



Author/Owner:	BS Manager	Type:	Procedure
Approved by:	CEO	Revision:	Jul 2024 Rev 5

Scope

This document describes the approach taken to appeals and complaints received in relation to all auditing and certification activities. The procedure applies to all the services provided by CICS Americas Inc.

CICS is responsible for all decisions at all levels of the appeals and complaints handling process and ensures that the persons engaged in the investigation and corrective actions are different from those who carried out the audits.

Submission, investigation, and decision on appeals/complaints shall not result in any discriminatory action against the appellant or complainant.

Responsibilities

The CEO has the overall responsibility to ensure this procedure is sufficiently implemented. As defined in this procedure, the CEO is supported in its implementation by other Senior Management (Sales Manager and Business Support Manager) and the Advisory Board (Appeals Panel).

The CICS Americas Inc. Advisory Board has the responsibility to act as an “Appeals Panel” as defined in the procedure “PR – Advisory Board”. They will hear and consider appeals relating to all the CICS Americas Inc. certification activities. The Advisory Board members hearing each appeal shall be selected from the Advisory Board (other than the CEO) and shall consist of different members, none of whom shall have any commercial interest in the subject of the appeal. The Advisory Board members selected to hear any appeal will be appropriately qualified persons.

Definitions

Appeals: An appeal can be a request by a client or responsible party to CICS Americas Inc. for reconsideration of a decision that CICS Americas Inc. has made in relation to certification.

Complaints: A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, other than an appeal, by any person or organization to CICS Americas Inc. concerning any client or CICS Americas Inc. Service where a response is expected. Any complaint-handling process is subject to confidentiality, as it relates to the complainant and the subject of the complaint.

During an appeals/ complaints process, CICS has defined four (4) figures who will act as:

- a) **Appellant or complainant:** Any person/ entity that submits an appeal or complaint to CICS Americas.
- b) **Recorder:** A member of the CICS Business support staff who will be in charge of receiving the appeal or complaint and logging it into the Internal concerns log for internal control and reviewal.
- c) **Responsible:** A person from CICS Senior Management who will oversee investigating the appeal or complaint and defining correction/resolution. The “responsible” shall be independent of the relevant certification activity and not involved in the subject of the complaint (i.e. auditor carrying out the audit, certification decision maker).
- d) **Approver:** The approver should be a person different from the responsible and should not have been involved in the certification. Generally, the approver would be the CEO or any member of the Advisory board.



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The process for handling appeals and complaints is as follows:

1. Should an appellant or complainant wish to submit an appeal/complaint, they will be encouraged to do so in writing to the email: clientresponse@cics-americas.com, using the “Appeals and complaints” Form provided by CICS on request, supported by relevant facts and data for consideration (documents, records, communications, etc.).
2. The “recorder” will then analyze if it is a valid appeal and complaint and if it has sufficient evidence to start the investigation. Then, he/she will send acknowledgement in writing to the appellant/complainant, as well as further steps. The appellant shall also be informed that CICS “Appeals and complaints” Procedure is publicly available in its [CICS Website](#) and the persons to be initially involved in the process. **Only if this is matter of a complaint**, he will then log the request in the “Internal Concerns” LOG and submit to the “responsible” person for investigation.
3. The “responsible” person will investigate the appeal or complaint and carry out a root cause analysis, identifying and defining corrective actions to resolve the appeal. **Only in case of a complaint**, this information will be recorded using the “Internal concern” form. When investigating the complaint, the root cause shall not necessarily lead to a failure of CICS system, since there could be the case that the appeal/complaint is examined and determined it does not proceed (due to the nature of it or with a valid justification).
4. If the appeal cannot be resolved, then it may be referred to a member of CICS Americas Inc. Advisory Board, if the appellant so wishes. The CEO shall notify the appellant, in writing, of the members of the “Appeals Panel” and the appellant shall have the right to object in writing to the CEO or to any member(s) of the “Appeals Panel”. This process shall also ensure that any decisions do not result in any discriminatory actions against the appellant.

After this has been defined, a meeting with the Advisory Board (*Appeals Panel*) shall be held within 90 clear days of receipt of such notice and the appellant shall be given at least seven calendar days’ notice of the time and place of such a meeting. The decision of the senior manager (or whoever actioned the appeal) shall stand, pending any meeting of the Appeals Panel. At such meetings, both the appellant and the Manager handling the appeal (or whoever actioned the appeal) shall be entitled to be heard in confidence. For practical reasons, pressure on time and expense, any/all appeals will be heard in the US either physically or using any virtual meeting technologies.

The decision of most of the “Appeals Panel” as declared by its members shall be final and binding on both the parties. Once the decision regarding an appeal has been made, no counterclaim by either party in dispute can be made to amend or change this decision.

The Advisory Board is responsible for the review and disposition of appeals and overview of the proper implementation of its decisions.

