



COMPLAINTS

QP 22 V:7.0

Internal Information

Document Control

Approval Process

Role	Group or Job Title	Authority
Document Owner	Compliance Lead	Creation
Document Approver	Head of Compliance	Approval
Document User	All Alcumus ISOQAR staff	Use
Document Reviewer	Compliance Lead	Review

Change Record

Revision	Summary	Status	Date
V: 6.0	Updated to reflect current complaints and NC handling on D365. Updated with current complaints handling for overseas locations	Approved	23/08/23
V: 7.0	Update to design and layout. Added flowchart. Removed section for internal nonconformity handling (this is now a separate procedure QP 41). Minor changes to wording. Added escalation process.	Approved	12/06/24

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Introduction

Scope

This procedure applies to all those working under the control of Alcumus ISOQAR.

Purpose

To ensure that complaints received (from whatever source) are responded to quickly, investigated and resolved.

To ensure that effective corrections and corrective actions are instigated in order to prevent recurrence in case of any nonconformity identified

To monitor and report on the progress and handling of complaints.

Definitions

Complaint: expression of dissatisfaction made to an organization, related to its products, services or processes, or the complaints-handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected

Complainant: person, organization, or its representative, making a complaint

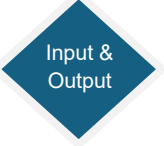
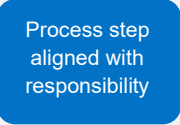




Complaint owner: The person responsible for handling and managing the complaint.

Correction: action to eliminate a detected nonconformity

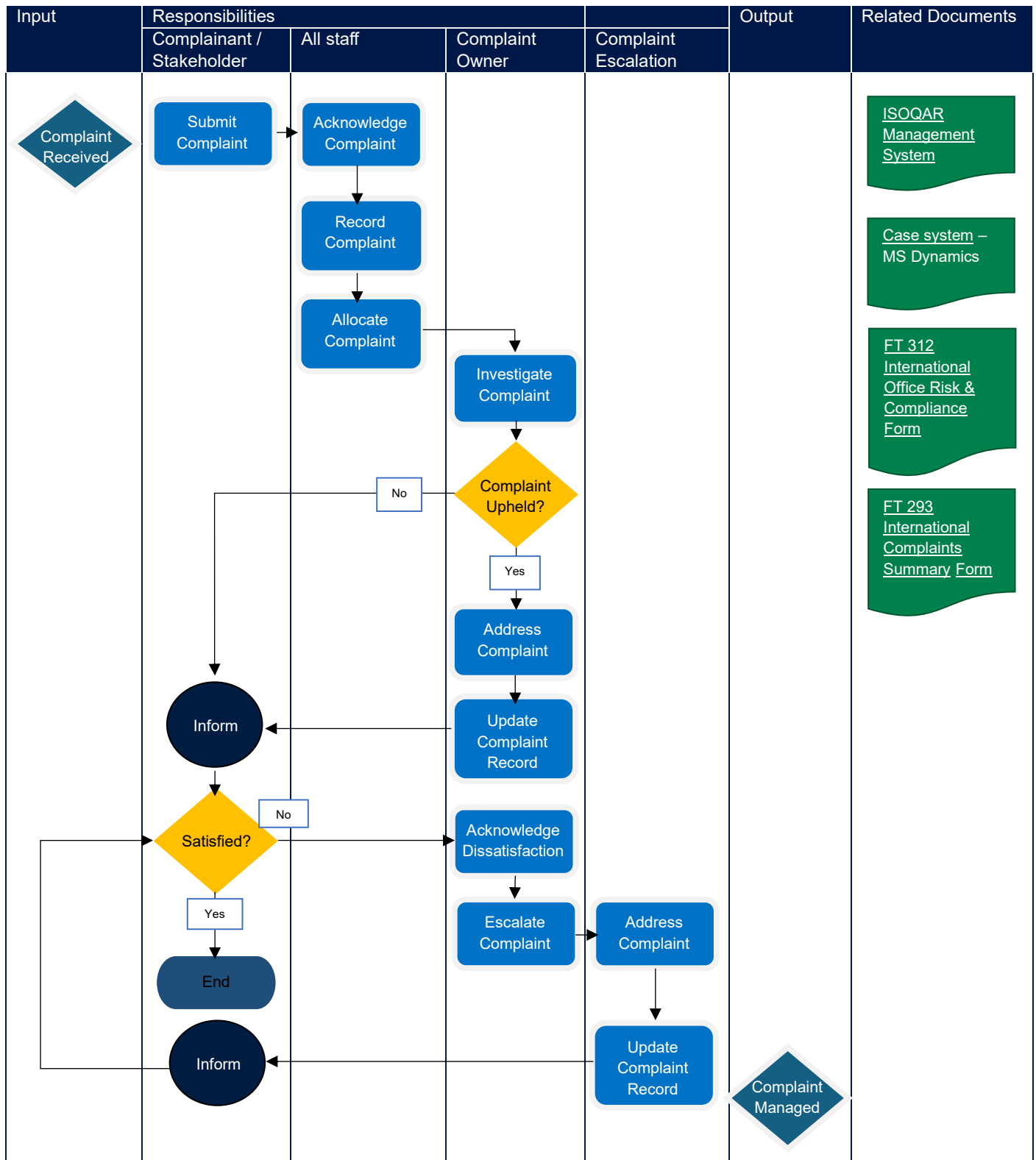
Corrective action: action to eliminate the cause of a nonconformity and to prevent recurrence.

