

Complaints

Standard Operating Procedure

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1 Purpose

This Standard Operating Procedure outlines the principles and responsibilities with regards to complaints. Furthermore, it describes the process for handling complaints.

2 Application

This Standard Operating Procedure applies to all parties that are involved in the process, including the party raising concern about the FLOCERT customer concerned, FLOCERT Credibility Assurance Unit and any other FLOCERT staff member concerned. Fairtrade International, National Fairtrade Organizations, Producer Networks, Audit Bodies, customers, or any interested party may make a complaint under this procedure.

3 Definitions

A complaint is considered as a formal expression of dissatisfaction with the quality of services delivered by FLOCERT.

The following topics, but not limited to, are considered to fall under the scope of this SOP:

- failure to respond to certification relevant correspondence within a reasonable amount of time,
- unprofessional behavior by a FLOCERT staff or auditor.
- fee related topics (including decertification due to non-payment).

When a customer fills an AuditServiceEvaluationbyCustomer FO and submits it to the Competence Management Unit or sends it directly to the Credibility Assurance Team where three or more statements have been rated with “disagree” or “strongly disagree”, this will automatically be-considered as a complaint.

4 Confidentiality

In general, all submitted complaints will be treated strictly confidentially by the staff responsible to ensure that identities of the parties involved are protected.

Where confidential information from the complainant such as workers, suppliers, buyers, or other stakeholders would reveal the information provider's identity, FLOCERT will:

- Not disclose that confidential information to any other party except the staff responsible within FLOCERT on a need-to-know basis.
- Not use that confidential information in any way that may allow identification of the individual(s) or organization(s) that provided the information.
- Use confidential information to identify which aspects should be investigated and for a better understanding of the complaint brought forward.

5 Process

5.1 Submission

A complaint can be submitted to FLOCERT via various channels:

- via e-mail to credibility@flocert.net
- via FLOCERT website <https://www.flocert.net/submit-an-allegation-appeal-or-complaint/> or
- by phone, emails, WhatsApp, or any other means of communication.

Where writing communication is not possible, the oral one will take place to ensure that the opportunity to express the dissatisfaction with the quality of services is given to everyone. In this case, the details obtained during this communication are documented in writing by FLOCERT and perused verbally or in writing to the complainant.

Complaints will be documented and managed centrally by the Credibility Assurance Unit of FLOCERT, an independent Unit intended to assure impartiality within the system and safeguard the applicability of the procedures on both parties.

Complaints should contain enough information to make investigation possible including, wherever possible, details of:

- the individual involved (name and position)
- the events giving rise to the complaint
- date, time, and location
- relevant communication regarding the complaint should be attached.

5.2 Confirmation

FLOCERT's Credibility Assurance Unit will conduct an initial evaluation of the complaint and within 7 calendar days confirm receipt and inform the submitting party whether the submission contains an actionable complaint, or if the request should be dealt with according to a different procedure such as the Review or Appeal SOP.

Credibility Assurance maintains a log of all Complaints.

5.3 Investigation

The CA Unit is responsible for the investigation of all complaints.

When necessary, the CA Unit will request responsible staff member to assist in the managing of a complaint.

Furthermore, a summary of the feedback from our clients, including all submitted complaints, is presented by the Credibility Assurance Manager in the Management Review Submission Report for the attention of the FLOCERT Leadership Team.

When a complaint concerns Credibility Assurance Officer, the Chief People and Governance Officer is responsible for managing the complaint. In case a complaint concerns the Credibility Assurance Manager, the FLOCERT CEO is responsible for handling it.

5.4 Decision

The decision to resolve the complaint will be made by the Credibility Assurance Team, in case a member of the Credibility Assurance Team is involved in the certification activities related to the complaint, the decision must be made by another team member to avoid any conflict of interest. The decision should be objective, impartial and in line with the applicable FLOCERT procedure.

5.5 Response

The CA Unit is responsible for the investigation of complaints pertaining to FLOCERT services as per section 3 of the current SOP and should reply within 35 calendar days from the day of acceptance of the complaint.

6 References

- CA AppealReview SOP
- CA Allegation SOP
- CM AuditServiceEvaluationbyCustomer FO