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IPIAB Quality Unit



Appeal & Complaint

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## Procedure of Handling Appeals and Complaints

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## Appeal & Complaint

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## 1. Objective

The purpose of developing this procedure is to:

- ✓ explain how to receive, evaluate, and make decisions in a confidentiality and non-discriminatory manner on complaints and appeals, handling process for complaints and appeals which is available to any interested party through the IPIAB website at [www.ipiab.ir](http://www.ipiab.ir);
- ✓ continuously improve the IPIAB accreditation services by identifying the factors that lead to submitting appeals and complaints and, organizing them to prevent their occurrence;
- ✓ explain the process of opinion poll of accredited CABs, analyzing information related to the level of customer satisfaction in order to meet the standard requirements and, measuring the level of CABs satisfaction with the way of accreditation execution of examinations and the performance of the IPIAB personnel and make sure that their satisfaction is based on the current rules and regulations of the IPIAB.

Briefly, this is to define the complaints and objection procedure to be followed by the parties concerned if they do not participate in the decisions made by IPIAB.

## 2. Introduction & Scope

A complaint can be made by any of the stakeholders of the accreditation services of IPIAB against the following:

- The IPIAB operation and/or procedures;
- The IPIAB-accredited CABs;
- Clients certified by IPIAB-accredited CABs;
- The IPIAB assessors, experts, committee members, or staff of the board;
- The IPIAB assessment process followed by the assessment team;
- The quality of the accreditation process;
- Any other IPIAB-related matter.

Complaints can be filed by any of the stakeholders of the accreditation services of IPIAB, such as:

- Manufacturers and suppliers of related equipment that are certified by IPIAB-accredited CABs;



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- Customers of the manufacturers and suppliers of oil industry equipment and inspected items that hold the quality certificate of CABs, which are accredited by IPIAB;
- Regulatory governmental and executive organizations related to the accredited CABs,
- National or international accreditation bodies associated with conformity assessment services of IPIAB, etc.
- etc.

The effective resolution of complaints and appeals is an important tool to protect the IPIAB, its customers/clients, and other users of the conformity assessment against mistakes, inefficiency, or unreasonable behavior. Confidence in conformity assessment activities is maintained when complaints and appeals are processed appropriately.

This procedure is used to address the complaints and appeals of all stakeholders<sup>1</sup> of IPIAB, including accredited CABs, regulatory organizations, CABs' clients, etc.

### 3. Responsibilities

The responsibility of the commitment towards the effective implementation of this procedure, handling all complaints and appeals raised by the CABs or other interested parties, until it is closed, is the responsibility of the IPIAB's director.

The quality expert is responsible for registering all complaints and appeals, and following up on the relevant corrective actions, while the quality supervisor is responsible for preparing summary reports for reporting to the director of IPIAB and planning for the management review meetings.

The responsible person should carry out the responsibility of investigating and handling the received complaints/ appeals as soon as possible and do the necessary follow-up until the case is closed and reported to the quality supervisor/expert.

All units are responsible to send and receive customers' survey forms to/from all clients and taking corrective or preventive actions if requested by the director of IPIAB.

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<sup>1</sup> Interested parties



## 4. Definitions

### Appeal

An Appeal is a request by an applicant or accredited CAB for reconsideration of any adverse accreditation decision related to its desired accreditation status. These decisions include granting, maintaining, extending, reducing, suspending, and withdrawing accreditation.

**Note 1:** *A nonconformity is not an accreditation decision. A nonconformity is the non-fulfillment of a requirement for accreditation. A nonconformity is not subject to appeal. Issues related to the fulfillment of requirements for accreditation, including technical requirements, will be resolved in the context of addressing a nonconformity not through the appeal process.*

### Complaint

- ❖ Expression of dissatisfaction by a CAB or third party relating to IPIAB's performance, i.e., its procedures, processes, or personnel.
- ❖ The allegation, made by a third party, against a CAB accredited by IPIAB, claiming that this CAB is violating the accreditation.

Since this document mainly focused on appeal & complaint these two words are specialty defined here. To thoroughly study the vocabulary, the users are kindly asked to look at "ISO/IEC 17000 Conformity Assessment — Vocabulary and General Principles".

## 5. IPIAB's Activities Description

### 5.1. The complaints

#### 5.1.1. To Receive a complaint

A complaint may be made in writing/e-mail /phone/verbal<sup>2</sup> to IPIAB with complete details of the complainant (name, address, organization, etc.) and a description of the problem. For this purpose, the complaint can be submitted to IPIAB using "the complaints and appeals form: IPIAB-Fr-016"<sup>3</sup>. Complaints need to include a clear description of the case, objective evidence to support each element or aspect of the complaint, and the name and contact information of the complainant. Upon receipt of a complaint, IPIAB will confirm whether the complaint relates to accreditation activities that it is responsible for and, if so, will deal with it. If it is not

<sup>2</sup> verbal complaints are made in writing by recipient and submit it to the Quality unit of IPIAB

<sup>3</sup> this form may be filled out by complainant or recipient in IPIAB and submit it to quality unit of IPIAB



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concerned with the activities of IPIAB, the result of the investigation will be written down, the complainant will be informed, and the case will be closed.