Flowchart

Flowchart key

 <p>Input & Output</p>	<p>Defines the start and end point of the process. Determines the input required to start the process and the required output as a result of exercising the process.</p>
 <p>Process step aligned with responsibility</p>	<p>Describes the action that needs to be taken by the role responsible for that action. Typically, process steps are describes using a verb followed by a noun.</p>
 <p>Decision</p>	<p>Determines that a decision needs to be made by the responsible party to progress with the process flowchart.</p>
 <p>Consulted/ Informed</p>	<p>Determines the interested parties that should be either consulted or informed when exercising the process step.</p>
 <p>Related Document</p>	<p>References other relevant documents that may be critical or useful to executing the process.</p>
 <p>End</p>	<p>Determines the end of the process.</p>

Flowchart



Process

Receiving and recording of complaints

A complaint may be received from different sources such as from a certified client, from a customer of a certified client, accreditation body or any other relevant interested party. This can initially be either verbally or in writing. Every endeavour should be made to deal with the issue raised immediately at point of contact or by transferring it to the most appropriate member of staff. At the discretion of the person dealing with the issue, this may be logged as a “concern” on the system to allow for further actions to be taken and monitoring as required and to the extent necessary.

If it is not possible to resolve the issue immediately, a request should be made to the complainant if they would like to raise an official complaint and to put the complaint in writing with as much detail as possible to enable the complaint handling process and investigation. The complaint handling process should be described to the extent necessary.

On receipt of a complaint the details will be recorded on the system. This will include the following as a minimum:

- o A unique reference number
- o The customer (if applicable)
- o Contact name of the complainant
- o Date the complaint was received
- o Complaint Type (e.g. Client, Consultant, UKAS)
- o Complaint category (e.g. 3rd party against certified client; Audit; Auditor; Breakdown of Process; Cancellation fee etc.)
- o Origin (e.g. Phone, Email etc.)
- o Product, i.e. Standard or scheme – this should be completed only if the complaint is standard or scheme specific. If the complaint is raised by a client who is certified to a standard (e.g. 9001) but is not standard specific (e.g. cancellation fee), the standard is not to be detailed
- o Description of the Complaint

Wherever possible a written response acknowledging the complaint and indicating that the complaint will be investigated will be provided to the complainant. Wherever possible, this response will be sent at the latest within 3 working days of receiving the complaint. This will be logged on to the system stating the name and date of the person.

The complaint will be allocated to the most appropriate member of staff who will be requested and be responsible for gathering and verifying all necessary information to validate the complaint. They will become the owner of the complaint. The person undertaking the investigation will be independent and not be the subject of the complaint.

