

⇒ **Objective**

This document sets out the guidelines to be followed by Nova Cert for handling complaints, appeals and disputes in accordance with ISO 17029:2019, ISO 14065:2020 and other accreditation guidelines.

⇒ **Scope of the procedure**

Applies for the appeals regarding a validation/verification opinion, findings, or audit criterion and for any type of complaint. The procedure also applies for the analysis and decision of complaints and análisis and decisión of disputes.

⇒ **Reference Documents**

- ISO 17029:2019
- ISO 14065:2020
- Paris agreement Article 6.4 crediting mechanism

⇒ **Template summary table**

Activity	Template
Appeals management	AC-01
Complaints management	AC-02

⇒ Development

1. Appeals

1.1. Appeal submission

Clients have the right to disagree with Nova Cert decisions regarding the validation and verification service. To file an appeal, the client shall send an email with the following information:

- Project name
- Decision being appealed
- Detailed explanation of why the decision is being appealed
- Annexes to support the appeal.

The appeal must be done within the following time frames. These time frames must be clearly stated in the proposal and agreement:

Item to be appealed	Time to submit appeal
Issuance of validation/verification opinion	15 business days
Issuance of a nonconformity or a lead auditor's decision to not close a nonconformity.	5 business days
Specific audit criteria added to the audit plan that was not contemplated in this agreement.	3 business days

1.2. Reception

Upon receiving the appeal, the GPM shall send an email to the client with the following information:

- Confirmation of the reception of the appeal with the Contact details of the personnel handling the appeal.
- Inform that the appeal treatment will not result in any form of discrimination actions towards the client, and that Nova Cert understands that the client has the right to disagree with the VVB's decisions.
- Confirm that the review, analysis and decision of the appeal shall not be carried out by the individuals directly involved in the subject of the appeal.
- Estimated time for an official response of the VVB, that should be no longer than 10 business days upon reception of the appeal.

This email must be sent no longer than 2 business days upon reception of the appeal.

1.3. Appeal Analysis and Response

The GPM and the CCED shall review the appeal with all the support annexes and provide the client with a response in no longer than 10 business days. A technical expert might be invited to analyze the appeal if the CCED deems it appropriate.

Personnel directly involved with the appeal shall not participate in the analysis and decision of it.

The record of the analysis of the appeal must be done in the **AC-01 “Appeal Management”** template.

2. Complaints

2.1. Complaint submission

Any stakeholder has the right to file complaints when they feel that poor service is being provided by the VVB, or when the expectations agreed in the proposal and legal agreement are not being met, either in relation to time or quality of service. Complaint decisions shall not have an impact on the result of validation/verification services. If so, an appeal shall be submitted by the stakeholder.

To file a complaint, the stakeholder shall send an email with the following information:

- Project name
- Detailed explanation of the complaint and why the stakeholders' expectations are not being met.
- Annexes to support the complaint, if applicable

The stakeholder may submit a complaint any time.

2.2. Complaint reception

Upon receiving the complaint, the GPM shall send an email to the stakeholder with the following information:

- Confirmation of the reception of the complaint with the contact details of the personnel handling the complaint.
- Inform that the complaint treatment will not result in any form of discrimination actions towards the stakeholder.
- Confirm that the review and analysis of the complaint shall not be carried out by the individuals directly involved in the subject of the complaint.
- Estimated time for an official response of the VVB, that should be no longer than 10 business days upon reception of the appeal.

This email must be sent no longer than 2 business days upon reception of the complaint.

2.3. Complaint analysis

The GPM and the CCED shall review the complaint with all the support annexes and provide the stakeholder a response in no longer than 10 business days. A technical expert might be invited to analyze the complaint if the CCED deems appropriate. Personnel directly involved with the complaint shall not participate in the analysis and decision of it.

The record of the analysis of the complaint must be done in the **AC-02 “Complaint Management”** template. NOVA CERT will implement the measures required as a result of the investigation, these measures are not directly related to the complainant's expectations.

2.4. Decision step: determination of actions in response to complaints

Following the complaint analysis, the Operations Manager and the Executive Director shall formally determine the actions to be taken in response to the complaint. This determination shall be documented in AC-02 as a distinct step, separate from the investigation narrative, ensuring transparency, consistency, and traceability of decisions in compliance.

