



**Information Management Systems (IMS)**

**Procedures for Responding to  
Complaints and Appeals on IMS Accreditation**

**JIP-IMAC112E-1.3**

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The Japanese version shall be the authorized version.

In the event of any question as to the English version, comply with the original (Japanese) version.

ISMS-AC

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## **1. Scope**

This document specifies the procedures for ISMS Accreditation Center (ISMS-AC) to deal with complaints and appeals related to the accreditation activities.

## **2. Related documents**

### **2.1 Complying standard**

This document complies with the relevant clauses in the following standard.

ISO/IEC 17011:2017 Conformity assessment – Requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies

### **2.2 Normative references**

The following documents contain provisions, which, through references in this text and only to the extent of the reference, constitute provisions of this procedure.

ISO/IEC 17000:2022 Conformity assessment – Vocabulary and general principles

ISO 9000:2015 Quality Management System – Fundamentals and vocabulary

### **2.3 Related standards**

ISO 10002: Quality management – Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations

JIP-IMAC110 Procedures for Accreditation of IMS Certification Bodies

## **3. Terms and definitions**

For the purpose of this document, the relevant definitions in the standards listed in clauses 2.1 and 2.2 and the following definitions apply.

- 1) complaint: lodging of dissatisfaction from individuals/ organizations pertaining against the activities of ISMS-AC, or certification bodies or certification bodies of persons accredited by ISMS-AC, and lodging of dissatisfaction excluding appeals from certification bodies or certification bodies of persons
- 2) appeal: dissatisfaction and request pertaining to the accreditation decision from certification bodies or certification bodies of persons accredited or to be accredited by ISMS-AC
- 3) certification body: a body which certifies organizations' management system
- 4) certification body of persons: a body which certifies persons, and here the term refers to a body which evaluates and registers auditors

- 5) CB: a collective term for certification body and certification body of persons
- 6) organization: an organization certified or to be certified by a certification body that is accredited by ISMS-AC
- 7) auditor: an auditor who is registered or wishes to be registered to a certification body of persons that is accredited by ISMS-AC and an auditor who is formally approved as such by a certification body
- 8) complaints/ appeals handler: a person in ISMS-AC who is appointed by Director of Accreditation Services to handle complaints/ appeals. In principle, Registration Manager shall be in charge of this.
- 9) Conciliation Committee: a board in ISMS-AC which deliberates complaints and appeals
- 10) complainant/ appellant: a person, an organization or their representative who lodges complaints/ appeals
- 11) complaining/ appealing body: a certification body or a certification body of persons which lodges complaints/ appeals

#### **4. How to lodge complaints/ appeals**

##### **4.1 Contact representative**

The following is the contact representative for complaints and appeals.

Registration Manager, ISMS Accreditation Center

##### **4.2 Complaint procedure**

A complainant shall submit a Complaint Form in writing to the contact representative with the details of the complaint identifying the date, the complainant's name and contact details in principle.

Note: Refer to the website of ISMS-AC for how to fill out a complaint form.

##### **4.3 Appeal procedure**

An appellant CB shall submit an Appeal Form in writing (any format is acceptable) in principle to the contact representative in the name of the representative of the CB.

The appellant CB shall notify the intention to appeal within 10 days following the receipt of an accreditation decision notice and send a formal Appeal Form within 30 days. When these due dates are passed, the appeal shall be invalid.

##### **4.4 How to send the Form**

Complaints/ appeals shall be documented and sent by postal mail, facsimile or email. In

case of email, the attachment can be regarded as a document.

The procedure in this document does not apply to telephone conversations or the text of email.

The language for complaints/ appeals lodging shall be Japanese.

## **5. Accepting and handing complaints**

### **5.1 Accepting complaints**

When ISMS-AC receives a complaint form, it shall decide according to Annex A whether to take actions in reference to Annex B – D or to request a complainant to take actions.

- Complaints against the accreditation activities of ISMS-AC – Refer to Annex D
- Complaints against certified organizations/ certification bodies – Refer to Annex B
- Complaints against auditors/ certification bodies of persons – Refer to Annex C
- Cases where ISMS-AC takes actions toward complaints against parties other than itself – Refer to Annex D

### **5.2 Cases where ISMS-AC takes actions**

The complaint handler checks if the content of a complaint meets the conditions for acceptance. If the complaint is determined to be dealt with by ISMS-AC, the complaint handler shall notify the complainant of acceptance in accordance with Annex D. Complaints are classified to be handled as follows. Director of the Accreditation Services decides if the issue shall be dealt with by the Conciliation Committee.

