Complaints, Appeals and Feedback

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PTC | Proficiency Testing Canada

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1.0 Scope

PTC will actively seek feedback from its participants, stakeholders and other interested parties. PTC maintains records of all feedback it receives. This includes feedback that expresses either satisfaction / dissatisfaction, or requests PTC to reconsider a decision that the association has rendered on any subject of concern to the originator of the feedback.

2.0 Definitions

2.1 **Appeal**: request by a person or organization that is a customer or interested party of PTC, for reconsideration by PTC of a decision it has made relating to PT.

2.2 **Complaint**: expression of dissatisfaction, other than appeal, by any person or organization to PTC, relating to the activities of PTC, where a response is expected

2.3 **Feedback**: information about a product, service or individual performance used for the purpose of system improvement.

3.0 Policy

3.1 PTC actively seeks feedback and input to the operation and improvement of its programs. This feedback is reviewed and documented by appropriate staff and changes made accordingly.

3.2 PTC will investigate and adjudicate all disputes and appeals of PT decisions in an impartial and timely manner.

3.3 PTC will acknowledge receipt of Complaints and Appeals and provide outcomes upon completion.

4.0 Procedure for Complaints

4.1 SOURCES OF FEEDBACK

4.1.1 Program Feedback

The following feedback mechanisms are used within PTC:

- PT participants may submit feedback to PTC during each PT round. This feedback mechanism is tracked and the resulting information used within the Proficiency Testing program. The process is documented in PROC09 - *PT Evaluation Procedures*.
- PTC may issue participant satisfaction surveys and other instruments to acquire feedback on the operation of PTC programs. These ad-hoc mechanisms acquire information that is tracked and acted upon by PTC staff. Records of their implementation and use are contained in management meeting minutes, management review minutes and other similar records.
- Feedback can be submitted to PTC using the "Contact Us" feature on the PTC website.
- All other feedback to PTC follows the procedures contained in this procedure and is acquired, tracked and acted upon accordingly.

4.1.2 Compliment

Compliments are acquired and tracked in the F04 - *Feedback Log*. Compliments are forwarded to the Program Officer. At the discretion of the Executive Director the compliment may be circulated to all staff and the Board. Upon agreement with the person submitting the compliment, the nature of the compliment may be disseminated more widely.

4.1.3 Complaint

Complaints are recorded and tracked in the F04 - *Feedback Log*.

A Request to check the accuracy of a PT evaluation is not considered to be a complaint. However, if it is found that the evaluation was incorrect, it is treated as a non-conformance and handled as per PROC02 – *Continuous Improvement*.

Investigation and resolution of Complaints shall not result in any discriminatory actions.

4.2 ACTION UPON RECEIPT OF COMPLAINT

The PTC staff member receiving a complaint is encouraged to resolve it to the satisfaction of the complainant immediately if possible. A record of actions taken shall be entered into the Feedback Log.

The Feedback Log will include at a minimum:

- Feedback number, year and number format (e.g. 2020-001 etc.)
- The date the complaint was received,
- The complainant,
- The issue,
- The employee assigned to investigate/resolve/follow up,
- Summary of the resolution.
- ICAR no. where applicable
- Link to supporting documents/emails.

The Program Officer will review all feedback entered in the feedback log.

If it is not possible to resolve the complaint immediately (within three working days), or if it is necessary to refer it to another staff member for resolution, the staff member who received the complaint shall report it to the Executive Director.

In the event of a significant complaint:

- Staff shall immediately report them to the Executive Director, whether or not they are able to solve the complaint immediately.
- The Executive Director will promptly inform the Board Chair.

A significant complaint is any complaint that, if substantiated, would have a negative impact on reputation, finances or liability.

4.3 INVESTIGATION OF COMPLAINT

4.3.1 Initiating Investigation

The staff receiving the complaint notifies the Executive Director who assigns it to the person who will conduct the investigation. Normally complaints will be investigated within program staff but the Executive Director may opt to include the Board depending on the nature of the complaint.

The investigator documents the courses of action in F04 - *Feedback log*.

In carrying out the investigations, the investigator should consider the following:

- Has the complaint been substantiated?
- Is the credibility of the applicable PTC program affected?
- Was there a breach of PTC Policy/Procedure?

Any **yes** answers to these questions require some action from PTC.

4.3.2 General Conduct of an Investigation

If the investigation of the facts substantiates the complaint, the investigator shall develop potential solutions to resolve the complaint.

If the facts identify any weakness, shortcoming or non-conformance of the PTC QMS, an ICAR is to be raised to address it. See PROC02 – *Continuous Improvement*.

The investigator shall ensure confidentiality is maintained while investigating the issues with respect to complaints.

Investigation of a complaint consists solely of comparing requirements to actual events. The only requirements that can be compared to actual events are those published PTC requirements that affect the required conduct of the organisation or person named as the object of the complaint. Unpublished procedures and policies do not apply.

From this comparison, the investigator is able to establish whether the facts substantiate the complaint.

4.3.3 Resolution Procedure for Complaints

The Executive Director reviews any suggested solutions for implementation. The Executive Director signs off to close the complaint and indicate the implementation of the solution and any raised ICARs.

