the certification body forwards to the complainant/appellant. To ensure this, every employee of LACON has direct access to the CEO of the certification body.

4.3 Handling appeals against audit results, sanctions or certification decisions

If not done yet, the responsible person asks appellant to submit its appeal in written form to LACON.

After consultation with the auditor, who carried out the inspection, and the involved reviewing/certifying employee, the responsible person gives an explanation regarding the audit results, sanctions or certification decisions to the appellant and asks whether he/she wishes to uphold the appeal.

If the appeal is upheld, the responsible manager of the certification body shall be informed. The manager reassesses the audit results, sanctions or certification decisions, ultimately.

The responsible person shall give formal notice of the outcome and the end of the appeal process to the appellant.

In addition, the regulations and approval notifications of the competent authorities apply. The competent authority obliges LACON to submit instructions about a person's available remedies to the complainant and indicating the responsible appeal authorities and administrative courts.

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4.4 Complaints against a DIN EN ISO/IEC 17021 certified client

Complaints against a DIN EN ISO/IEC 17021 certified client must be forwarded to this certified client within an adequate period. The assessment of the complaint also includes the assessment of the effectiveness of the management system. Whenever possible, the responsible person shall give formal notice of the outcome and the end of the complaint process to the complainant.

4.5 Anonymous notifications, complaints and tips

Anonymous notifications, complaints and tips are processed in accordance to chapter 4. The responsible department evaluates them. A formal notice of the outcome to the complainant is not possible. Therefore, steps 4.1.9 und **Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.** are not applicable.

5 Corrective measures

The responsible manager of the certification body sends proposals on corrective measures on continuous improvement of the quality management system, that emerge from the complaint/appeal procedure, to the QMO. The QMO files them in the corrective measures plan U-QM-20.

U-QM-20 and the summary of complaints are an input for the management review. Within the management review, the managers of the certification body may define further corrective measures.

6 Related documents

Form Registration complaint appeal U-QM-03e
 Corrective measures plan (Korrekturmaßnahmenplan U-QM-20)
 Summary of complaints (Beschwerdeübersicht)

7 Reason for changes

Harmonisation with K-QM-05_r11.

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