

## PROCESSES: COMPLAINTS, APPEALS AND DISPUTES

### 1 COMPLAINTS

#### 1.1 Purpose

Complaints arising from grievances are received from clients and users of the services of SABS Commercial as well as from organizations and members of the public who may consider that SABS Commercial has not fulfilled its duties and obligations.

#### 1.2 Scope

This section covers all complaints and concerns from persons or organizations from outside the SABS Commercial with regards to matters arising from the SABS Commercial's activities, as well as complaints raised by one BU to another (internal complaints).

#### 1.3 Informative reference

CSP120: SABS Customer Complaint handling system (utilized for SABS Corporate complaints).

#### 1.4 Definitions

A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction with the service received by a person or organization from SABS Commercial, which relates to the operational activities or service delivery of SABS Commercial;

An appeal is defined as a request by a Certified Company for the reconsideration of a decision that was made by SABS Commercial, that are not acceptable to a person or organization that was affected by the original decision;

A dispute is defined as a disagreement that arises out of the contractual agreement or the interpretation thereof between SABS Commercial and the organization that entered into an agreement with SABS Commercial;

A consumer complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction with products and/or services received by a consumer from a company which has been certified by SABS Commercial.

#### 1.5 General Rules

**SABS COMMERCIAL SOC Ltd.** Reg. No. 2000/013581/07

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a) The General Manager/ Regional Manager/ Senior Manager is responsible for drawing the attention of the Executive: SABS Commercial to complaints of such a serious nature as to have wider implications and which in consequence could require action by the Executive: SABS Commercial.

b) In the case of a complaint being registered against a Cluster General Manager, the Accreditation Manager or the Senior Manager Shared Services, the complaint shall be forwarded to the Executive SABS Commercial for allocation to an independent and impartial person(s). The Executive of SABS Commercial shall be responsible for the confirmation of the root cause and the implementation of the corrective action(s).

c) In the case of a complaint being registered against a department, the complaint shall be forwarded to the Cluster General Manager, the Accreditation Manager or the Senior Manager Shared Services, for allocation to an independent and impartial person(s). The relevant GM shall be responsible for the confirmation of the root cause and the implementation of the corrective action(s).

*Rule: Should a complaint be received that could have as a root cause a problem with Standards or Corporate Services, in combination with one or more of the other Clusters of SABS Commercial, the General Manager, Regional Manager or Senior Manager will, after evaluation of the complaint, allocate the complaint to a specific SBU to take the lead in addressing the problem, and to ensure liaison with other relevant BU's or Divisions.*

d) IRQ'S arising as a result of customer complaints shall be investigated to obtain the following objectives:

- To determine the validity of the complaint;
- To determine the root cause of the complaint;
- To determine if there are other customers affected by the cause;
- To notify other customers, where relevant, of the potential effect on the service supplied to them; and
- To determine why the subject of complaint was not detected by the Management system prior to the complaint being lodged and correcting the system to allow for improved monitoring, where relevant

e) A complaint received by another BU shall first be acknowledged within the two day period giving the complainant information as to who will further be handling the complaint, before passing it to the relevant General Manager, Regional Manager or Senior Manager, who will arrange for it to be registered and for an IRQ to be raised. A copy of the acknowledgement shall accompany the complaint.

f) Complaints which have possible legal implications must be referred to the Manager: Legal Services for Advice before any statement is made or correspondence is sent to the complainant. Such advice shall be given within 2 (two) days of receipt of the request by the Manager: Legal Services.

## **1.6 Procedure**

a) Complaints shall be acknowledged in writing within 2 working days by the recipient from date of receipt.

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b) Complaints shall be finalized within 2 weeks (14 days) of receiving the complaint.

c) When the complaint takes longer than 2 weeks to resolve/clear an interim report with a corrective action plan indicating when the final report is expected to be completed. This report shall be sent by the Manager to the complainant.

d) In these cases where the customer complaint has not been resolved and no feedback has been received by Accreditation Management, by the two week deadline date, a reminder will be forwarded from Accreditation Management to the Manager.

The following information shall be included in the reminder:

- i) The IRQ no. and date on which the complaint was registered;
- ii) Two weeks deadline date - this date is fourteen days after date of receipt;
- iii) Request for a copy of the corrective action plan/interim report; and
- iv) Reason why the complaint could not be closed out within the required two week period.

### **1.7 Preparation for closure**

a) The Manager shall issue a formal report to the complainant on completion of the investigation.

b) A customer satisfaction/ dissatisfaction survey form shall be attached to the report, to request feedback.

c) On completion of this process, the Manager will forward the particular complaint with the relevant records to the General Manager, Regional Manager or Senior Manager for approval of corrective action taken.

d) The General Manager, Regional Manager or Senior Manager shall sign the SABS Commercial IRQ investigation form prior to submitting to Accreditation Management for close-out.

e) Records shall be kept of the final conclusion to the complaint

## **2. APPEALS**

Any person or organization that feels him aggrieved by a

a) certification decision;

b) consignment inspection decision;

By SABS Commercial can appeal to the Executive of SABS Commercial and/or where appropriate to the Certification Schemes Impartiality Committee.

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An appeal shall be lodged through the customer complaint system and an IRQ shall be raised to ensure that remedial action(s) will be identified and implemented that will lead to the satisfactory resolution of the appeal. The Accreditation Manager shall ensure that an independent, impartial and competent person is appointed to investigate the appeal, on behalf of the Executive SABS Commercial, to obtain the factual information and to determine the possible root cause(s) of the appeal. The appointed person shall be responsible for the confirmation of the root cause and the implementation of the corrective action(s). Appeals shall be finalized within 30 working days of receiving the appeal. A written response will be compiled and provided to the appellant as proof that the appeal has been formally addressed. Records shall be kept of all appeals and their supporting evidence and documentation. Appeals shall be reported to the quarterly company level management review meeting for monitoring purposes.

