



MAURITAS

P2

Procedure for dealing with appeals and complaints

Mauritius Accreditation Service

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Foreword

The MAURITIUS ACCREDITATION SERVICE (MAURITAS) is a governmental body established in 1998 to provide a national, unified service for the accreditation of Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) such as calibration/testing laboratories, certification bodies and inspection bodies. Organizations that comply with the MAURITAS requirements are granted accreditation by MAURITAS.

About MAURITAS publications

MAURITAS publications are categorized as follows:

- R series Publications containing general policy and requirements related to MAURITAS accreditation.
- G series Publications providing guidance on MAURITAS requirements.
- A series Publications related to assessment procedures.
- P series MAURITAS quality system procedures
- F series MAURITAS Forms
- Directories Classified listing of accredited organizations.

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Procedure for dealing with appeals and complaints

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this procedure is to define how appeals and complaints are handled at MAURITAS.

2. Scope and Responsibilities

2.1 This procedure defines the steps that are followed by MAURITAS for processing appeals and complaints. The procedure includes the steps such as receipt, validation, investigation, actions taken in a timely manner as well as communication to appellant and complainant.

3. Reference

- 3.1 MAURITAS A8 : Procedure for assessment – Laboratories
- 3.2 MAURITAS A9 : Procedure for preliminary visit, initial assessment and re-assessment for Management System Accreditation - Certification bodies
- 3.3 MAURITAS A18 : Procedure for assessment and extension of scope of accreditation for Management System Accreditation - Certification Bodies
- 3.4 MAURITAS A27 : Procedure for Remote Assessment
- 3.5 MAURITAS A30 : Procedure for assessment of Product Certification Bodies
- 3.6 Mauritius Accreditation Service Act (Act 23 of 1998 - 1 August 1999 amended 10/17 (cio 24/7/17)
- 3.7 ISO/IEC 17011 : Conformity assessment – General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies

4. Definition

4.1 Appeal

Request by a CAB for reconsideration of any adverse accreditation decision related to its desired accreditation status.

Example of appeal can be, but not limited to, complaints made against accreditation decision.

4.2 Complaint

Expression of dissatisfaction, other than appeal, by any person or organisation to a CAB or MAURITAS, relating to the activities of the CAB or MAURITAS, where a response is expected

Examples of complaints can be, but not limited to:

- Complaints made against applicant/accredited CABs
- Complaints made against an assessment team.
- Complaints made against MAURITAS.
- Complaints made against assessment processes/techniques.
- Complaints made against MAURITAS policies, procedures and regulations

4.3 Complaints Working Group (CWG)

A CWG is established when the complaint is directed towards the actions of MAURITAS. The Director shall set up the CWG with a minimum of two (2) impartial members of the MAURITAS Advisory Council (MAC) and additional experts as required when technical issues are involved, to investigate a specific complaint, or a series of complaints. The Secretary of the CWG shall either be from the laboratory/inspection body or certification body of MAURITAS and independent of the complaint.

4.4 Ad-Hoc Working Group

A group with a minimum of two (2) impartial members nominated by the Director, MAURITAS, to investigate a specific complaint, or a series of complaints related to the activities of MAURITAS. Members shall either be from the laboratory/inspection body or certification body section of MAURITAS and independent of the complaint. The Secretary of the Ad-Hoc Working Group shall be from the administrative section.

4.5 The term "**certification**" covers both product certification and management systems certification in this document.

5. Registration of appeals and complaints

5.1 All appeals and complaints shall be addressed to the Director who shall refer them to the Quality Manager. The latter shall keep a record of all such appeals and complaints in respective files.

5.2 All appeals and complaints are logged in the Appeals/Complaints Registration Form (**F 2.10**) and are given a tracking number.

5.3 The Quality Manager shall acknowledge receipt of the appeal or complaint in writing, preferably within a week, to the appellant or complainant.

6. Determination of validity of appeals and complaints

6.1 Following logging of appeals and complaints, MAURITAS will set up an ad-hoc committee comprising designated MAURITAS Technical Staff to determine the validity of the appeals or complaints. For an appeal or complaint to be considered as valid:

- they shall be received within 30 days of the event that caused the appeal or complaint
- they shall be in writing
- they shall be based on first-hand information
- the complainant shall be identified and
- the substance of the appeal or complaint shall be clearly understood.

