	OPERATING PROCEDURE	APPEALS			
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1.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to define the process for addressing appeals raised against application, nonconformance issuance, or registration decisions of *Audit3* clients or applicants.

2.0 SCOPE

The scope of this procedure applies to any requests for reconsideration of management decisions on nonconformance issuance, applications or contradictions of a registration decision. This procedure does not address the handling of complaints which is addressed in the Corrective / Preventive Action procedure.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

See Procedure P-001 Definitions and Interpretations


4.0 REFERENCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

- 4.1 *Audit3* Quality Systems Manual
- 4.2 ISO 17021


5.0 PROCEDURE AND RESPONSIBILITY

5.1 General / Procedure

- 5.1.1 Appeals form an integral part of the comprehensive corrective and preventive action process in the quality management system of *Audit3*.
- 5.1.2 It is the goal of this process to resolve any appeals within 30-60 days of submittal.
- 5.1.3 An appeal may be withdrawn by written request at any point in time by the appellant.
- 5.1.4 An appeal is a request to reconsider a decision in the registration process. This is typically issued in the following situations:
 - 5.1.4.1 The client feels a nonconformance has been issued without merit
 - 5.1.4.2 An application for management systems certification services is denied
 - 5.1.4.3 A decision to deny granting or continuing certification is reached.
- 5.1.5 If a client feels that a decision has been reached in error or that facts and data have been misinterpreted or misconstrued, they are encouraged to first discuss the situation with the primary contact, whether auditor, President, or otherwise. This may uncover facts or information from both perspectives to resolve the issue. If the issue still cannot be resolved, the appellant may lodge a formal appeal with *Audit3*. The appellant will be briefed on the appeals procedure and their rights and obligations within that procedure.

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- 5.1.6 This formal appeal should include complete details regarding the situation and the nature of the decision reached. The appellant should also clearly indicate evidence and facts which they feel contradict the decision as communicated to them. This appeal should be signed by a responsible authority within the appellant's organization.
- 5.1.7 The request will be forwarded to the President for resolution. If this represents a potential conflict of interest, the request may be submitted to another member of management.
- 5.1.8 The President or other designee responsible for review of the information provided for clarity and completeness and may request additional information from the appellant. Failure of the appellant to provide complete and verifiable information may forfeit the appeal. The Manager will collect any additional information and investigate the complaint. Every effort should be extended to ensure this occurs within 21 days.
- 5.1.9 Once the owner feels they have sufficient information for a judgment to be made, the information is forwarded to the President. If the President represents a potential conflict of interest, the appeal will be handled by the Vice President. If this represents a conflict of interest, members of the Advisory Board, auditors not involved in the activity or others will be assembled to address the appeal. The finding of this independent group will be binding. This group, usually 2-3 people, may review the information and add to its membership an additional authority provided they have sufficient background and knowledge. In either case, the committee shall be unbiased and have had no participation in the events leading to the appeal.
- 5.1.10 The Reviewer shall review the original appeal and the results of the investigation conducted and reach a unanimous decision regarding the appeal. The results shall be documented and communicated to the President who will in turn inform the appellant in writing of the decision of the committee.
- 5.1.12 If the appellant feels that this procedure has been violated or that the decision was reached unfairly, they retain the right to appeal to an independent arbitration body. In the event the decision of *Audit3* is upheld, the appellant may be held responsible for the costs of any such appeal.
- 5.1.13 Records including the original appeal as submitted, the results of the investigation, the decision of the committee, and the communication to the appellant will be filed according to established recorded retention policies and made available during Internal Audits, Management Reviews and accreditation assessments. The President is responsible for reporting on appeals and the status of any open appeals during Management Review.

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6.0 RECORDS

- 6.1 Appeal Log
- 6.2 Appeal Files

7.0 CHANGE SUMMARY

REV	Revision Description	Date
0	Original Issue	04.29.02
1	Modified procedure that potential conflict of interest may result in Appeal being forwarded to Advisory Committee.	10.29.02
2	Removed reference to Director and VP.	08.07.06
3	Replaced references to IT3 with <i>Audit3</i> . Aligned new titles with existing responsibilities.	08.19.08
4	Clarified in scope that CA/PA procedure deals with complaints	11.14.08
5	Removed decision making step by accrediting body and input independent arbitration body.	10.19.08
6	Added references to clarify that appeals may also apply to the issuance of nonconformance that a client feels does not have merit.	09.23.12
7	Clarified Titles	07.18.13
8	Clarified process flow from President to Advisory Committee.	04.27.16
9	Changed Logo.	07.01.17

ANNUAL REVIEW		
Date	Summary	R/A
07.18.13	Clarified Titles	RSB
08.31.14	No Changes	RSB
08.01.15	No Changes	RSB
03.15.16	No Changes	RSB
07.01.17	Modified Logo. No other changes.	RSB