

## Complaints , Appeals and Disputes

**Corporate Procedure:** GIPL\_CPRO05\_ComplaintsAppealsandDisputes\_V1-1\_280619

**Authorized By:** Sachin Raj Jain, Managing Director      **Approval Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup> July'18

### 1. Scope

This procedure covers the complaints, appeals and disputes addressed to GICIA India Pvt. Ltd (hereinafter referred as GIPL). In response to the assessment actions, recommendations that follow, and the role of the personnel involved in reaching a conclusive settlement on account of an appeal.

### 2. Objective

GIPL has a policy to give utmost importance to the complaints and appeals. It feels complaints are good source of feedback and useful in taking corrective action for improvements of its activities.

GIPL respects the right of persons and entities to disagree with the decisions of GIPL and to prefer an appeal for the reconsideration of its decision.

The objective of this document is, thus, to provide a strong, impartial and transparent mechanism for dealing with complaints and appeals.

### 3. Terms and Definitions

For the purpose of this procedure, unless the context otherwise stated, the following definitions shall be applicable;

#### 3.1 Appeal:

Appeal is defined as an “Appeal against a Certificate Decision or a request made by a client for a formal review of a decision taken by GIPL in respect of its validation and/or verification/certification activities.

#### 3.2 Appellant:

Person, organization or its representative, making an appeal.

### **3.3 Complaint:**

Complaints is defined as - A documented complaint received against either GIPL or a GIPL's Certified Organization within the scope of certified Quality Management System. Any expression of dissatisfaction other than appeal, made by a person, organization or its representative, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected from GIPL.

### **3.4 Complainant:**

Person, organization or its representative, making a complaint

### **3.5 Dispute:**

A disagreement or argument.

## **4. Process**

### **4.1 Process for Handling of Complaints, Appeal and Disputes**

- a) GIPL is open to receiving complaint/appeal/dispute from any sources. The complaint/appeal/dispute can be against personnel involved in the Certification process or Certified Client. The complaint/appeal/dispute must be made in writing to the Quality Assurance Manager or designee with complete details of complainant (name, address, organization, detailed description and proposed action to rectify the matter etc.). If the complaint/appeal/dispute has no details of the complainant or the description is not adequate, GIPL will reserve the right of dealing with the complaint/appeal/dispute as deemed fit. GIPL can investigate the reports appearing in media, if relevant.
- b) Once the complaint/appeal/dispute is received, GIPL shall provide an initial response, including an outline of the proposed course of action to follow up on the complaint or appeal, within two (2) weeks of receiving a complaint or appeal.
- c) The designated personnel shall maintain a record for the complaint/appeal/dispute that is received to GIPL. The designee personnel assign the appropriate registration number to the complaint/appeal/dispute as per the Document Control System in GIPL. The important dates viz. date of receipt of complaint/appeal/dispute, date of acknowledgement and date of disposal including date of final closure shall be recorded in Complaint File.
- d) Initial scrutiny of the complaint/appeal/dispute is done by the designated personnel. This is to determine that the complaint/appeal/dispute falls within the ambit of GIPL activities and whether the complaint/appeal/dispute prima facie holds ground.

- e) If it is found that the complaint/appeal/dispute does not fall within the ambit of GIPL the complaint/appeal/dispute is considered closed and the complainant is informed accordingly.
- f) If the complaint/appeal/dispute falls within the ambit of GIPL and the initial information provided in the complaint/appeal/dispute is enough, the complaint/appeal/dispute is investigated further as deemed fit.
- g) The entire handling process of the complaint/appeal/dispute should respect and maintain confidentiality, non-discrimination and avoid conflict of interest and maintain complete impartiality. GIPL shall retain the anonymity of the complainant in relation to the client, if this is requested by the complainant. GIPL shall treat anonymous complaints and expressions of dissatisfaction that are not substantiated as complaints as stakeholder comments and address these during the next audit.
- h) In the event that the relevant governing body of GIPL service has its own complaint, appeal and/or dispute procedures, the governing body's requirements may supersede the GIPL procedure. A complainant shall be offered the opportunity to refer their complaint to specific accreditation board, if the issue has not been resolved through the full implementation of the GIPL's own procedures, or if the complainant disagrees with the conclusions reached by GIPL and/ or is dissatisfied by the way the GIPL handled the complaint. As the ultimate step, the complaint may be referred to specific scheme owner.
- i) Depending upon the nature of the complaint/appeal/dispute, GIPL reserves the right to charge a fee to cover at least a portion of the costs of the investigation. Such fees will only be considered in situations where the time and/or resources required to investigate the complaint/appeal/dispute is expected to be substantial. Failure to agree to pay these additional charges or to otherwise cooperate in the investigation of the complaint can be grounds for termination of certification or loss of verification/validation status.
- j) GIPL shall investigate the allegations and specify all its proposed actions in conclusion to the complaint or appeal within three (3) months of receiving the complaint or appeal;
- k) The complaint/appeal/dispute received by GIPL can be classified into three categories:
  - against applicant/ certified Client
  - against Assessors/Experts/ Committee Members
  - against GIPL officials