If implementation of the suggested solution requires more authority than that vested in the Executive Director, then the Chair of the Board of Directors, will be approached to execute the suggested solution.

The Program Officer closes the complaint in the Feedback log.

4.3.4 Review of Compliments and Complaints

Complaints and compliments are reviewed during the annual Management Reviews.

4.4 COMPLETION AND CLOSURE

Compliments are formally passed to the organisation or person being commended.

As soon as the investigation of a complaint is completed, and a decision on the issue of a non-conformance or opportunity for improvement is made, the complainant is notified in writing of these facts. If the complaint is not substantiated, the complainant is referred to the documentation that supports such a decision. If the complaint is substantiated, the complainant is informed of the nature and extent of corrective action taken to prevent recurrence.

5.0 Procedure for Appeals

As the evaluation of participant performance is purely statistical, and published on the PTC website, the questioning of a PT evaluation is not considered an appeal because there is no decision being made. A request to check the assignment of performance for a participant is handled as feedback. Any PTC error resulting in the issuing of a revised report are treated as a non-conformance and handled accordingly.

In general, appeals would be limited to things such as:

- Publishing a new or revised policy affecting participants or interested parties;
- Revisions to evaluation procedures;
- Prohibiting an individual or organization from participation in PTC PT;

Requirements documented in ISO/IEC 17043 or specific A2LA accreditation requirements are not eligible for appeal with PTC.

Investigation and resolution of Appeals shall not result in any discriminatory actions.

5.1 INITIATING AN APPEAL

A participant shall only be entitled to submit a dispute with respect to a PTC decision within 30 calendar days of publication of the decision being appealed.

5.2 APPEALS LOG

All appeals shall be submitted in writing to the Program Officer (or designate), who shall, immediately on receipt, record it in F05 – *Disputes and Appeals Log*.

This Log will include the date of the appeal, the name and participant number (if applicable), the issue, the date resolved, and the decision taken.

The Program Officer maintains the *Disputes and Appeals Log*. The log and the documented appeals form part of the information to be reviewed during the annual Quality System Review in accordance with PROC05– *Quality System Review*.

5.3 ACTION UPON RECEIPT

Appeals that are received will be logged and an investigation will be initiated by the Program Officer (or designate).

In the event that the Program Officer receiving an appeal believes that the issues raised therein may adversely affect the public image of PTC or call into question the integrity or credibility of any PTC programs, the Program Officer shall Immediately report the appeal to the Executive Director, who will also notify the Board Chair.

5.4 INVESTIGATION AND ADJUDICATION

Appeals are initially reviewed and investigated by the Program Officer. The appellant is informed and the resulting outcome is documented as part of the Disputes/Appeals Log entry for each appeal.

The Program Officer then forwards the details of the investigation and proposed outcome to the Executive Director for final approval or further investigation.

Should the Executive Director believe that the reason for the appeal could have a significant impact on the reputation or financial viability of PTC, or if there is a real or perceived conflict of interest between the Executive Director and the appellant, the Executive Director will arrange with the Board Chair to appoint an Appeal Panel of a minimum of two members of the PTC Board of Directors.

The composition of the Appeal Panel is documented by the Executive Director and retained with the appeal. The Executive Director (or designate) acts as secretary to the Appeal Panel but does not get involved in any discussion other than providing objective evidence to the panel when asked. All documentation provided to the appeal panel is edited to remove anything that could identify the appellant.

The Executive Director or the Appeal Panel will decide to either:

- agree with the original decision and deny the appeal; or,
- uphold the appeal and reverse or modify the original decision, or require PTC staff to modify an operational policy.

In considering an appeal of a published PTC policy, the Appeal Panel may only make recommendations. If changes to policies are deemed necessary, the policies will be reviewed and approved by the appropriate person(s) as identified in the Master Document List.

The investigation and the decisions of the Appeal Panel are to be part of the Disputes/Appeals Log entry for each appeal. The decisions of the Executive Director and/or the Appeal Panel are final.

5.5 COMPLETION AND CLOSURE

If the appeal is adjudicated by the Executive Director, the Executive Director (or designate) drafts the correspondence to communicate the decision to the appellant. The Program Officer closes the entry in the log.

If the appeal is adjudicated by an Appeal Panel, the Executive Director (or designate) drafts the correspondence for signature by the Chair of the Appeal Panel, to communicate the decision to the appellant. The Program Officer closes the entry in the log.

5.6 REVIEW OF DISPUTES AND APPEALS

All disputes and appeals are reviewed during the annual management review.

6.0 Forms and Logs

The formats of the forms and logs associated with this procedure are:

- F03 – *Feedback Form;*
- F04 – *Feedback Log;*
- F05 – *Disputes and Appeals Log.*

7.0 History of Changes

Date	Rev. No.	Sections	Changes
12/18/2019	1.0		Initial publication
03/14/2022	1.1		Added Program Officer throughout the document
07/11/2022	1.2		Combined the Feedback and Appeals document
03/30/2023	1.3	3.0 4.1.3 & 5.0	Updated Policy for clarification Added a statement regarding discriminatory action
09/16/2026	1.4	4.1.1	Added feedback submission process