

Complaints Guidance - Accredited Bodies / Clients of ASCB

Accredited Bodies

Our Commitment

We aim to consider any complaint we receive in a fair and impartial manner.

Our role and remit when dealing with complaints

ASCB will assess and, where appropriate, investigate complaints in accordance with the requirements of the international standard ISO/IEC 17011 "Conformity assessment – General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies".

ASCB's role is one of assessment in accordance with the above standard. We are not a regulator, and therefore, we do not have any regulatory powers. This is in line with all international and national accreditation bodies. Equally, we are not a mediator or arbitrator. Therefore, we are unable to mediate or arbitrate between an accredited body and/or a third party in relation to matters which do not directly relate to the accreditation requirements, e.g., contractual disagreements or financial disputes.

ASCB will not normally investigate a complaint where the subject matter is also the subject of active legal proceedings, arbitration, or other adjudicative process in any jurisdiction. ASCB findings are made for accreditation purposes only and are not prepared for, or intended for use in, legal proceedings.

Confidentiality

Please note we are required by the international standard ISO/IEC 17011 to have arrangements in place with all our customers to protect and not disclose information obtained or created during the accreditation process. The only exception is where the law requires such information to be disclosed without their written consent. Therefore, ASCB is not permitted to disclose confidential information about its customers outside of the organization without their written consent.

Where a complaint is made by a third party, that is, a person or organization other than the accredited body or certificated company to which the complaint relates, ASCB will not confirm or deny to that complainant the existence of certificates, audit findings, or complaint records concerning an accredited body or its clients. The third party complainant will be informed of the outcome of the investigation to the extent necessary for that purpose. Information already in the public domain may be referenced freely.

Complaints about an ASCB-accredited body and/or certificated company

If your complaint relates to the activities of a certificated company (e.g. one which is ISO 9001 certificated) and/or an ASCB accredited body, you must firstly address your complaint to them and allow them a reasonable opportunity to investigate and respond in compliance with their own complaint process. ASCB will not normally log and investigate a complaint if the complaint has not, in the first instance, been raised with the accredited body and/or certificated company.

How will we deal with your complaint?

Complaints to ASCB must be submitted in writing and include as a minimum the following:

- Summary of the complaint, specifically who and what it is about.
- Timeline of events.
- Copy of supporting correspondence.

When we receive your formal complaint in writing, we will review the information you have provided. We may require the submission of additional information or further clarification.

Initial review (triage) is undertaken within ten working days of receipt of a complete written submission. Where ASCB has requested additional information or clarification, the ten working day period commences on receipt of the further information.

In conducting triage, ASCB considers in particular:

- whether the matter falls within any of the categories ASCB cannot pursue, including but not limited to commercial or contractual disputes, financial disputes, employment matters, matters before a court or tribunal, and matters outside the scope of ASCB accreditation;
- whether the matter has, where applicable, first been raised with the certification body or certificated company concerned, and whether that body has had a reasonable opportunity to respond;
- whether the named certification body holds, or at the material time held, ASCB accreditation in the relevant scope; and
- whether the subject matter of the complaint relates to a requirement governed by the applicable accreditation standard.

Where any of these is not satisfied, the matter will be closed at triage with a written explanation to the complainant. ASCB will signpost alternative routes where one is identifiable.

If we conclude that the complaint is within our remit, we will log it in our database and allocate a unique reference number. ASCB will provide details of the likely timescales for the investigation to be completed. Please note that timescales may vary depending on the nature of the complaint.

An ASCB officer will investigate the complaint in accordance with the applicable accreditation standard(s). On completion of the ASCB investigation, we will inform you of the outcome.

What if I am not satisfied with the outcome of the ASCB investigation?

If you are an ASCB customer whose complaint is not upheld and it relates to your accreditation status, you may request that ASCB reconsider the decision in line with our Appeals process. Details of this process are set out in ASL(G)100, Appeals Guidance, which is available on request.

In the case of third-party complaints, there is no option for appeal. ASCB will provide notification of the end of the complaint process. Where appropriate, we can advise you of the alternative routes available to pursue your complaint.

Representatives

A complainant may be represented by a legal adviser or other representative. Where a complaint is received from a representative, ASCB may require written authority from the complainant confirming the representative's authority to act before substantive correspondence is exchanged.

Costs

Please be aware that each party is responsible for its own costs in connection with a complaint. ASCB does not award costs or compensation as part of the complaints process. Any findings made by ASCB are for accreditation purposes only and do not constitute a basis for financial remedy.

To submit a complaint

Please send your complaint and details as outlined above by the following methods:

Email: admin@ascb.com

Or by post:

Accreditation Service for Certifying Bodies LLC
8 The Green,
Dover, DE 19901,
United States