**Note 1:** All received complaints must be formally confirmed by the complainant in writing by signing the “the complaints and appeals form: IPIAB-Fr-016”.

**Note 2:** If the complaint has no details of the complainant or the description is not adequate, IPIAB will reserve the right to deal with the complaint as deemed fit.

After receiving and formally registering the complaint, the quality unit of IPIAB will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and provide gradually the complainant with progress reports and the outcome. In addition, the quality unit registers the complaint in “the complaints and appeals list”: IPIAB-Fr-035. The received and registered complaints are coded applying the coding process described in IPIAB-Pr-02.

**Note 3:** IPIAB is responsible for all the information collected for validating the complaint. Also, upon the appeal of any beneficiary or complainant, all information and stages of work progress will be announced.

### 5.1.2. Complaint Investigation

Complaints are forwarded to the director or the accreditation supervisor, depending on the nature and severity of the complaint. The responsible manager is obliged to assign a person to follow up on the complaint, review and, gathering the necessary information to confirm the complaint. This person shall not have been involved in the accreditation or activities related to the complaint and, should not be in any way interested in the case of the complaint.

- ✓ If the complaint is unfounded or outside of the scope for complaints handling, the person in charge will reject the complaint in writing.
- ✓ If the complaint is within the scope of complaints handling, the person in charge initiates the complaint handling process as detailed hereafter.

If the complaint is filed against an accredited CAB by IPIAB, or against applicants for the accreditation process, the issue will be informed to the applicant and the reasons, explanations, and results of their investigations will be requested. The responsible person should follow up on the case by researching and collecting evidence, registering the required information in *the complaint/ appeal form: IPIAB-Fr-038*, and, delivering it to the quality unit. After reviewing and confirming the sufficiency of the evidence, the quality unit informs the director of the result.

Mechanisms for reviewing complaints/appeals and collecting information are:



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- Examining the report and relevant evidence
- Returning to the assessment site (if possible)
- Holding meetings with interested parties
- Conducting interview with the assessment team, and relevant person
- Holding internal meetings
- Studying and reviewing sources and standards

*Note 1: regarding the complaint/appeals, IPIAB is responsible for collecting and verifying all the necessary information to validate the complaint and appeals.*

*Note 2: In the case of complaints received from legal organizations, coordination should be done with the mentioned organizations in a short time so that the director of the IPIAB or his/her representative can receive more detailed information about the nature of the complaint by holding the in-person meeting.*

### 5.1.3. Complaint Resolution

A meeting can be held with both parties, if necessary, to investigate the complaint. Also, the results of the investigation will be registered in “*the minutes of meetings form*”: IPIAB-Fr-012 and the complainant will be informed of the results, if possible. IPIAB may follow up on the necessary actions to resolve the matter by filling out “*the corrective and preventive action request form*”: IPIAB-Fr-013 in accordance with *the procedure of corrective and preventive actions: IPIAB-Pr-08*. If the actions do not satisfy the complainant, and close the case, the quality unit of IPIAB will bring up the complaint in the nearest meeting of the committee for safeguarding the impartiality of IPIAB. It also will register, enforce, and follow up on the actions confirmed by this committee.

The process for investigating the complaint/appeals can be repeated up to 1 time to lead to a satisfactory result. After closing the case IPIAB will give formal notice of the end of the complaint handling process to the complainant.

*Note 1: According to the type and importance of the complaint/appeals as well as the information provided in the complaint/appeals, the quality unit, if necessary, contacts the relevant organization and requests the information needed for a more appropriate evaluation and investigation.*

*Note 2: In case of encountering a specific and very important complaint/appeal, the appropriate approach with on-time response and necessary interactions and arrangements based on the opinions of the director of IPIAB will be taken.*

*Note 3: The accreditation body shall be responsible for all decisions at all levels of the handling process for complaints.*



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If the appropriate results are not achieved after the aforementioned efforts regarding the investigation, the complaint/appeals will be referred to competent, independent, and relevant external authorities.

## 5.2. Appeals

### 5.2.1. Reception of Appeal

Appeals can be made by the certificate holder within two weeks after receipt of the decision on the suspension, withdrawal, or scope restriction of the accreditation certificate, also it may be made on the decision not to issue the accreditation after initial accreditation by IPIAB as well. Appeals shall only be submitted to IPIAB in writing by filling out the “*complaints and appeals form: IPIAB-Fr-016*” or submitting the request by E-mail. The appellant may send the appeal to info@ipiab.ir. Then, the quality unit will register this type of appeal in “*the complaints and appeals list: IPIAB-Fr-035*”. Appeals need to include a clear description of the case, objective evidence to support each element or aspect of the appeal, and the name and contact information of the appellant. If necessary, the quality unit should ask the client, who has submitted the appeal, for additional information about the request.

*Note: Once the appeals are received the appellant will be informed.*

### 5.2.2. Assessment and Resolution of Appeals

The quality unit of IPIAB will investigate the matter by appointing an impartial person who has not been involved in the accreditation process. As soon as possible, the person in charge should provide an overview of the accreditation actions to follow up on the appeal.