#### **1) Cases where the complaint handler takes actions**

The complaint handler shall check the facts surrounding the case and reply directly to the complainant after hearing the opinions of the accreditation assessors and the parties concerned as appropriate.

#### **2) Cases where the Conciliation Committee takes actions**

When the Conciliation Committee is going to be held to deal with complaints, the complainant shall be notified to that effect.

The Conciliation Committee to deliberate complaints shall be comprised of more than two members including external experts, chosen from the pre-selected members taking into account the content of the complaints. It shall be confirmed in advance that there is no conflict of interest between the members and the case and the confidentiality pledge shall be signed by the selected Conciliation Committee members.

The complainant can inquire about the composition of the Conciliation Committee and submit objection to a specific member if well founded.

The complainant can present its opinion at the Conciliation Committee.

### **5.3 Cases where ISMS-AC does not take actions**

#### 1) Complaints against certified organizations

Complaints against organizations certified by certification bodies accredited by ISMS-AC will not be dealt with in this procedure. ISMS-AC will request the complainant in accordance with Annex B to first lodge it to the relevant organization or the certification body.

When the complainant does not want to lodge directly to the organization or the certification body, ISMS-AC accepts it as a complaint and may request the certification body to investigate the situation. When ISMS-AC finds it necessary, it will notify the CB that a complaint against it has been lodged to ISMS-AC and disclose the information obtained from the complainant with its consent.

#### 2) Complaints against auditors

Complaints against the qualification of auditors registered to certification bodies of persons accredited by ISMS-AC will not be dealt with in this procedure. ISMS-AC shall request the complainant to first lodge it to a certification body of persons in accordance with Annex C.

Complaints against an auditor's audit methodology and ethical issues shall not be dealt with in this procedure. ISMS-AC will request the complainant to first lodge it to the relevant certification body.

When the complainant does not want to lodge directly to the relevant CB, ISMS-AC accepts it as a complaint and may request the CB to investigate the situation.

When ISMS-AC finds it necessary, it will notify the CB that a complaint against the CB has been lodged to ISMS-AC and disclose the information obtained from the complainant with its consent.

#### 3) Complaints against certification bodies or certification bodies of persons

ISMS-AC shall request the complainant to first lodge complaints against a certification body accredited by ISMS-AC to the relevant certification body in accordance with Annex B. ISMS-AC shall request the complainant to first lodge complaints to a certification body of persons accredited by ISMS-AC to the relevant certification body of persons in accordance with Annex C.

### **5.4 Cases which are not subject to this procedure or which are not to be accepted**

#### 1) Cases which don't meet the conditions for complaints

When a complaint form is not adequately filled out or when a complaint does not meet the conditions to be accepted, such as not being relevant to the ISMS-AC's accreditation activities, those cases will not be subject to this procedure.

Cases where the content of the complaint is the same as those on trial or in conciliation process will not be subject to this procedure.

#### 2) Complaints from parties requesting anonymity

Complaints from anonymous parties shall not be accepted in principle. However, as some of the complaints from anonymous parties such as whistle-blowing could be highly credible and have social significance, they could be handled by ISMS-AC not in accordance with this procedure.

#### 3) Cases which are not accepted as ISMS-AC cannot take actions

Apart from the cases of anonymity, cases where a name and contact details are not known or cases which are not obviously deemed to be a complaint cannot not be accepted.

#### 4) Complaints without complainants

When events, incidents or breach of laws and regulations which can lead to a social problem and will adversely affect the operation of the conformity assessment scheme of ISMS-AC are covered by mass media, even though there are no complainants, they could be handled by ISMS-AC not in accordance with this procedure.

### **5.5 Response to complaints and resubmission**

The results of investigation by the complaint handler or the Conciliation Committee shall be sent to the complainant within 30 days.

If the response cannot be provided within 30 days, the latest situation and the scheduled date of response shall be notified to the complainant.

When new facts, evidences and change in the situation arise after the initial submission of complaints or ISMS-AC's response, the complainant can resubmit a complaint within 30 days from receiving a reply from ISMS-AC.

