

POLICY

This procedure defines how an interested party can present an argument for reversal of a decision with which it disagrees, or to resolve a complaint. This procedure ensures a process whereby either party can receive a fair and equitable handling of complaints, disputes, and a process by which either party can appeal decisions made by either party. It is Carbon Check's policy, in the interests of the Parties that, wherever possible, disputes are avoided and/or their effects mitigated.

1. PURPOSE

To ensure a process whereby either party can receive a fair and equitable handling of complaints, disputes, and a process by which either party can appeal decisions made by either party.

In this procedure, the following terms and expressions shall have the meanings set out below.

Appeals: A client organization's request for a review by an independent appeal panel of various decisions taken by a V & V B in respect of validation and/or verification/ certification functions

Complaints: Formal (written) and/or informal (verbal) expressions of dissatisfaction regarding the performance of a V & V B, from any source, such as the client's organization, the public or its representatives, government bodies, NGOs, etc.

Disputes: Disagreement between a V & V B and the project participant regarding the VVB's recommendation and/or opinions/decisions made at various stages during the validation and/or verification/certification functions.

2. SCOPE

This process applies to receiving, evaluating, investigating, managing, taking the necessary corrective action, and making decisions on disputes, appeals and complaints. It applies to all Carbon Checks staff and management and to all organizations doing business with Carbon Check in the context of Carbon Check's validation/verification and or certification activities.

It applies to disputes, appeals and complaints relating to project participants received by Carbon Check as relating to validation/verification and or certification activities.

This process applies to:

1. Appeal Panel
2. Disputes
3. Appeals
4. Complaints

3. PROCESS OWNER / OVERALL RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTHORITY

The Technical director has overall responsibility and authority for ensuring that this procedure is implemented.

4. PROCESS / PROCEDURE

4.1 Process Inputs

Inputs	Source	Acceptance Criteria
Dispute, appeal, or complaint	Client or Carbon Check or AB	Must be related to Carbon Check services

4.2 Process Outputs

Outputs	Destination/s	Acceptance Criteria
Resolved dispute, appeal, or complaint	Complainant	Resolved

4.3 Process/Procedure Steps

Step	Activity	Responsibility & Authority
1	Disputes Handling Procedure	
1.1	<p>Receiving and logging disputes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Log any dispute received using the Action Form process (Proc 1.1 and FM 1.2 and FM 1.3) - Refer the dispute to the Technical director - Send an acknowledgement of receipt of the dispute to the complainant. <p>Note: Disputes may be received from any source and all need to be evaluated for validity as per the procedures below.</p>	Quality Manager
1.2	<p>Evaluate the dispute</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Obtain the pertinent information from interested parties. - Review the details of the dispute, and if necessary, liaise with the disputing party/ies to gather additional information. - Verify the information provided. - Evaluate the dispute to establish whether it is valid. - If it is not valid: communicate the outcome and justification to the disputing party/ies, and close the Action Form off. <p>If it is valid – continue</p> <p>Criteria for Validity of Disputes Disputes shall be considered valid:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o If it relates to any matter or issue in dispute between the parties arising out of or connected with the contract/letter of engagement (FM 4.3), its existence, implementation, performance, interpretation or termination and includes any dispute as to any opinion, instruction, determination, certification or valuation of Carbon Check. o If it relates to a disagreement or argument between a Carbon Check client and Carbon Check about a decision Carbon Check or Carbon Check’s client has made relating to the object of validation or verification. o If the information provided is successfully verified and found to support the dispute. <p>Disputes shall be considered invalid:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o If the above criteria are not met. o If Carbon Check was acting in a manner necessary to fulfil the applicable GHG scheme requirements and the decision was justified. <p>Note: Personnel, including management, should not be employed to investigate any dispute if</p>	Technica; director and/or Quality Manager

	they have been directly involved in the dispute. Ensuring that the persons engaged in the dispute handling process are different from those who carried out the validation or verification/certification activities.	
1.3	Deal with disputes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Investigate the dispute. Carry out an investigation of the valid dispute to determine the root cause where possible and to decide on appropriate actions. - Decide on what actions are to be taken in response to the dispute. Log the planned actions, with target dates on the Action Form. - Ensure the actions logged are implemented and their success tracked, as below. Ensure all disputes are dealt with in a constructive and timely manner. - Safeguarding the confidentiality of the disputes and subject of the disputes. This process should be subject to requirements for confidentiality, as it relates to the disputes and to the subject of the disputes; - Communicate the decision to the technical director and the disputing party/ies 	Technical director or appointed personnel
1.4	Tracking and Recording Disputes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure the dispute progress is captured onto the Action Form and maintain the Action Form register. - Follow up any overdue actions with the technical director. - Give feedback/progress to the disputing party/ies where feasible - Ensure the information related to the dispute and the disputing party/ies is maintained confidentially 	Quality Manager
1.5	Dispute Outcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On completion of the investigation and actions as identified above, inform the disputing party/ies of the outcome of the investigation and the final notice of the end of the disputes handling process. - Maintain a record of disputes. 	Quality Manager
2	Appeals Handling Procedure	
2.1	<p>If any entity wishes to appeal the dispute decision, it must submit a formal written appeal.</p> <p>Once the appeal is received, Carbon Check initiates steps necessary to appoint the Appeal Panel comprised of at least three members . The persons engaged in the appeal process differ from those who conducted the validation or verification/certification, including the technical review and final decision-making</p> <p>Refer to the Carbon Check Appeal Panel Terms of Reference (Proc 8.1)</p>	Technical director and/or Quality Manager
2.2	<p>The appeals process must ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An independent appeal panel is responsible for the appeals process - the persons engaged in the appeals process differ from those who carried out the validation, verification or certification activities - the submission, investigation and decision on appeals do not result in any discriminatory actions against the appellant - Tracking and recording appeals, including actions undertaken to resolve them if the investigation points towards a non-conformance, then appropriate correction and corrective action are taken to eliminate the gaps in the system - Safeguarding the confidentiality of appellants and the subjects of the appeal. - Providing the progress on appeal investigation and handling to the appellant and providing information/notice on final decision - Ensuring that the final decision shall be made by the independent appeal panel 	Appeal Panel

