



PROCEDURE FOR COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS ON 4C CERTIFICATION



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Document history

Version	Detail of change	Effective date
V.1.8	No content change to the previous version, only the renaming of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coffee Assurance Services GmbH & Co. KG. to 4C Services GmbH • Verification Companies to Certification Bodies • 4C Lead Verifiers to 4C Auditors • 4C License to 4C Certificate 4C Services GmbH will be managing and operating the 4C Certification System to validate compliance against the 4C Code of Conduct.	November 2018
V.1.7	Update of the section Evaluation of the complaint/appeal	13 th April 2018
V.1.6	No content change, only small updates to adjust to the new organizational reorganization with Coffee Assurance Services operating the 4C certification system: Mediation board replaced by internal mechanism to deal with appeals and complaints on 4C certification.	April 2016
V.1.5	Meeting section 7.13 of ISO17065 (2012).	1st August 2015
V.1.4	Appeals are included	15 June 2015

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1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to outline a clear, transparent and consistent process for cases when there is any complaint and appeal to be filed and handled in the context of certification activities.

2. SCOPE

This procedure applies to complaints and appeals that are related to certification activities received mainly from 4C Units and 4C auditors but also from other parties, such as customers of 4C Services in the context of 4C certification activities.

3. DOCUMENTS

3.1 INTERNAL DOCUMENTS

- 4C Compliant and Appeal form
- 4C Summary of complaints and appeals and their status

3.2 EXTERNAL DOCUMENTS

- Letter or e-mail from the complainant/appellant

3.3 REFERENCES

- 4C Certification Regulations_v2.2_en
- ISEAL Assurance Code v1.0
- ISO 17065 - Requirements for Bodies certifying products, processes and services 2012

4. DEFINITIONS

Complaint - a formal (written) expression of dissatisfaction by any related party about any other party intentionally not following specified rules or regulations or breaching agreement within the certification process.

Appeal - an appeal is a formal (written) request for a review of a decision made regarding the certification issues.

Certification decision - a decision made by the certification function at the 4C Services GmbH regarding the issuance, suspension, withdrawal of a 4C Certificate and lifting of a certificate sanction (suspension/ withdrawal).

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 MANAGING ENTITIES OF 4C UNITS, 4C AUDITORS AND OTHER PARTIES

Managing Entities of 4C Units, 4C auditors and other parties have the right to lodge complaints and appeals when feeling discontent with services or situation in the context of certification or disagreeing with a decision made by any of the party involved.

5.2 4C SERVICES GMBH

- Managing Director - or an authorized person: handles all complaints and appeals on certification decisions that were made by 4C Services authorized staff
- Sustainability Assistants: responsible to handle all other complaints and appeals.

In general, the Sustainability Managers, Quality Assistant and Managing Director at 4C Services:

- Receive complaints and appeals
- Assess the nature of the complains and appeals
- Make efforts to settle the cases within their authority
- Prepare, publish and update a summary of complaints and appeals and their handling status.

6. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCEDURE

When filing for a complaint and/ or appeal, it is helpful to understand the structure of the 4C Certification System described in Figure 1. Complaints and appeals on certification issues are handled by 4C Services. For more information see 4C certification regulations.

6.1 FILING OF COMPLAINTS/APPEALS

A complaint can be filed when:

- An approved 4C Auditor or 4C Services has a conflict of interest.
- A 4C Unit's confidentiality is concerned.
- A certification body team member or 4C Services is not competent to perform their respective tasks.
- A 4C Unit disagrees with the conclusion on their overall result made by the auditor during and/ or after the audit visit.
- An interested party disagrees on the procedure by which a certificate was granted.

An appeal can be filed when:

- A 4C Unit or the member it belongs to disagrees with the certificate decision, including no-/ certificate issuance, certificate suspension, certificate withdrawal
- An interested party disagrees with the certification decision of any 4C Unit of their knowledge
- A 4C Unit is not content with the performance of an auditor or the 4C Services
- A Certification Body disagrees with the decision of the auditor selection process
- A Certification Body disagrees with the decision of termination of their framework contract.
- A Certification Body disagrees with the decision of dis-/ approval of their company and/ or auditors.

Formal complaints and appeals on certification matters must be sent in written form (via email, letter) to the 4C Services office at

Bonner Talweg 59, Bonn 53113, Germany

OR

info@4C-services.org

A complaint or appeal must include the below described parameters. A form may be used (Annex 1: Complaint and Appeal form), or a letter or e-mail with the parameters as long as it includes the below parameters:

- A clear description of the nature of the claim; justification of the claims; and supporting evidence.
- Grounds for complaints and appeals should be reasonable. Note that complaints and appeals lacking clear justification and supporting evidence will be considered irrelevant and will not be processed.
- Supporting evidence

6.2 RECEIVING OF THE COMPLAINT/APPEAL

All complaints and appeals are handled professionally, impartially and transparently. Person(s) leading the handling and resolving a complaint or appeal are not directly involved in the certification activities related to the complaint or appeal.

Within the following five (5) working days from receiving the complaints/appeals, 4C Services acknowledges receipt with initial confirmation of ir-/ relevance of the complaints and appeals and informs of the next steps.

6.3 EVALUATION OF THE COMPLAINT/ APPEAL

- An evaluation of a complaint/appeal based on gathered and verified necessary information is carried out by relevant person(s) at the 4C Services.

- All the complaints that have lacking clear justification and supporting evidence will be considered irrelevant and will not be processed and the complainant/appellant will be informed
- All complaints/appeals related to areas not connected with the certification department will be analysed by the executive director or a relevant staff will be appointed

6.4 GATHERING INFORMATION ON THE COMPLAINT/ APPEAL PROCESS

The person(s)/ organisation directly evolved in the complaint must be contacted for establishing the facts from different sides for as comprehensive a view of the situation as possible.

6.5 DECISION ON THE COMPLAINT/APPEAL

- After gathering the information from a complaint/appeal, the responsible person shall analyse and recommend solutions or actions that needed to be carried out - this process shall not take more than fifteen (15) working days
- The recommendations will be sent to the Quality Assistant, or in case of a conflict of interest then to the Managing Director, for approval
- The 4C Services will implement any subsequent action needed to resolve complaint or appeal.

6.6 COMMUNICATION OF THE OUTCOME OF COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

- Findings and conclusions of the evaluation are communicated to both complainants/appellants and the affected parties within the next fifteen (15) working days after acknowledgement notice has been sent out.
- In case of appeals against certification decisions, regardless the type of certification (initial, addendum, renewal, follow-up, unannounced visit, monitoring visit) of 4C Units in question, their certification status will be on hold (neither certified nor suspended or withdrawn) and no selling 4C Compliant Coffee by those 4C Units is allowed until the final resolution and clear certification status are communicated to all parties involved.

6.7 RECEIVING REQUEST FOR REVISION OF THE CONCLUSION

- The 4C Services will appoint a person in charge of the re-analyses of the complaint

6.8 REGISTER REGARDING COMPLAINTS/APPEALS

- All cases will be analysed at the 4C Services to draw lessons learned, and develop and implement improvement activities

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- For transparency, the 4C Services logs all complaints and appeals on certification matters and generates and publishes an anonymised summary with clear status of settlement.
- Below is the overview table of major steps and corresponding timeline:

Step	Responsible	Maximum process time
Send complaint / appeal	Any person sending a complaint / appeal	Day 0
Acknowledge receipt	4C Services	5 working days as of reception
Gather info, analyse, recommend, share with VQA and MD	4C Services	5 working days as of acknowledging reception
Communicating outcome to the parties	4C Services	5 working days as of acknowledging reception