

CUSTOMER FEEDBACK HANDLING PROCEDURE

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Table of Contents

	Page
1. PURPOSE.....	3
2. RESPONSIBILITY.....	3
3. DEFINITIONS.....	3
4. ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION.....	3
4.1 Complaints.....	3
4.2 Positive Feedback.....	4
4.3 Disputes.....	5
4.4 Appeals.....	5
5. COMPLAINTS/ DISPUTES/ APPEALS RECORDS.....	6
6. REFERENCES.....	6
APPENDIX – AMENDMENT RECORD.....	7

1. **PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

This procedure describes how customer feedbacks/complaints, appeals and disputes are handled in SADCAS.

2. **RESPONSIBILITY**

2.1 The procedure applies to any SADCAS staff who receives customer feedback.

2.2 The Quality Manager shall be responsible for validating the complaint.

2.3 The Quality Manager shall be responsible for allocating responsibilities for investigating and reporting on complaints.

2.4 The Quality Manager is responsible for making final decisions regarding complaints.

2.5 The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for making decisions on disputes.

2.6 The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for validating appeals.

2.7 The SADCAS Appeals Committee shall be responsible for making final decisions regarding appeals.

3. **DEFINITIONS**

3.1 **Customer feedback:** A compliment or complaint received from a person or organization relating to SADCAS activities, personnel, assessors/technical experts.

3.2 **Complaint:** Expression of dissatisfaction, other than an appeal, by any person or organization to SADCAS relating to SADCAS activities, personnel and assessors/technical experts where a response is expected.

3.3 **Appeal:** Request by a conformity assessment body to SADCAS for a reconsideration of an accreditation decision.

3.4 **Dispute:** Complaints which have not been resolved through the SADCAS complaints handling system.

4. **ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION**

4.1 **Complaints**

- 4.1.1 Complaints concerning SADCAS services, personnel, assessors/technical experts can be received by any member of staff and directed to Quality Manager.

Once received the Quality Manager shall log the complaint on SADCAS F 85, gather and verify all necessary information to decide on the validity of the complaint then register on SADCAS F 86 if deemed valid. Should the Quality Manager decide that the complaint is not valid then the complainant shall be notified accordingly and shall be advised of the reasons thereof.

All complaints relating to an organization accredited by SADCAS shall first be referred to the accredited organization. Only when the accredited organization has not resolved the complaint shall the matter be referred to SADCAS. Complaints which have not been resolved through the SADCAS complaints handling system are classified as disputes and shall be brought to the attention of the Chief Executive Officer for resolution. The customer feedback procedure is publicly available.

- 4.1.2 The Quality Manager shall allocate the responsibility to investigate and report on the complaint. The person investigating the complaint shall be independent of the complaint and shall confirm ability to undertake the investigation within stipulated timeframe.
- 4.1.3 Within a week of registering the complaint, the Quality Manager shall forward a confirmation of receipt of the complaint using Standard letter SL 16 to the complainant and inform the complainant that the complaint is being handled.
- 4.1.4 The person responsible shall investigate the complaint in such a manner that all facts relevant to the complaint are obtained. The person undertaking the investigation shall regularly inform the Quality Manager of progress with the investigation. The Quality Manager shall provide the complainant with progress reports in those cases where the investigation is anticipated to take more than forty-five (45) days to complete.
- 4.1.5 Upon completion of the investigation, the person responsible shall compile a report and submit it to the Quality Manager.
- 4.1.6 The Quality Manager shall review the report and propose appropriate actions to resolve the complaint.
- 4.1.7 The Quality Manager in liaison with the head of department/unit shall conclude on the complaint.
- 4.1.8 The Quality Manager within a week of concluding the complaint shall notify the complainant in writing about the outcome of the investigation.

4.1.9 If a complaint is not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, he/she may request that the complaint be raised into a dispute.

4.1.10 Disputes shall be handled as outlined in section 4.3

4.2 **Positive Feedback**

4.2.1 All positive feedback on SADCAS activities, personnel, assessors/technical experts shall be directed to the Quality Manager who in turn shall note it. Where feedback is on SADCAS personnel, then the respective staff and head of department/unit shall be informed.

4.3 **Disputes**

4.3.1 Disputes shall be brought to the attention of the Chief Executive Officer.

4.3.2 The Chief Executive Officer shall allocate the dispute to a head of department/unit independent of the dispute for resolution. All costs associated with the resolution of the dispute shall be to the account of the organization against which the dispute is awarded.

4.4 **Appeals**

4.4.1 Appeals from organizations on accreditation decisions shall be in writing and shall be forwarded to the Chief Executive Officer within three (3) months of the course of appeal.

4.4.2 The Chief Executive Officer shall decide on the validity of the appeal after gathering and verifying all necessary information related to the appeal. Should the Chief Executive Officer decide that the appeal is not valid then the appellant shall be notified accordingly and shall be advised of the reasons for not actioning the appeal within four (4) weeks from the date of receipt of the appeal.