## **6. Accepting and processing appeals**

### **6.1 Acceptance of appeals**

The appeal handler shall check if the content of an appeal meets the conditions for acceptance in accordance with Annex E. If the appeal is determined to be dealt with by ISMS-AC, the appeal handler shall notify the appellant of the acceptance. When the



case does not satisfy the requisite to be handled as an appeal e.g. which is not relevant to ISMS-AC's decision on accreditation decision, it shall not be dealt with in accordance with this procedure or not be accepted.

## **6.2 Deliberation on appeals**

### 1) Cases where the appeal handler takes actions

The appeal handler shall check the facts surrounding the case and reply to the appellant in writing within 30 days after hearing the opinions of the accreditation assessors and the parties concerned as appropriate.

If the appellant body is not satisfied with the reply, the appellant shall contact ISMS-AC within 10 days of the reply from IAMS-AC and request within 30 days for conciliation in the Conciliation Committee. When these due dates are passed, the appellant is deemed to agree to the reply from the appeal handler. ISMS-AC shall send a letter of acceptance in response to the request for actions at the Conciliation Committee.

### 2) Cases where the Conciliation Committee takes actions

The Conciliation Committee to deliberate the appeals shall be comprised of more than two members including external experts, chosen from the pre-selected members taking into account the content of the appeals. It shall be confirmed in advance that there is no conflict of interest between the members and the case and the confidentiality pledge shall be signed by the selected Conciliation Committee members.

The appellant can inquire about the composition of the Conciliation Committee and submit objection to a specific member if well founded.

The appellant can present its opinion at the Conciliation Committee.

ISMS-AC shall notify the appellant of the deliberation results at the Conciliation Committee in writing within 60 days from the acceptance date of the request.

## **6.3 How an appeal affects accreditation assessments and accreditation expiry dates**

When an accreditation assessment is being conducted and it is decided that a CB's accreditation shall be withdrawn, suspended or its scope shall be reduced due to other reasons which are not relevant to the assessment at that time and an appeal is raised against the decision, the assessment shall be suspended. The assessment shall be resumed when the appeal is closed out.

Withdrawal, suspension or reducing the accreditation scope shall be suspended until the appeal against them is closed. When the accreditation expiry date comes around during that period, the extension of the expiry date shall be deliberated in the Accreditation Review Board.

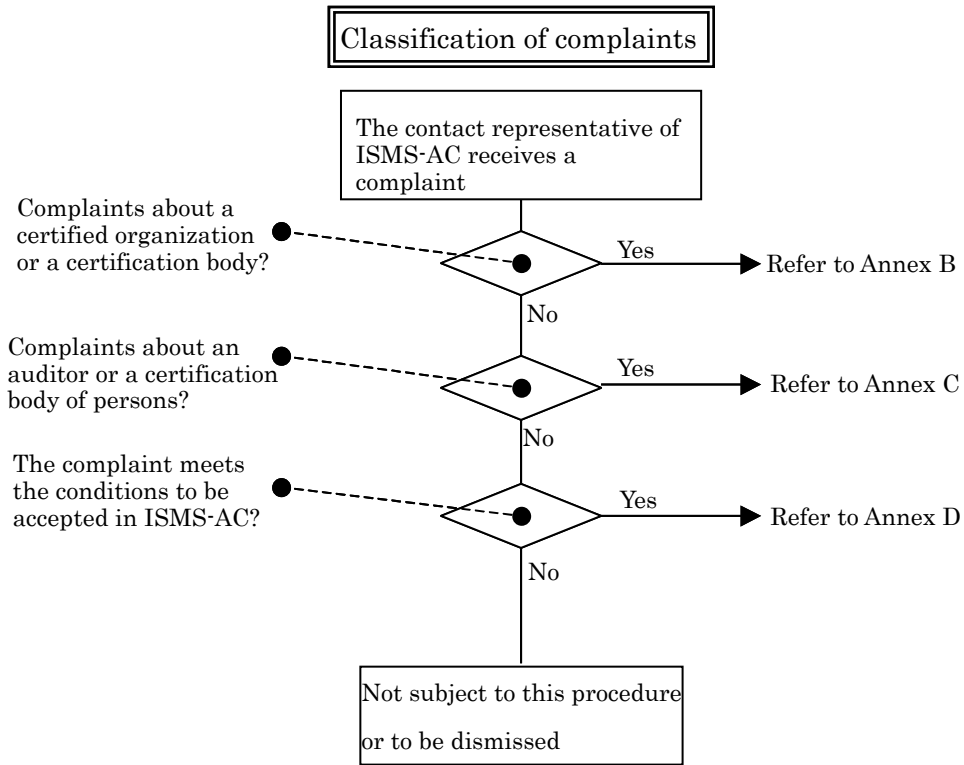
## **7. Disclosure of complaints and appeals**

