

MSC Complaints Procedure

Marine Stewardship Council

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Purpose

This procedure sets out the steps to be followed to submit a complaint about activities within the scope of the MSC programme.

Scope

- 1.1 The MSC will address any formal complaint that is brought to its attention. A complaint may be from any stakeholder regarding MSC's standard setting activities, other actions or inaction of the MSC or other activities of the MSC.
- 1.2 This procedure does not cover complaints about misuse of the MSC ecolabel. If misuse of the MSC ecolabel is suspected, an email should be sent to ecolabel@msc.org.
- 1.3 Any complaints about MSC I shall be dealt with under the MSC I Complaints Procedure. Please refer to this.
- 1.4 Any complaints about ASI shall be dealt with under ASI complaints procedure available at http://www.accreditation-services.com/document_management.html.
- 1.5 Any complaint about an accredited certification body shall be dealt with under the certification body's own complaint procedure or shall be raised to ASI.

2. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

- 2.1. All terms and definitions are set out in the MSC/MSC I Vocabulary.

3. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTATION

- 3.1. Checklists, Templates Complaints file
 Personnel File
 MSC I Complaints Procedure
 MSC Crisis Procedure

4. RECEIVING COMPLAINTS

- 4.1. To be accepted and classified by the MSC as a formal complaint, it shall:
 - 4.1.1 be in writing (complaints@msc.org/letter/fax);
 - 4.1.2 state that it is a complaint;
 - 4.1.3 be submitted in English. Other languages may be accepted by the MSC on a case by case basis;

<i>Document:</i>	MSC Complaints Procedure		Page 1 of 5
<i>Author:</i>	NV	<i>Approved by:</i>	AM
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- 4.1.4 be specific and include appropriate objective justification and evidence to substantiate any claim (credibility).
- 4.2. Complaints based upon hearsay will not be accepted by the MSC and the MSC will ask for further information from the complainant.
- 4.3. Upon receipt, the S&L Director or their delegate shall ensure the complaint meets the general criteria set out in 4.1 and 4.2 above within 5 working days of receipt.
- 4.4. If it meets the criteria, the S&L Director or their delegate shall perform a risk assessment, using the criteria set out in Annex 1.
- 4.5. If the complaint is rated as very high risk, the MSC's Crisis Procedure shall be triggered.
- 4.6. The complaint shall be acknowledged in writing and the complainant informed whether the complaint has been accepted for investigation or rejected by the S&L Director or their delegate within 5 days of its receipt. If accepted, the complainant shall be informed of the next steps for considering the complaint. If rejected, they shall be informed of the reasons why.
- 4.7. Once accepted the S&L Director shall report the complaint to the SMT within 2 days
- 4.8 Each accepted complaint shall be entered by the S&L Director or their delegate on to the Complaints File attached as Annex 2.

5. DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

- 5.1. The S&L Director shall allocate each complaint to an 'investigator' within 10 days of receipt of the complaint for investigation, according to the following criteria
 - 5.1.1. The investigator shall not be the one(s) complained about.
 - 5.1.2. The investigator can be more than one person working as a team,
 - 5.1.3. At least one member of which shall, subject to this section, be from amongst the SMT team.
 - 5.1.4. Depending on the nature of the complaint, such as a complaint giving rise to a conflict of interest, the S&L Director shall appoint an investigator independent of the MSC.
- 5.2. A copy of the complaint, with all correspondence, shall be passed to the investigator. In all cases the investigator shall not be involved with the complaint.
- 5.3. The investigator may contact the complainant to determine the full nature and extent of the complaint and to obtain any additional information from whatever source, including the complainant and other stakeholders, if necessary.
- 5.4. The investigator, having reviewed all information, shall also perform a risk assessment using the criteria set out in Annex 1.
- 5.5. If the complaint is rated as very high risk by the investigator, the MSC's Crisis Procedure shall be triggered.

<i>Document:</i>	MSC Complaints Procedure	Page 2 of 5
<i>Author:</i>	NV	<i>Approved by:</i> AM
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<i>File:</i>	O:\QMS - Quality Management System for MSC\CURRENT QMS Documents - Word\MSC Complaints Procedure version 1.doc	

- 5.6. The investigator shall determine whether the complaint has merit or whether the complaint has not borne out as a situation needing corrective actions. The decision shall be recorded in the Incident log.
- 5.7. The investigator shall determine the cause of the complaint and, after investigation, shall set up an action plan to correct the cause of the complaint and prevent its reoccurrence. This shall be approved by the CEO and entered by the investigator in the Complaints File. All relevant documentation shall be saved in the complaints folder.
- 5.8. The investigator shall send the complainant an estimated timeframe for dealing with the complaint and keep them informed of the progress of the investigation.
- 5.9. The investigator shall ensure that the MSC follows the action plan. The CEO shall verify that the corrective action has been effective and if so, close out the complaint. This shall be recorded in the Complaints file.
- 5.10. The S&L Director or their delegate shall notify the complainant that the complaint has been addressed and will explain what actions have been taken, within 10 days of the complaint being closed.
- 5.11. If the action plan required by the investigator is not completed by the MSC, the investigator shall report the matter to the CEO for decision.
- 5.12. When completed the Complaints File shall be updated.
- 5.13. If the complaint was against MSC/MSCI personnel and upheld, a copy of the correspondence shall be filed in their Personnel File.
- 5.14. There is no provision in this procedure for an appeal against a decision on a complaint.

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