

Introduction

This procedure is based on the information contained in the current version of ACE operating procedures QM01 – Quality Manual and QOP08 Complaints, Quality Control and Non-Conforming work. It is designed for issue to interested parties (e.g. clients).

Policy

It is the policy of ACE that in the event of a complaint being received from clients and/or other interested parties that it will follow the procedure detailed below.

ACE will aim to investigate any complaint in line with our documented non-conforming work procedures and close out/complete all complaints/appeals in an appropriate time frame (normally a calendar month from receipt of complaint).

Procedure

When a complaint is received the Compliance department should be informed. All relevant staff will be informed via email by the Compliance department and a decision made, if work is on-going, whether the work be halted or if completed that test certificates, reports or surveying reports are withheld from the client until remedial action is taken.

A responsible person will be assigned based on the area and nature of the complaint in order to establish all the facts. If it is believed that there is no fault to be attributed to ACE then a response will be provided in writing to client or other interested party (see Appeals below). If non-conforming work is identified then the responsible person will continue with the investigation.

If non-conforming work has been confirmed any corrective action required should be taken immediately and where necessary, the client notified, and work recalled.

The investigation will attempt to identify the root cause. This will incorporate a review of the following (but not restricted to):

- Actions of individual/groups involved
- Impact and extent of issue
- Training
- Quality Control/assurance
- Reporting/Data entry
- Document control
- Equipment
- Calibration
- Procedures
- Management
- Administration
- Other

In cases where departure from stipulated laboratory procedure is identified as the cause of any complaint, the reason for that departure shall be established and appropriate action taken to prevent any similar recurrence, this may include disciplinary action if necessary.



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Once the person responsible for managing the complaint has identified the root cause(s), they shall inform the Compliance department and a decision made on appropriate action to be taken.

A comprehensive record is maintained of all complaints received together with the corrective and preventative actions taken (if required).

Where an audit's findings cast material doubt on the correctness or validity of the laboratory's test results the laboratory shall immediately notify, in writing, any client whose work may have been affected. This will be logged as a complaint/non-conforming work and investigated as above. All on-going complaints and non-conformances will be reported to senior management at regular Management Meetings.

Once a client complaint or anomaly has been fully investigated, the client will be issued with the findings in the form of a close out letter or email (including notification that if no response is received then the complaint will be deemed to be closed).

Appeals

If the client disagrees with the findings, then they will be invited to appeal against the findings formally within seven days of receipt. All clients that appeal will have the complaint reinstated until a mutual agreement on the outcomes can be achieved. Only once mutual agreement is achieved will the complaint be considered closed and removed from the monthly list for review.

Process Flow Complaint Procedure