Complaints and appeals dealt with in the Conciliation Committee and the outline of the results from the actions taken shall be disclosed in principle. Even the cases which were not dealt with in the Conciliation Committee shall be disclosed if deemed appropriate. The name of a complaining/ appealing person, an organization or a CB shall be disclosed where deemed appropriate with the consent of the complainant/ appellant.

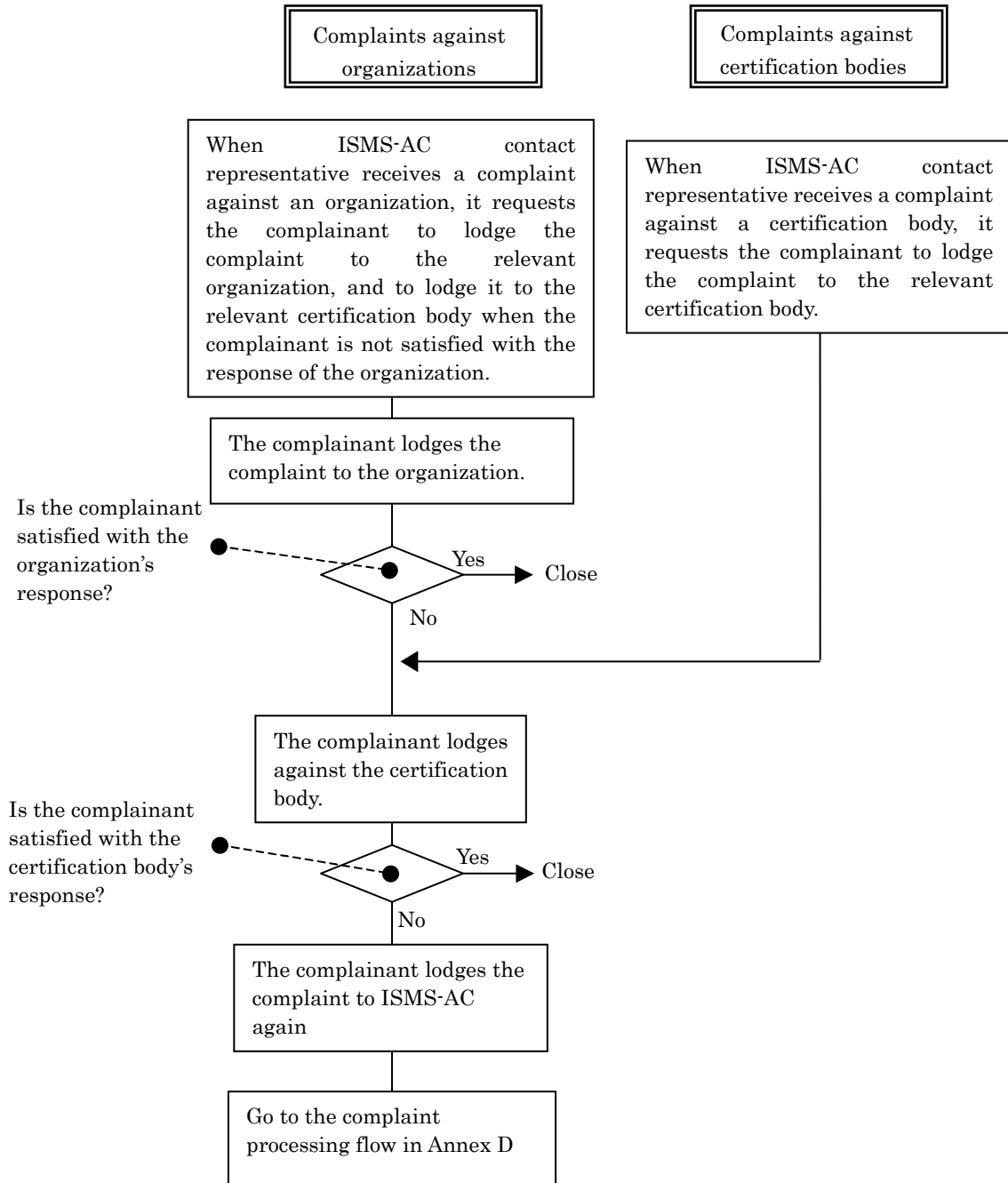
## **8. Records**

The process from the receipt to closure of complaints and appeals, the results and other related issues shall be recorded. Although these records are not to be disclosed, it can be disclosed for investigation required by law and for the evaluation of IAF/APAC and internal audits with confidentiality protection such as nondisclosure agreement. Complaints against certification bodies and certification bodies of persons can be referred to in accreditation assessments with confidentiality protection.