## **4.2 Process for Handling of Complaints:**

- a) On receipt of complaint, designated personnel shall discuss with the concerned officer dealing with that department and the case is investigated accordingly.
- b) If required, a hearing with the complainant or clarification form the concerned may be taken.
- c) The complainant shall be informed about the action taken by GIPL If the complaint is found invalid, the complainant is informed accordingly.
- d) The complaint shall be resolved within 30 days to 120 days of its receipt.
- e) The investigating authority shall record its decision.
- f) If the complainant is not satisfied, he/she may go for an appeal against the decision.
- g) Records of complaints shall be maintained by the Quality Assurance Team and details shall be reported in the next management review meeting.
- h) Submission, investigation and decision on complaints shall not result in any discriminatory actions against the complainant.
- i) Regardless of the outcome of any complaint, the complainant and GIPL will each meet their own costs.
- j) The anonymity of the complainant shall be maintained.

#### **4.3 Process for Handling of Appeals**

- a) Any person or entity not satisfied with any decision of GIPL may prefer an appeal.
- b) Appeal shall be made by the appellant within 30 days of the receipt of decision, indicating the specific decision appealed against.
- c) Managing Director of GIPL may, however, condone the delay beyond 30 days, if satisfied about the genuineness of the reasons for delay.
- d) GIPL shall acknowledge immediately the appeal and make an entry in the appeals register.
- e) Designated personnel shall inform the managing director about any appeal received and may request him to set up a meeting of eminent persons including Managing Director, CEO/Management Representative, Quality Assurance Team and technical experts. Any person who was associated with the processing of decision appealed against shall not be involved in the meeting. The members of this meeting shall have the authority to call for any

relevant papers, evidences, give opportunity of being heard in person to both sides or consult any expert on the subject, if felt necessary. After considering the relevant facts, shall evaluate, verify and record its decision. The decision of the appeals committee shall be based on a simple majority and shall be final.

- f) GIPL shall convey the decision to the appellant. The communication shall include formal notice to the appellant of the end of the appeals-handling process.
- g) GIPL shall take follow up action, including any corrective action as per the decision of appeals committee.
- h) Records of appeals shall be maintained, and details reported at the next management review meeting.
- i) Submission, investigation and decision on appeals shall not result in any discriminatory actions against the appellant.
- j) GIPL shall resolve the appeal within 60 to 120 days of its receipt, quality assurance manager or designee shall record and communicate the same to appellant.

#### **4.4 Process for Handling Disputes**

- a) If the complainant/appellant rejects the proposed decision or action related to GIPL service, it shall be considered as dispute and GIPL Quality Assurance Manager (or designee) will provide notice of the dispute to the GIPL top management(Managing director and CEO/Management Representative) within seven (7) business days of receipt of the complainant/appellant's rejection.
- b) GIPL Quality Assurance Manager (or designee) will convey the formal dispute file in which all materials and correspondence associated with the formal appeal, including the proposed decision or action, to the top management.
- c) Top management of GIPL shall select a Dispute Panel to consist of Managing director himself, CEO/Management Representative, Program Manager, Quality Assurance Manager and at least one technical expert who is independent of the:
  - i. certification evaluation at issue;
  - ii. associated certification decision; and
  - iii. day-to-day implementation of the policies of the relevant GIPL services.
- d) The formal dispute file, including all evidence provided by the complainant/appellant, along with the proposed decision or action prepared by the GIPL's Quality Assurance Manager (or designee), will be provided to the corresponding Dispute Panel.

- e) The Dispute Panel shall, at its sole discretion, request additional information by telephone or written correspondence of the parties. Based on its review of the facts, the Dispute Panel shall then prepare a written report of its findings, which shall be submitted to the Quality Assurance Manager, the complainant/appellant, and any additional affected parties. The quality assurance manager shall submit the resolution report within 120 days of receipt of the notice of dispute and the same should be communicated to all relevant parties and recorded in specified file.

## **5. Responsibility**

Responsibility of handling of complaint/appeal/dispute rests on the Quality Assurance Team under the supervision of Managing Director and/or CEO/Management Representative.

## **6. Contact Us**

For any complaint/appeal/dispute please write a mail to us at [complaincell@gicia.org](mailto:complaincell@gicia.org)