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - shall make publicly available a description of the appeals-handling process upon request, - shall be responsible for all decisions at all levels of the appeals-handling process, - Ensuring that, if the investigation points towards a non-conformity, appropriate corrections and corrective actions are taken to eliminate the gaps in the system, especially if the investigation points towards any gaps in the system and should be registered in Action Form register. 	
2.3	The decision of the Independent Appeal Panel is forever binding in the matter under appeal.	All
2.4	Should the appellant still be dissatisfied after having gone through the appeal process as described above, then Carbon Check is compelled to advise the appellant of the option to complain to the Board.	Technical director
3	Complaints Handling Procedure	
3.1	<p>Receiving and logging complaints</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Log any complaint received using the Action Form process (Proc 1.1 and FM 1.2 and FM 1.3) - Refer the complaint to the technical director, - Ensure that those who handle the complaint are different to those who carried out the validation or verification. - Send an acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint to the complainant. <p>Note 1: Complaints may be received from any source and all need to be evaluated for validity as per the procedures below.</p> <p>Note 2: Investigation and resolution of complaints shall not result in any discriminatory actions.</p>	Quality Manager
3.2	<p>Evaluate the complaint</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review the details of the complaint, and if necessary liaise with the complainant to gather additional information. - Evaluate the complaint to establish whether it is valid. - If it is not valid: communicate the outcome and justification to the complainant, and close the Action Form off. <p>If it is valid – continue</p> <p>Criteria for Validity of Complaints</p> <p>Complaints shall be considered valid:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o If the complaint relates to validation or verifications carried out by Carbon Check o If the complaint relates to actions carried out or caused by Carbon Check o If these actions are contrary to the requirements related to validations and verification as defined by the applicable GHG scheme requirements, legislative requirements and/or the Carbon Check manual and procedures. <p>Complaints shall be considered invalid:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o If the above criteria are not met o If Carbon Check was acting in a manner necessary to fulfil the requirements listed above 	Technical director and/or Quality Manager
3.3	<p>Investigate the Complaints and take action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Carry out an investigation of the valid complaints to determine the root cause where possible and to decide on appropriate actions. - Log the planned actions, with target dates on the Action Form. - Ensure the actions logged are implemented and their success tracked, as below. 	Technical director or appointed personnel

3.4	Tracking and Recording Complaints <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure the complaint progress is captured onto the Action Form and maintain the Action Form register. - Follow up any overdue actions with the technical director. - Give feedback/progress to the complainant where feasible - Ensure the information related to the complaint and complainant is maintained confidentially 	Quality Manager
3.5	Complaint Outcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On completion of the investigation and actions as identified above, inform the complainant of the outcome of the investigation and the final notice of the end of the complaint. - Maintain a record of complaints 	Quality Manager
4	General	
4.1	Management Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Include disputes, appeals and complaints in the Management Review, as per FM1.12 	Technical director
4.2	Publication of the Complaints, Disputes and Appeals Procedures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure Carbon Check makes all interested parties aware, as and when appropriate, of the existence of the appeals/dispute process and the procedures to be followed. - Publish these on the Carbon Check website, as per Proc 1.5 	Technical director and Compliance Officer
4.3	Pending judicial processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure that any pending judicial processes are logged onto the Register of Pending Judicial Processes (FM 1.13). - Report any cases where the matter is incompatible with Carbon Check's functions as a VVB to the applicable GHG scheme. 	Technical director with Compliance Officer

5. PROCESS METRICS

Measure	Responsibility	Frequency	Use of the data	Target
No. of disputes, appeals and complaints	Quality Manager	Annual	To manage trends in the nature of disputes, appeals and complaints.	Not more than one per year that are attributable to Carbon Check actions.
Reasons for disputes, appeals and complaints	Quality Manager	Annual	To manage trends in the nature of disputes, appeals and complaints reduce repetitive causes.	No target, but monitor trends to reduce repetitive causes.

6. REFERENCES & ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS/SOFTWARE

6.1 Documentation References

Procedure: Action/Problem Management	Proc 1.1
Procedure: Legal requirements management	Proc 1.4
Procedure: Impartiality management process	Proc 6.0
Procedure: Appeal Panel terms of reference	Proc 8.1
Form: Action Form Register	FM 1.2
Form: Action Form	FM 1.3
Form: Management Review Agenda	FM 1.12
Form: Register of pending judicial processes	FM 1.13
Form: Carbon Check Appeal Panel Terms of Reference	FM 8.1

7. Records Table

Record type/group	Responsibility	Access control/ Confidentiality	Minimum retention period	Disposal method
Records of disputes, appeals and complaints and related correspondence and records	Quality Manager	Confidential	For ever	N/A
Register of Judicial Processes, and all associated records	Compliance Officer	As per Proc 1.4		

8. Revision History

Rev Date	Rev. No.	Brief Details of Changes
Sep 2020	00	New document
Jan 2021	01	Revised in response to NABCB's office assessment concerns
March 2022	02	Revision due to the adoption of ISO 17029 & for the application under ANAB
September 2022	03	Revision in response to concern no. 6 during SA and SE audit by NABCB
December 2023	04	Revision to reflect changes in organization structure