## Complaint Processing Flow

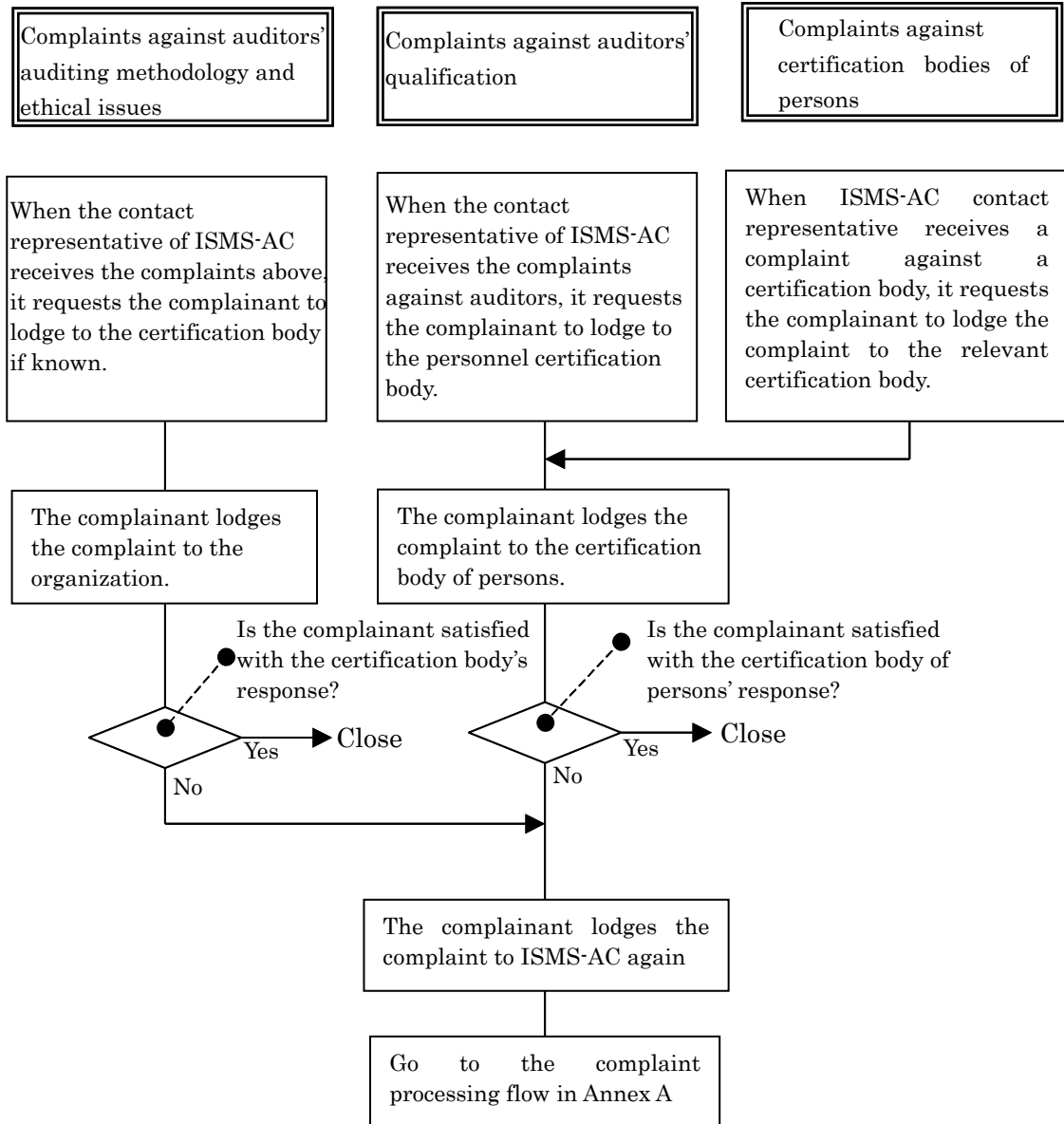


## Processing Flow of complaints against organizations/certification bodies

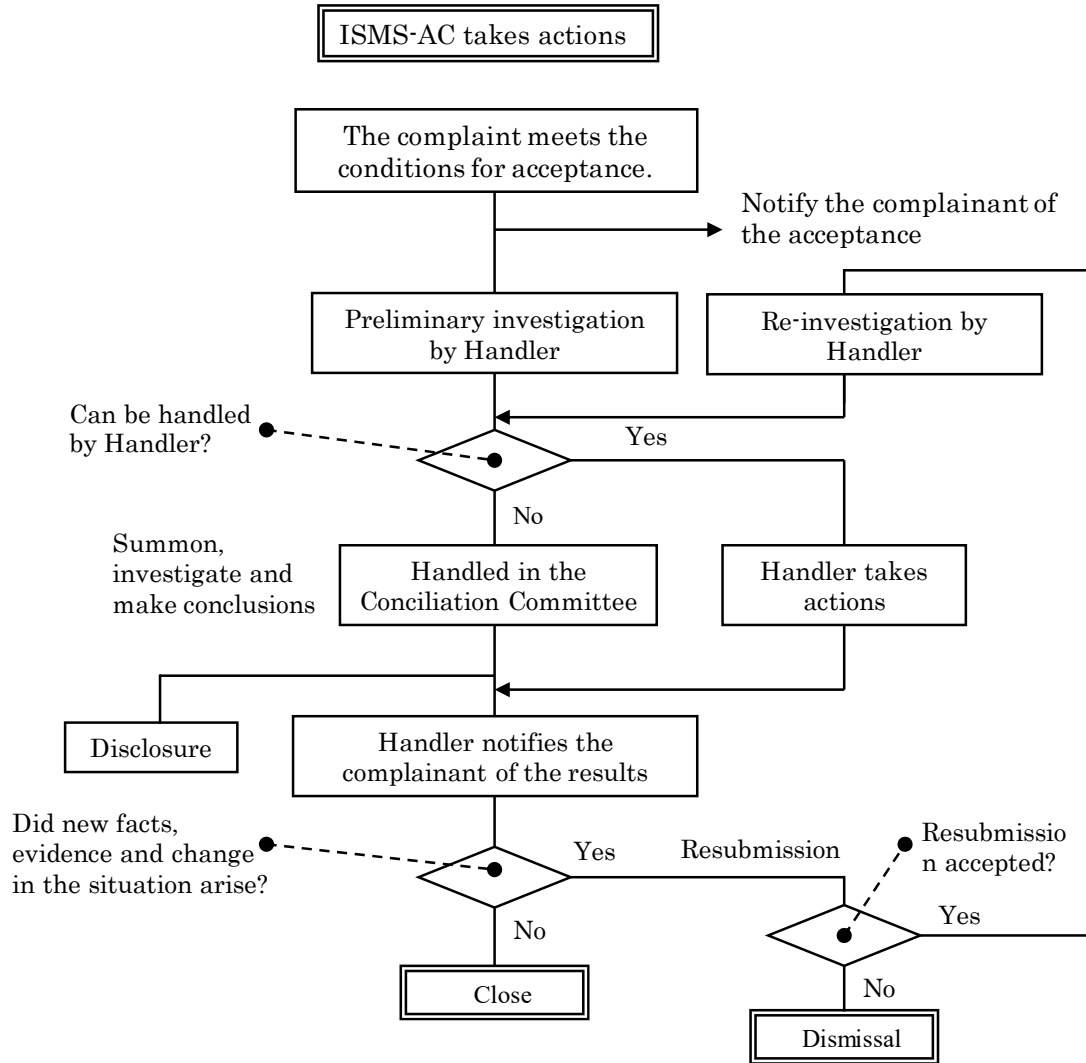


Annex C

## Processing Flow of complaints against auditors/ certification bodies of persons



### Processing Flow of complaints dealt within ISMS-AC



# Appeal Processing Flow