The Director shall instruct whether other complaints that do not satisfy all of these criteria shall also be investigated when he considers them sufficiently serious and plausible.

6.2 If the appellant or complainant is unable to submit all necessary information within 1 month of the submission of the original information to enable MAURITAS to validate the complaint, MAURITAS shall close the complaint and inform the complainant of the closure.

6.3 If the appeals or complaints are deemed to be valid, they will be investigated as detailed in sections 7, 8 and 9 below. If they are not valid, they are rejected and the party making the appeals or complaints is informed in writing.

6.4 If MAURITAS receives complaints with unfounded allegations, MAURITAS will submit these complaints through the parent Ministry to the State Law Office for necessary legal advice/ actions as deemed appropriate.

6.5 If MAURITAS receives repetitive complaints of a similar nature from the same complainant / organisation or anonymously, MAURITAS reserves the right not to respond any further to these complainants. A decision shall be made by the Director of MAURITAS and the complaints are closed.

7 Investigation of appeals

7.1 Appeals relating to the granting, maintaining, extending, reducing, suspending or terminating of accreditation shall be considered by an Appeal Panel appointed by the Minister.

7.2 The Minister shall, on receipt of a notice of appeal, within a period of 10 days, appoint an independent panel to hear and determine the appeal.

7.3 The panel shall consist of a Chairman and 2 other members, one of whom shall have a scientific or engineering background or be knowledgeable in accreditation procedures.

7.4 A period of six (6) months, depending on nature and complexity of the appeal, is desirable for the resolution of appeals; however, this period may be extended at the discretion of the Appeals Panel.

7.5 MAURITAS shall base itself on the findings and recommendations of the appeal panel, to take the necessary follow-up actions, if required, with respect to that particular appeal.

7.6 MAURITAS shall provide the appellant with progress reports and the final outcome of the appeal.

8 Investigation of complaints

8.1 Depending on the nature of the complaint, the Director shall assign a MAURITAS Staff /Member of the MAC who is independent of the activity to lead the Working Group (Ad-Hoc or CWG) to investigate the complaint. The investigators shall be selected as being as remote as possible and independent from the basis of the complaint. An assigned officer is also nominated by the Working Group (Ad-Hoc or CWG) to provide the relevant information relative to the complaint to the Working Group.

8.2 Where the complaint is directed towards an accredited CAB, MAURITAS shall request the CAB to first address the complaint and provide feedback to MAURITAS.

MAURITAS shall ensure that the provider (source) of the complaint remains confidential to MAURITAS and is not shared with the CAB, unless agreed by the source. Upon feedback from the organisation, MAURITAS shall follow the procedures for handling the complaint.

8.3 The designated investigators shall proceed with a thorough investigation of the complaint and seek a resolution of the issue(s) involved. It is the responsibility of the designated investigators to ensure that the investigation is performed in a timely manner (preferably 3-6 months of complaint).

8.4 When the issue has been investigated, the CWG shall submit a detailed written report on the complaint, including a statement whether the complaint has been found to have been substantiated or not, and any recommendations and corrective actions required for the resolution of the complaint. MAURITAS shall then consider the report from the CWG and decide on the necessary actions for resolving the complaint.

8.5 MAURITAS shall provide the complainant with progress reports and the final outcome of the complaint.

8.6 Effectiveness of action(s) taken to address the complaints shall be assessed by the Director during management review meetings so as to ensure that similar complaints do not recur.

9 Confidentiality and impartiality

9.1 MAURITAS shall be responsible for all decisions at all levels during the handling process and shall respond to the appeals and complaints taking into account the issue of confidentiality and impartiality.

9.2 Investigation and decision following an appeal/complaint shall not lead to discriminatory actions by MAURITAS against the appellant/complainant.

10 Related Forms

10.1 Appeals/Complaints Registration Form, **F 2.10**

Appendix A: Amendment Table

SN	Section	Amendment
1.		
2.		