The classification of response actions (correction, corrective action, or no action) follows the same categories defined in **section 3.4** of this procedure (Disputes – Analysis, Decision and actions). More than one category may be selected if appropriate.

The selected category, the rationale, and the specific actions to be taken shall be recorded in AC-02 and communicated to the complainant as part of the official response within the 10 business day period established in section 2.3.

3. Disputes

3.1. Initial reception and logging.

This is the formal entry point for any dispute. Any stakeholder (e.g., project proponents, local communities, NGOs) has the right to submit a dispute. This step ensures it is captured officially, the submitter receives confirmation, and a traceable record is created from the very beginning. Disputes must be submitted via email to info@nova-cert.com.

To file a dispute, the stakeholder shall send the email with the following information:

- Identification of the project
- Clear description of the objection
- Supporting evidence
- Identification of the complainant
- What was their affected interest

Within 5 working days, a formal acknowledgment is sent to the disputant, confirming receipt and informing the general process steps.

3.2. Preliminary assessment and validity

Not all submissions may constitute a valid, processable dispute. This step acts as a filter to ensure resources are focused on substantive issues that fall within the Body's mandate and scope, while respectfully declining those that are clearly out of scope, anonymous, or lack a basic foundation.

Upon receiving the dispute, the Quality Coordinator shall assess whether the dispute:

- Is directly related to a validation/verification activity of the body
- Is specific and substantive (not frivolous or vexatious)
- Presents verifiable initial evidence of grounds

If valid, the an investigation is initiated. If not valid , the disputant is informed with clear justification. This decision can be appealed internally via a review request to the Quality Coordinator.

3.3. Investigation

The core fact-finding phase. This is conducted by an independent team to guarantee objectivity and avoid any conflict of interest. The principle of confidentiality is paramount here to protect all parties and encourage open provision of information.

The top management designates and investigation team composed of at least two people with appropriate technical and procedural competence. It will be verified that no members was involved in the process in question. The team gathers all relevant information:

- Project documentation
- Reports
- Communications (Email, WhatsApp, etc)
- Interviews , when aplicable.

During the investigation, all information is handled with strict confidentiality. Documents will be stored in the iCloud. The disputant's identify will not be disclosed without their consent, unless required by law.

3.4. Analysis, Decision and actions.

This step transforms gathered facts into a formal conclusion and determines the necessary organizational response. It distinguishes between fixing the immediate problem (correction) and preventing it from happening again (corrective action), driving continual improvement.

The investigation team assess the information against applicable requirements (Last version of the Article 6.4 crediting mechanism standard document, VVB procedures, among others) and prepare an investigation report including:

- Established facts
- Analysis againts criterio
- Conclusion on the merits of the dispute
- Recommended actions.

The recommended actions shall be classified in the following:

- Correction: Immediate action to rectify an identified error
- Corrective action: Action to eliminate the root cause and prevent recurrence
- No action: If the dispute is deemed unfounded.

The top management reviews the report and approves the final decision and actions to be taken.

3.5. Communication and closure.

This ensures transparency and respect for the disputant by keeping them informed throughout the process and formally concluding the case. It also mandates communication with other affected parties (like the project proponent) if the Body's prior work is impacted by the decision.

For investigations taking more than 30 days, an interim update will be provided to the disputant.

Within a maximum period of 60 working days from receipt the disputant will be notified via email of the final outcome of the investigation, the decision taken and the reasoning behind it.

In case that the decision affects an issued report and statement, the client and the applicable authorities, if necessary, will be notified immediately, detailing the corrective actions applied.

3.6. Follow up, recording and improvement

This is the loop-closing and learning phase. It ensures decisions are implemented, creates an auditable history for accountability and oversight, and uses the information from disputes as a tool for strengthening the Body's management system and preventing future issues.

The Quality coordinator Will be the responsible for corrections/corrective actions and the verification on the effectiveness of the implementation (With approval of the top management). The entire dispute file shall be archived in the iCloud and securely for at least 7 years.