

A. APPEALS

1. Written appeals with respect to any decision or action taken during the accreditation process shall be submitted to NBE within 30 days of the action or decision.

1.1. The appeal shall clearly state why the customer does not agree with a nonconformance and/or accreditation decision.

1.2. The customer making the appeal (appellant) shall provide any information and other appropriate documentation to support its view.

1.3. When a customer appeals an NBE invoice, the customer shall pay the invoice in full prior to the due date to avoid suspension or cessation of the accreditation process. If the decision is in favor of the appellant, NBE will issue a credit or refund.

2. The NBE appeal process has two levels: Level 1 appeals are evaluated by a panel of NBE staff and/or accreditation assessors and level 2 by members of the Accreditation Council (AC).

3. Level 1 appeals are vetted by a panel of three consisting of NBE staff and/or accreditation assessors who have no conflicts of interest (i.e., not involved in the assessment) and have knowledge relevant to the subject of the appeal. This is normally the level applied to any appeal of a nonconformity or invoice. When appealing an invoice, judgment will be considered final as a result of the Level 1 appeal decision.

4. Level 2 appeals are vetted by members of the AC who have no conflicts of interest and have knowledge relevant to the subject of the appeal. This is the first and only level for any appeal of an accreditation decision. It is also the second level of appeal if either party (the appellant or NBE) is not satisfied with the decision made by the level 1 appeal panel.

5. Level 2 appeal panels consist of at least three members of the AC, with one member appointed as Chair. The appellant shall be informed of the members of the panel and have an opportunity to object to the selections. If the appellant objects to the selection, the appellant shall submit in writing appropriate information supporting the objection.

6. Appeals are not legal proceedings and, therefore, legal counsel will not be permitted to make arguments or ask questions. If the appellant intends to have legal counsel present during the proceeding, the appellant shall notify NBE at least 10 calendar days in advance to ensure sufficient notice to arrange for NBE legal counsel to be present. The cost of NBE legal counsel will be invoiced to the appellant.

7. Level 2 appeal proceedings are conducted remotely and proceed as follows:

- Introductions
- Presentation by the appellant, limited to 30 minutes
- Presentation by NBE, limited to 30 minutes
- Rebuttals, limited to 10 minutes for each party
- Questions from the appeal panel
- Closing at which the chair of the panel shall:

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- Dismiss the parties.

8. Following the level 2 appeal proceeding, the panel members may deliberate without any involvement by NBE or the appellant.

9. The Appeals Panel will formally communicate the decision to NBE and to the appellant in writing.

10. NBE shall make every effort to have the appeal evaluated within 60 days.

B. COMPLAINTS

1. To uphold the integrity of the third-party conformity assessment system, NBE has a formal complaint process to review and handle each complaint received, as outlined in this complaint process.

2. Submittal of Complaints

2.1. Complaints shall be submitted using the Form for Complaint Registration available at www.nbeglobal.org.

2.2. Complaints can be filed by any person or organization and may concern NBE (including contract assessors), an NBE-accredited entity, or an organization certified by an NBE-accredited entity.

2.2.1. Complaints about NBE shall be filed by the complainant using the online complaint form.

2.2.2. For other complaints, it is recommended the complainant first file the complaint directly with the subject of the complaint (e.g., NBE-accredited entity). If there is no satisfactory resolution, then the complainant can file the complaint with NBE. When appropriate, NBE ensures that a complaint concerning an NBE-accredited entity is first addressed by that entity.

2.3. Unless authorized by the complainant, NBE does not disclose the identity of the complainant except when required by law.

3. Responsibility

3.1. NBE is responsible for the complaint process.

3.2. NBE shall assign responsible parties to review the information submitted and determine the validity of a complaint, conduct an investigation (if applicable), and make a decision regarding the outcome of the complaint.

3.3. When appropriate or applicable, NBE is responsible for communicating with interested parties (e.g., complainant, entities named in the complaint) throughout the complaint process, including acknowledgement of the receipt of the complaint and updates on the investigation and the outcome of the complaint, with consideration for the confidentiality for all involved in the complaint.

3.4. NBE is responsible for ensuring that the appropriate revision is added effective date is taken in a timely manner.

4. Complaint Investigation

4.1. The NBE employee designated as the responsible party for the investigation may receive assistance from other NBE employees and/or contract assessors, experts, accreditation council members, or other interested parties during the investigation, as necessary.

4.1.1. Investigation of a complaint may include but is not limited to the following:

- Request for additional information from the accredited entity
- Requirement that the accredited entity carry out its own investigation
- NBE assessment focusing on the concerns related to the complaint

4.1.2. See Annex 1 for details of the process for handling complaints received specific to an organization certified by an NBE-accredited entity.

4.2. When a complaint about NBE is filed, NBE initiates its corrective action/opportunity for improvement process when appropriate and this serves as the mechanism to determine any necessary action.

C. RELATED DOCUMENTS

1. PR-5-02 Procedure for the Records Control Procedure
2. PR-5-03 Nonconformity Control, Corrective and Preventive Actions Procedure
3. PR-5-05 Procedure for the Internal Audit
4. FR-5-07-2 Form for Complaint Registration
5. FR-4-02-1 Confidentiality and Neutrality Commitment of Committee/Board/Working Group Members
6. PR-7-01 Procedure for the Accreditation of Conformity Assessment Bodies

D. REVISION HISTORY:

PAGE NO:	REVISION NO:	CAUSE FOR REVISION: