

Procedure NSDO PR-11: Appeals, complaints and disputes

1. Introduction

This procedure describes how National Standards Development Organisation (NSDO) handles appeals, complaints and disputes. It is freely available to anyone with an interest in NSDO activities.

2. Related documents

ISO/IEC Guide 2, Standardization and related activities – General vocabulary

NSDO *Schedule of Fees*

3. Definitions

3.1 Appeal: a complaint or dispute that cannot be resolved by other means and prompts a request for a formal review of a decision made by the NSDO Board or the NSDO Standards Development Committee (SDC) on behalf of the Board.

3.2 Complaint: an expression of dissatisfaction about an issue in which NSDO has an active interest. Complaints may be made about the activities of NSDO, its personnel or committee members; or standards it has published or intends publishing.

3.3 Dispute: a disagreement about an issue in which NSDO has an active interest. Disputes are handled the same way as complaints.

3.4 Standard: document, established by consensus and approved by a recognised body, that provides, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for activities or their results, aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree of order in a given context. Standards should be based on the consolidated results of science, technology and experience, and aimed at the promotion of optimum community benefits. [ISO/IEC]

4. How to make a complaint or lodge an appeal

4.1 Complaints: write, talk to, or email the NSDO Chief Executive Officer (CEO); or if unavailable and the matter is urgent, any other member of the secretariat. Give your name and contact details; describe the problem and identify the parties involved; and describe what you think needs to be done to fix the problem.

4.2 Complaints about an organisation's apparent non-conformance with a standard published by NSDO should be directed to that organisation. Subsequently, if unsatisfied with the outcome and the organisation is certified, you may complain to the organisation's certification body, that is required to investigate the matter. Such complaints may be copied to NSDO for information, as there may be an issue with the wording of the standard itself, indicating a possible need to revise the standard.

4.3 Appeals: write to or email the NSDO CEO, supplying the same details as for complaints. In addition, quote the decision by the NSDO Board and/or its SDC that needs to be reviewed. Also include the appeal fee (see current NSDO *Schedule of Fees*), which will be refunded if the appeal is successful.

4.4 In all cases, the complainant or appellant is responsible for his / her own costs in making representations, personal or otherwise.

5. Receiving and referring complaints

5.1 Minor complaints: if the complaint can be easily rectified to the satisfaction of the complainant by the member of the secretariat receiving it - take the action. This may involve seeking assistance from another secretariat member. Record brief details in the Complaints Log to enable a review later of whether there are any system improvement issues.

5.2 All other complaints: if verbal, take notes during or immediately after the conversation to capture the information requested at section 4.1. Also, record the complainant's response and any advice given to the complainant.

5.3 If the person receiving the complaint is not the CEO, forward the record of conversation or written complaint to the CEO as soon as practicable.

5.4 The CEO appoints a member of the secretariat to action the complaint, ensuring that he/she is not a party to the complaint. If the complaint involves the CEO, he/she refers it immediately to the NSDO Board.

6. Complaints handling process

6.1 If the complaint cannot be rectified quickly as in clause 5.1, the secretariat member creates a file for that complaint and records brief details in the Complaints Log. He/she acknowledges the complaint in writing to the complainant within 10 working days and investigates the matter. Investigation includes bringing the complaint to the attention of the other party formally, and seeking a response to the complaint. Confidential information must not be disclosed without the written consent of the party involved.

6.2 The secretariat member attempts to resolve the matter between the two parties, consistent with his/her level of authority, documenting actions, responses and outcomes on the file. When the complaint is resolved, he/she writes to both parties advising the outcome.

6.3 If he/she cannot resolve the complaint, he/she refers the complaint to the CEO, who may involve both the NSDO Standards Development Committee and Board.

6.4 Ultimately, the NSDO Board may need to decide the matter. Where that decision does not resolve the complaint, the CEO informs the complainant of the appeals process.

7. Appeals handling process

7.1 Normally, an appeal is heard only after the outcome of the complaints process has failed to satisfy the complainant. An appeal should be a last resort because it can be expensive to resource for both parties. The CEO should try to resolve the issue as a complaint first, before confirming it as an appeal.

7.2 The CEO informs the NSDO Chair immediately he/she receives and confirms an appeal. The Chair may refuse to accept an appeal considered spurious, in which case the appellant is advised accordingly, and where possible, given contacts for other avenues of appeal outside NSDO.

7.3 The NSDO Chair appoints an appeals panel of three directors and nominates a director to chair the panel. The CEO will participate in a non-decision making role.

7.4 The NSDO Chair ensures (and records) that members of the appeals panel are free from pressures that might affect the outcome of the appeal, and have no conflict of interest with the appellant.

7.5 The CEO advises the appellant of the names of the appeals panel members and seeks the appellant's agreement that there is no conflict of interest. If the appellant declares a potential conflict of interest with a member, the CEO advises the NSDO Chair. The Chair proposes another member who may not necessarily be a NSDO Director and, if necessary, does this in consultation with the appellant.

7.6 Appeals are conducted in person at a time and place agreed with the appellant. The appellant has the right to present his/her case formally. Normally the appeal should be heard no later than 20 working days after it is lodged and confirmed.

7.7 Both parties may bring experts and witnesses to the appeal hearing if the names and addresses of the experts or witnesses have been supplied to the other party at least five working days before the hearing.

7.8 Panel members vote to decide an appeal. The chair of the panel advises the CEO of the decision and the reasons for the decision. In turn, the CEO notifies the appellant (in writing) and the NSDO Chair of the decision and the reasons. If the appeal is successful, the CEO arranges for the appeal fee to be refunded to the appellant.

7.9 Decisions of an appeals panel are binding. No further avenues of appeal are available within National Standards Development Organisation.

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