

# ADISA<sup>®</sup>

## CERTIFICATION

<b>Appeals and Complaints Policy</b>			
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### Introduction

As an independent certification body, ADISA operates with two core pillars at the heart of its operations: to always be impartial and to make balanced and fair decisions.

ADISA does not always claim to get things right and so we have an appeals and complaints process to provide avenues for organisations to raise concerns with ADISA.

This policy addresses “Appeals” being made about decisions ADISA has made during the execution of its certification duties and “Complaints” being made about ADISA activities or activities of companies certified by ADISA. This includes issues associated with the performance of ADISA in the role of Secretariate for the CUPAS scheme.

Both processes are managed internally by ADISA but should the organisation making the Appeal or Complaint feel they are not being treated fairly, there is the ability to escalate the process to the Independent Impartiality Council. This council operates in accordance with the Impartiality Council Policy.

This document supersedes ADISA Appeals Policy v1.1 and ADISA Complaints Policy v1.4.

### Scope

This policy applies to:

- All ADISA Directors.
- All employees of ADISA involved in certification services.
- All participants of the Impartiality Council.
- All customers of ADISA Services.
- All participants in the CUPAS scheme.

### Appeals being made about ADISA decisions relating to certification.

There are two scenarios where an appeal can be made relating to the certification process.

- When an application for certification is refused during the application review stage.
- Where a decision made during an evaluation (test or audit) is disputed and cannot be resolved during discussion.

### Application Refusal Appeal

When an organisation applies for certification, ADISA reviews the application to ensure that before progressing to an audit, both parties are clear on the following:

- The information about the applicant is clear such that the scope of the application is fully understood.
- Any misunderstandings or points open to interpretation are clarified before the site audit.
- The resources required to conduct the evaluation process are identified, impartiality assessed, and competency assured.
- Client-related issues. (Prior relationship issues with ADISA)

This is a process called Application Review which is designed to ensure that the applicant has the potential to meet the certification requirements successfully. As per Clause 4.4 – Non-Discriminatory conditions – of ISO 17065, ADISA is permitted to decline an application for a variety of reasons, including the following:

- Fundamental or demonstrated reasons why an application cannot be processed. (We do not believe you would be able to achieve certification)
- Applicant participating in illegal activities. (We would need to have public domain evidence of this)
- History of repeat Non-Conformances with certification requirements. (Prior history with ADISA)

If an application is to be refused, ADISA will email the applicant to explain the reasons. Should a potential applicant disagree with ADISA's view, then they can appeal by following the Appeals Process.

### Audit Decision Appeal

During any aspect of an audit, the company undergoing evaluation may disagree with the auditor's decision, or they may also feel that the auditor is not acting impartially or does not have the requisite skills to evaluate their business truthfully.

Examples of acceptable grounds for appeals at this point might be:

- The auditor was not impartial throughout.
- The auditor did not display knowledge of the industry/standard.
- The business suffered an exceptional issue, and so we were not operating as business as usual.

Examples of not acceptable appeals might be:

- We knew about that and were going to fix it.
- We've told EMPLOYEE NAME that lots of times.
- That was an anomaly that this happened.

These appeals can be made at any time during an audit process by following the Appeals Process, but it is recommended to allow the audit to be concluded before making such an appeal.

### Appeals Process

Should an applicant or existing certified company wish to appeal an action taken by ADISA, they can download the page on ADISA's website [Appeals and Complaints - ADISA Certification](#)

This form controls the appeals process and outlines the stages followed for all appeals, which will be emailed to [appeals@adisa.global](mailto:appeals@adisa.global).

When submitted, the appeals form is received by the Directors at ADISA, who will then determine the appropriate team members to respond. All appeals are handled by senior team members who are not directly involved in the activity being appealed.

The form provides an opportunity for additional evidence or context to be presented, allowing the ADISA team member to form an opinion based on all the evidence available.

All appeals are processed as follows:

- Acknowledge receipt of the appeal. (two working days from receipt of email)
- Appoint two senior ADISA team members (who are not involved in the area of the business that refers to the nature of the appeal) to investigate. (two working days from receipt of email).
- Investigate and respond to appeals companies using the Appeals Form. (Five working days from receipt of email)
- If the decision is to reject the appeal, the applicant or existing certified company will receive details of that decision using the same appeals form.

If the applicant or an existing certified company remains unhappy, they can escalate the issue as per the escalation process outlined in this document.

### **Complaints being about ADISA activities or the behaviour of a company certified by ADISA.**

Complaints are typically when an organisation wishes to raise concerns about ADISA's general behaviour or wishes to complain about a company certified by ADISA.

Typically, ADISA can receive notifications of complaints via verbal, email, or web-based means. However, to ensure that all complaints are treated fairly, all complainants are directed to a form on the ADISA website, which must be completed for a complaint to be recorded and addressed.

The form permits anonymous complaints to be made. Where names are shared, these are treated confidentially and are NEVER disclosed to any external parties without written permission from the person making the complaint.

All complaints are processed as follows:

- If a complaint is made from a named person, acknowledge receipt (two working days from receipt).
- Transpose the webform onto a Complaints Form and appoint one senior ADISA team member (who is not involved in the complaint) to investigate. (two working days from receipt of email).
- Determine the validity of the complaint (i.e. does the complaint have sufficient merit to investigate). (two working days from receipt) If the complaint is to be investigated, respond to the complainant to acknowledge that an investigation is to take place.
- Using the Complaints form, the investigator is to follow the process outlined on the form and submit it to the CEO for final approval. (Five working days from receipt of email).

Once signed off, respond to the complainant with findings. If a complainant is not satisfied, they can escalate the issue as per the escalation process outlined in this document.

Where a complaint results in actions being required by companies, then those actions are listed on the Complaints form, and an ADISA team member is appointed to liaise with the company in question and ensure the actions are taken.

## **Vexatious Complaints**

ADISA takes all complaints seriously and at face value commit to fair and impartial assessment. However, in a small minority of cases, some parties choose to make complaints without grounds, based on false pretences or simply to be problematic.

Where a complainant has been deemed to be vexatious, ADISA reserves the right to restrict contact with the complainant but in any such cases, the complainant will be informed citing the reasons why a decision has been made to restrict contact, including details of the arrangements, and the length of time any restrictions will remain in place.

## **Escalation to Independent Impartiality Council**

At any point, if an appeal or complaint has either not been responded to or has not been resolved satisfactorily, then there is an escalation route to an external body called the “Impartiality Council”. This group comprises of external professionals who ensure that ADISA always operates with impartiality and fairness.

To escalate an appeal or complaint, please email [impartiality@adisa.global](mailto:impartiality@adisa.global) and include the documents shared with you by ADISA. The impartiality council operates as per the Impartiality Council Policy which is available on the ADISA website.

ADISA is bound to adhere to the decision the Impartiality Council makes on such matters.

## **Confidentiality Awareness**

When making a complaint and / or appeal, all parties should consider the confidentiality of business data especially data which relates to individuals.

During the internal response to appeals and complaints ADISA pseudonymises data to ensure only critical data is shared with ADISA team members.

When the Impartiality Council is used for escalation, all parties should always be aware of the need for confidentiality as this Council comprises external parties, who whilst under a confidentiality agreement, do not fall under the ADISA data protection regime.

The complainant’s identity and situation will be treated as confidential and not disclosed to anyone other than necessary for the advancement of the investigation. Should disclosure to any third party be required, for example, to the company, which is the subject of the complaint, ADISA will seek approval to do so BEFORE disclosure.

ADISA will always adopt the principle of confidentiality.