4.4.3 If valid, the appeal shall be registered on SADCAS F 86.

4.4.4 Within a week of registering the appeal, the Chief Executive Officer shall forward a confirmation of receipt of the appeal and advise the appellant that the appeal is being handled.

4.4.5 Throughout the investigation of an appeal all decisions made prior to the appeal stand.

4.4.6 The Chief Executive Officer shall table the appeal to the SADCAS Appeals Committee to investigate the appeal and give a judgment.

4.4.7 The judgment of the Appeals Committee shall be communicated to the appellant within two (2) weeks of judgment.

4.4.8 Appeals should be satisfactorily resolved and appropriate action taken within 4 months of receiving the appeal. Where not possible, the Chief Executive Officer shall track the progress

and liaise regularly with the appellant regarding the progress of the appeal until such time as it has been resolved.

- 4.4.9 An appeal received after the stipulated period shall be referred to the SADCAS Chief Executive Officer who shall decide whether or not to process it. Should the Chief Executive Officer decide not to process the appeal then the appellant shall be notified accordingly and shall be advised of reasons for not actioning the appeal within four (4) weeks from the date of receipt of appeal.

5. COMPLAINTS/ DISPUTES/ APPEALS RECORDS

- 5.1 The records pertaining to complaints and disputes shall be kept and maintained by the Quality Manager.
- 5.2 The records pertaining to appeals shall be kept and maintained by the Chief Executive Officer.

6. REFERENCES

- SADCAS PM 01 – Sections 7.12 and 7.13
- SADCAS BP 05 – Terms of Reference Appeals Committee
- SADCAS F 85 – Complaints, Disputes and Appeals Registration Form
- SADCAS F 86 – Customer complaints/Appeals Register
- SADCAS SL 16 – Complaints Acknowledgement Letter
- SADCAS AD 02 – SADCAS Service Charter

APPENDIX - AMENDMENT RECORD

Revision Status	Change			Approved by	Effective Date
	Page	Clause/ Subclause	Description of Change		
Issue 1	-	-	-	CEO	2009-09-14
Issue 2	4	New sub clause 4.1.6	Added ne sub-clause which reads “The Quality Manager shall review the report and propose appropriate actions to resolve the complaint”.	CEO	2016-07-20
Issue 3	3, 4, 5	3.1, 3.2, 4.1.1, 4.2.1	Deleted “expert” and substituted with “technical expert”	CEO	2018-11-21
	3,4,5	4.1.1,4.1.2, 4.1.3, 4.1.8, 5.1	Deleted “Accreditation Administrator” and substituted with “Quality Manager”	CEO	2018-11-21
	4	4.1.1	<u>3rd paragraph</u> ➤ Line 1 - Inserted “first” between “shall” and “be referred”. ➤ Added sentence at end of paragraph which reads “Complaints which have not been resolved through the SADCAS complaints handling system are classified as disputes and shall be brought to the attention of the Chief Executive Officer for resolution. The customer feedback procedure is publicly available”.	CEO	2018-11-21
Issue 4	4	4.1.1	<u>2nd paragraph</u> – Deleted “been able to resolve” and substitute with “resolved”	CEO	2019-03-04
Issue 5	3	2.2	<u>New clause added:</u> “The Quality Manager shall be responsible for validating the complaint.” Renumbered subsequent clauses	CEO	2021-02-04
		2.6	<u>New clause added:</u> “The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for validating appeals.”		
	4	4.1.1	<u>2nd paragraph:</u> Inserted “gather and verify all necessary information to” between “who shall” and “decide to”		
		4.1.4	Added sentence at end of paragraph which reads_“The Quality Manager shall provide the complainant with progress reports in those cases where the investigation is anticipated to take more than forty-five (45) days to complete”.		

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	Page	Clause/ Subclause	Description of Change		
Issue 5	5	4.4.2	Added “after gathering and verifying all necessary information related to the appeal” at the end of first sentence.	CEO	2021-02-04
		4.4.8	New clause added: “Appeals should be satisfactorily resolved and appropriate action taken within 4 months of receiving the appeal. Where not possible, the Chief Executive Officer shall track the progress and liaise regularly with the appellant regarding the progress of the appeal until such time as it has been resolved”. Renumbered subsequent clause		
6	4	4.1.2	End of paragraph - Added: “and shall confirm ability to undertake the investigation within stipulated timeframe”.	CEO	2023-02-28
	6	6	Added SADCAS AD 02 – Service Charter to list of References		
Issue 7	4	4.1.1	End of 1 st paragraph - Added “and directed to Quality Manager” 2 nd paragraph – Added “Once received the Quality Manager shall log the complaint on SADCAS F 85”	CEO	2025-03-31