All appeals are preliminarily reviewed by the person in charge:

- If the appeal is outside of the scope for appeals handling, the person in charge will reject the appeal in writing;
- If the appeal is within the scope for appeals handling, the person in charge initiates the appeal handling procedure as detailed hereafter.

The appeal is duly investigated and the accreditation decision is re-assessed in consideration of the new evidence or additional justification provided, as well as additional information obtained by other staff members and/or third-party experts, if relevant. Any action to investigate the matter which is taken in consultation with the competent experts based on rational judgment, should observe the impartiality and avoid any bias towards the previous decisions made by IPIAB about the subject of the appeal. Further information is requested from the appellant if necessary.

*Note: The person in charge keeps the appellant informed of the progress in evaluating the appeal.*





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Based on the result of the investigation, the person in charge specifies all proposed actions in conclusion to the appeal within two (2) months of receiving the appeal.

In order to ensure that there is no conflict of interest, the decision resolving the appeal is taken by, or reviewed and approved by, the person(s) not involved in the activities related to the appeal. This means the person in charge must have been not involved in the accreditation decision questioned in the appeal. Furthermore, personnel involved in the review or approval of a resolution to an appeal must not have been involved in consultancy tasks with or have been employed by the client in question for the past three years.

The appeal is closed once IPIAB has gathered and verified all necessary information, assessed the evidence provided, and taken a decision on the appeal. If applicable, the accreditation decision will be revised and updated based on reviewed documents according to accreditation requirements. If the appeal is not confirmed based on rational reasons, the matter will be written down in “*the complaints and appeals form*”: IPIAB-Fr-016 and if necessary, in *the minutes of meetings*: IPIAB-Fr-012. The person in charge notifies the appellant in writing about the outcome of the appeal when the appeal is considered to be closed.

If the appellant is not satisfied with the result of the investigation, the matter will be referred to the committee for safeguarding the impartiality of IPIAB. Approvals of the committee for safeguarding impartiality concerning the appeal will be followed up on and registered by IPIAB and the final result of the appeal will be notified to the appellant in writing. In case the appellant disagrees with the conclusions reached by IPIAB, the appellant may refer their appeal to the competent authorities and/or the standard holder.

### 5.3. Registering the feedback of Accredited CABs

To assess the quality of the accreditation services provided by IPIAB, the lead assessor presents the *Evaluation of the performance of the assessment team*: IPIAB-Fr-062&063 to each accredited CAB. The mentioned CABs will send the completed forms to the quality unit of IPIAB.

To make sure that the CABs complete the evaluation form impartially, it is assured that the above information will remain confidential with the IPIAB's management.

The form to register the accredited CAB's opinion includes several criteria with defined weights i.e., the criteria with higher weight (coefficient) is more effective to assess the proficiency of team members. The evaluator (CAB) can register four grades for each criterion which are Excellent (3), Good (2), Medium (1), and Weak (0), then write the assigned number for each grade in the grade column. The other parameters will be automatically calculated in the Excel sheet. The percentage of earned points is the parameter we care about, which is estimated according to below formula:



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$$\begin{aligned} \text{Percentage of earned points}(\%) &= \frac{\text{the points earned}}{\text{the available points}} * 100 \\ &= \frac{\sum_1^n(\text{grade} * \text{weight})}{\sum_1^n(3 * \text{weight})} * 100 \end{aligned}$$

Where 3: is assigned to the Excellent grade (the highest score that each criterion can get) ;

Weight: is the assigned coefficient for each criterion;

and, the grade is the score assigned by the evaluator.

The maximum possible score for each survey is 100 percent.

- ✓ The quality of the services of IPIAB is acceptable if  $70 \leq X \leq 100$ .
- ✓ If  $X < 70$ , it is necessary to investigate the root causes and define the corrective actions. This investigation will be carried out by the quality unit of IPIAB in cooperation with the associated person(s).

In the form: *Evaluation of the performance of the assessment team: IPIAB-Fr-062&063*; if the **Percentage of earned points** (%) assigned by the CAB is less than 70% then it will be considered as a complaint and IPIAB will act according to clause 5.1. *The complaints* of this procedure.

## 6. Documents and Annexes

No.	Document Code	Document Title
1.	IPIAB-Fr-016	the complaints and appeals form
2.	IPIAB-Fr-035	the complaints and appeals list
3.	IPIAB-Fr-012	the minutes of meetings form
4.	IPIAB-Fr-013	the corrective and preventive action request form
5.	IPIAB-Pr-02	Document and record control procedure
6.	IPIAB-Pr-08	the procedure of corrective and preventive actions
7.	IPIAB-Fr-062&063	Evaluation of the performance of the assessment team

## 7. References

7.1. ISO/IEC 17011:2017 Conformity assessment — Requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies

7.2. ISO/IEC 17000:2020 Conformity assessment — Vocabulary and general principles



## 8. Revision History

<i>Version</i>	<i>Change Description</i>	<i>Date</i>
1.00		
2.00		
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