### **3. DISPUTES**

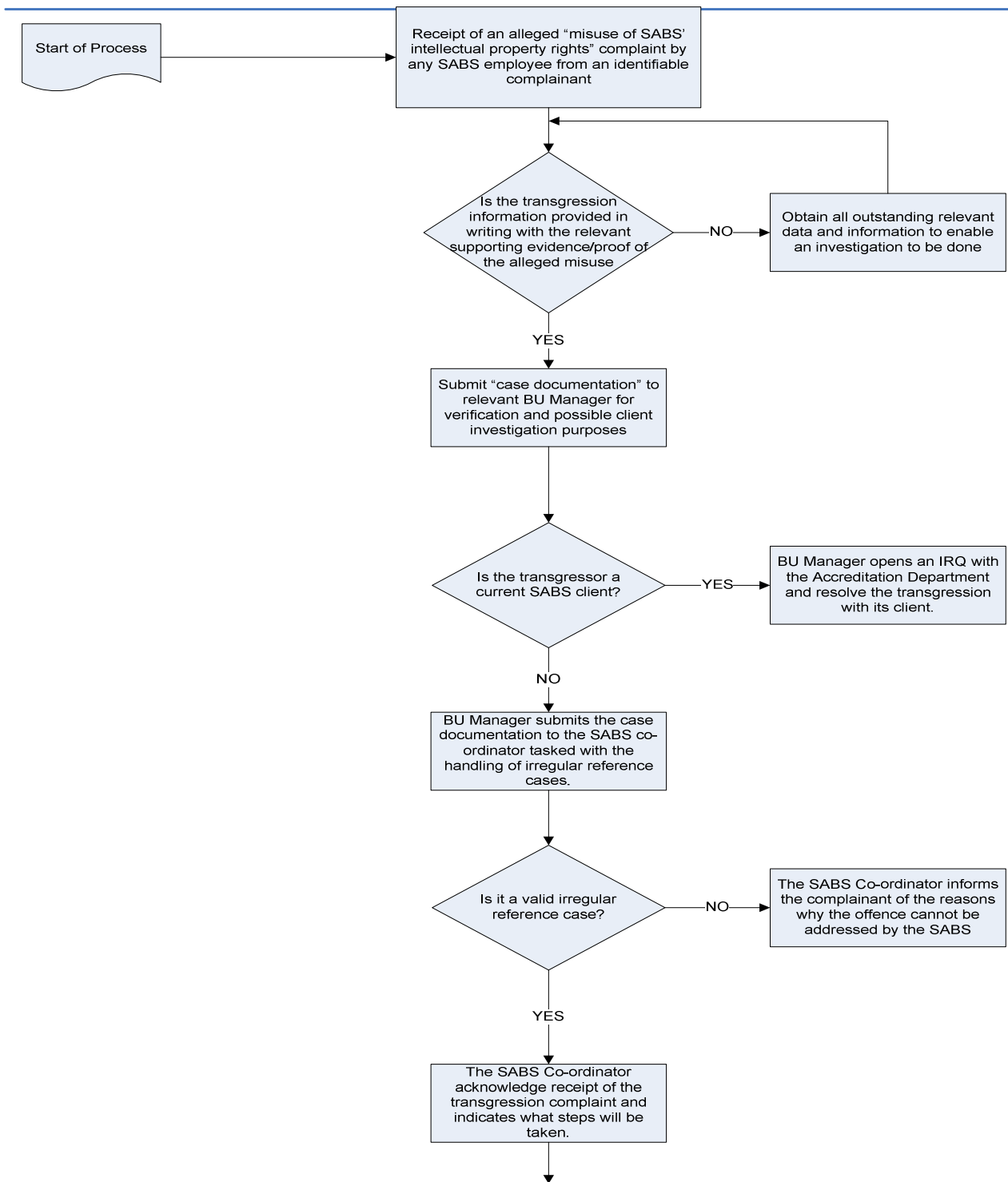
In the event of a disagreement arising out of a SABS Commercial contract, or the interpretation of the contractual requirements and/or obligations therein, the contracting parties must first try to reach an agreement or a settlement before a formal dispute can be lodged. The dispute shall be recorded as an IRQ and be referred to the Executive of SABS Commercial who will endeavor to settle the dispute through bona fide negotiations. In the event that the contracting parties are still unable to reach agreement through the intervention of the Executive of SABS Commercial, the dispute shall then be submitted to and decided by arbitration in accordance with the rules of the Arbitration Foundation of Southern Africa (AFSA), by an arbitrator agreed upon between the contracting parties or, failing agreement, appointed by AFSA. Records shall be kept of all disputes and their supporting evidence and documentation. Disputes shall be reported to the annual management review meeting for monitoring purposes.

### **4. CONSUMER COMPLAINTS**

All Consumer complaints shall be referred to the 'Sales and Customer Relations' department. Currently consumer complaints against SABS Commercial registered companies (Management systems and SABS Product certification scheme) are handled in the same manner as normal complaints, where complaints are received for non-registered issues/products; the complainant will be referred to the SA Consumer Union and/or SABS Legal Department (See flow diagram for consumer complaints).

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# Process – Consumer complaints



# Process Continued