The Client has the right to appeal the CICS Americas Inc. decision to the appropriate accrediting body. The accrediting body may then review the appeal information and their sole duty shall be to determine whether CICS Americas Inc. appropriately followed this appeals procedure.



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- 5. When the evidence is acceptable, the “approver” will provide formal closure of the appeal or complaint (via the internal concerns log [in case of a complaint](#)) and send a closure letter to the appellant/complainant.

It may be that in some circumstances what was originally seen as a complaint may actually be an appeal in which case the reasons should be recorded.

All CICS AMERICAS INC. Appeals and Complaints shall be documented in the Management Review.

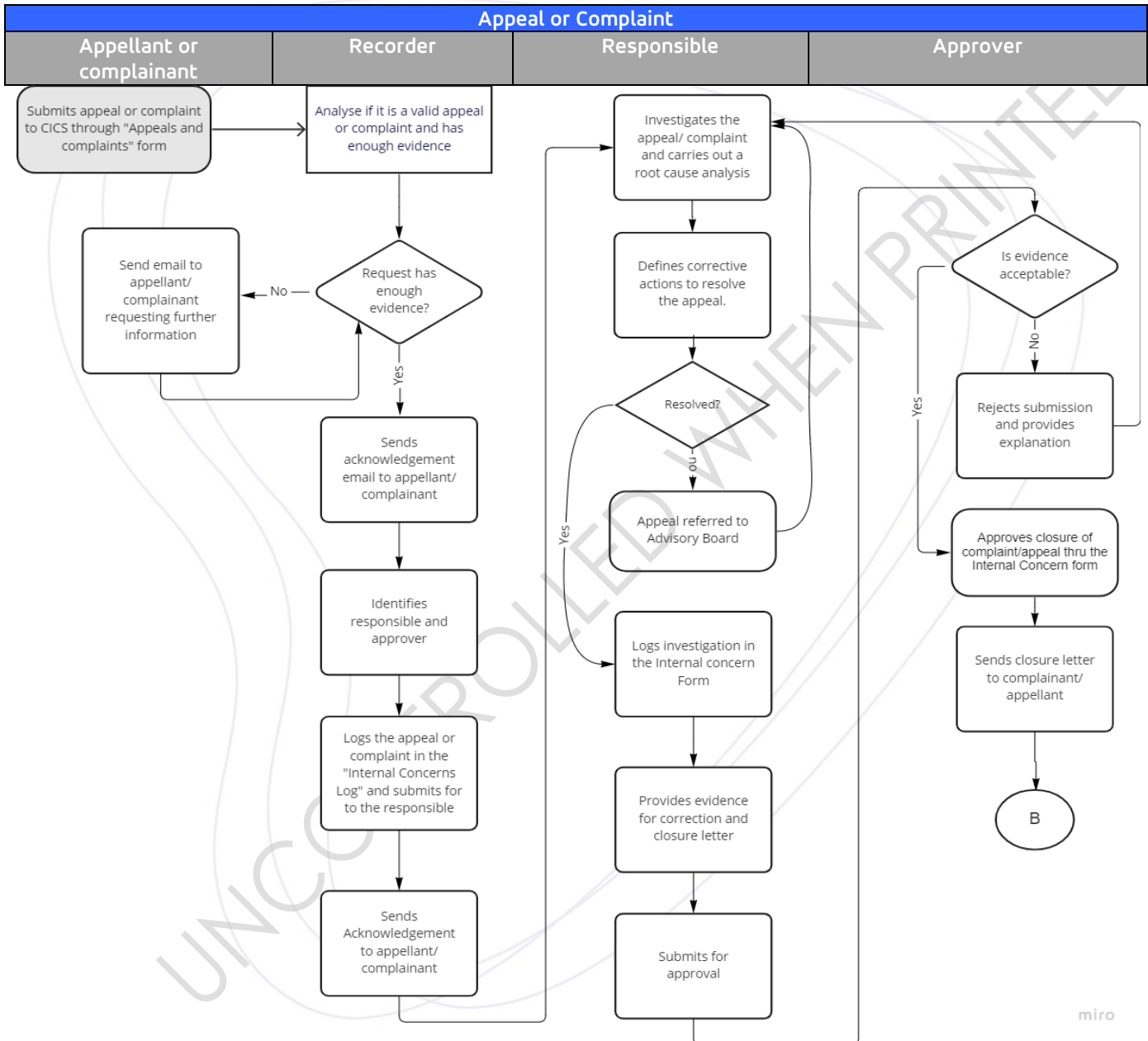


PR – Appeals and Complaints



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Flowchart describing the appeals and complaints processes:



PR – Appeals and Complaints



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Records

Record	Responsibility	Location	Period
Appeals and Complaints form	Recorder	CICS Americas Inc. Database	10 Years
Internal Concern form	Responsible	CICS Americas Inc. Database	10 Years
Appeals and Complaints Closure letter to Appellant/Complainant	Approver	CICS Americas Inc. Database	10 Years

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