Complaint handling

The means of the investigations will be determined depending on the nature of the complaint and actioned accordingly. If the complaint relates to a certified client, then examination of the complaint will consider the effectiveness of the certified management system. Actions may for example include:

- o Discussion with any relevant internal and external stakeholders.
- o Visiting either the complainant or subject of the complaint (e.g. ISOQAR client).
- o Undertaking an unscheduled audit or bringing a scheduled audit forward.
- o Investigating the complaint during a scheduled audit.
- o Conducting an internal audit of one or more processes within ISOQAR.

- o Review of documentation and records

An investigation report will be completed as a minimum once the investigation and conclusion is complete, but every endeavour should be made to update it during the course of the investigation. Whenever possible, the complainant will be updated on the progress of the investigation.

Depending on the nature and results of the complaint investigation, ISOQAR will ensure that any appropriate correction and corrective action are taken if applicable. No timescales or targets will be set to resolve a complaint; however, every endeavour needs to be made to deal with the complaint within a reasonable period of time following receipt.

The conclusion of the investigation and any action taken will be communicated to the complainant in writing and if possible, verbally. If the subject of the complaint is a certified client and if the complaint is valid the complaint will be referred to the certified client in question at an appropriate time. The investigation owner shall determine, together with the client and the complainant, whether and, if so to what extent, the subject of the complaint and its resolution shall be made public or communicated to any relevant party involved. Any communication will be subject to any restrictions of confidentiality

Once the complaint is dealt with, the complaint will be marked as resolved stating the date of resolution and by whom.

Submission, investigation and decision on complaints will not result in any discriminatory actions.

Escalation

In case the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution of the complaint, this can in the first instance be escalated to the next most senior and appropriate person who will review the complaint and follow the process to the extent necessary to come to a satisfactory conclusion. If the first escalation point would not be possible or would not come to a satisfactory conclusion, the complainant can choose to appeal the decision made.

If an appeal against a decision on a complaint is made, ISOQAR will form an appeals panel consisting of three senior managers within ISOQAR none of whom have had any involvement in the decision that led to the appeal or the complaint investigation. The panel will review the available evidence and if necessary, undertake further investigation into the complaint. Whenever possible, the complainant will be kept informed by the appeals panel of progress. The complainant will be invited to attend a meeting with the appeals panel in order that the complainant can explain the reasons for the appeal against the original decision.

The panel will on conclusion of its deliberations reach a decision. If necessary, a majority decision will be accepted. The complainant will be informed about the outcome. The decision of the appeal panel will be final and binding on both the complainant and Alcumus ISOQAR.

Monitoring and trend analysis

Status of the complaints will be regularly monitored. In case of any unresolved complaints for a long period of time and no progress visible, the complaint owner will be contacted to provide and updated on the status and update the system accordingly.

A summary of the findings and trend analysis will be reviewed at the management review meeting as a minimum.

Records

Records and evidence will be updated and kept to the extent necessary to demonstrate an effective process in line with this document. As a minimum this will include:

- o Any written correspondence.
- o A written record of any verbal discussions.
- o Any relevant documentations and records.
- o A Log of any action taken and the progress of the complaints handling.

Confidentiality

Where the complaint is against a client of Alcumus ISOQARs the client will normally be contacted and made aware of the nature of the complaint and asked to respond. However, where the complaint is against a client but is of a confidential nature a judgment may be made that it is inappropriate to contact the client. Withholding information at this stage may also be appropriate if a potential breach of the law is indicated in the complaint. A judgment will also be made regarding what information is divulged to any party involved in the complaint; permission will be sought where it is necessary to divulge confidential information in order to make progress with the investigation. The complainant will be informed as part of the communication of the requirement for confidentiality and the possible limitations on the information that can be divulged.

International Office Complaints

Each International Office shall maintain a complaint handling system in line with the requirements of this procedure. The roles and responsibilities shall be decided on by the office, but impartiality must be maintained. The output shall be an auditable trail from receiving a complaint through to conclusion with any relevant records kept demonstrating an effective system. This will be subject to internal audits.

Each International office shall provide a summary of complaints and appeals received via the FT 312 International Office Risk & Compliance Form.

This shall be reported on in six monthly intervals: first week of July for the period 1st Jan – 30th June and first week of January for the period 1 July - 31 Dec. In case of any complaints raised, the office is required to submit a completed FT 293 International Complaints Summary Form in addition to the FT 312.