



# Appeals Policy

POL049-Appeals\_Policy-2024-06-26

<b>POL049-Appeals_Policy-2024-06-26</b>		
REPLACES:	POL049-Appeal policy-2018-10-25	
NATURE OF CHANGE:	Appeals process and responsibilities	
APPROVAL OF THE ORIGINAL DOCUMENT:	BoD	2016-03-04
APPROVAL OF THE CURRENT VERSION:	BoD	2024-06-26

Be sure to have the latest version!

HQAI is constantly developing and improving its tools and procedures. Depending on feedback and learning from experience, these may change. Please make sure you're using the latest version, which can be found in HQAI website.

How to give feedback or contribute to the process?

If you would like to provide comments on this, document, or any aspect of our work, please send your feedback to: [admin@hqai.org](mailto:admin@hqai.org)

## Table of contents

.....	1
POL049 Appeals Policy .....	3
I. Key principles.....	3
II. References.....	3
III. Scope.....	3
IV. Definitions .....	4
1. Overview of Appeals Process .....	4
2. Scope of Appeals .....	4
3. Appeal Panel.....	5
4. Costs.....	5
5. Record Keeping .....	5
6. Reporting of Appeals and Audit Review Decisions .....	5
7. Accountability, Learning and Improvement.....	5

---

## POL049 - Appeals Policy

### I. Key principles

HQAI welcomes all appeals that are within the scope of its appeals policy and procedure. The principles that underpin the appeals system of HQAI and what these mean for HQAI is described below.

1. **Transparency:** communication between the appellant, HQAI and Advisory and Complaints Board (ACB) in relation to an appeal shall be open and honest, unless information must be limited for confidentiality, privacy, safety or other reasons.
2. **Impartiality:** any person handling an appeal shall treat the appeal on its merits and any actual or perceived conflicts of interest must be declared. They shall make decisions based on objectivity rather than bias or prejudice. The appeals process and governance should be able to demonstrate that it is independent from the parties involved in the original decision that is the subject of the appeal.
3. **Confidentiality:** identifying information relating to the appeal should only be made available to people who need to know, and those people should be cognizant of any risks related to the sharing of information. Systems shall be in place to ensure all privacy requirements when collecting and using information.
4. **Fairness:** proceedings shall be fair to all parties to the appeal. In particular, cost considerations shall not be a deterrent for lodging an appeal.
5. **Timeliness:** ACB will endeavour to resolve appeals within a reasonable timeframe and will communicate promptly with those involved in the appeal about timeframes and progress.
6. **Accessibility:** information about how to lodge an appeal to HQAI shall be made available to all auditees and other stakeholders as appropriate.
7. **Efficiency and Proportionality:** Whilst ensuring these principles are upheld, HQAI will efficiently apply methods that are appropriate to the complexity and sensitivity of each appeal.

### II. References

ISO/IEC 17065 - Conformity Assessment Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services (2012)

HQAI GOV001 - Articles of Association

HQAI PRO114 - Third-party quality assurance procedure

HQAI PRO048 - Complaint management procedure

HQAI PRO050 - Advisory and complaint board

### III. Scope

This policy applies to all appeals against quality assurance decisions that are lodged with HQAI. To be within the scope of this policy, appeals must be from auditees about HQAI audit findings and HQAI decisions related to those findings.

Appeals resulting from HQAI's complaint process are not covered by the scope of this policy and described in POL048 Complaints Policy and PRO048 Complaints Process under "Appealing against a Complaints decision".

## IV. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy the following definitions of key terms will apply.

<b>Appeal:</b>	A formal contestation by an auditee of a quality assurance decision made by HQAI about the auditee.
<b>Appellant:</b>	An organisation (or individual(s) authorised to act on behalf of an organisation) who lodges an appeal about HQAI audit findings or decisions.
<b>Auditee:</b>	An organisation that has been audited by HQAI.
<b>Feedback:</b>	A report to HQAI from an auditee in regard to an audit that is complimentary, positive, negative or neutral about HQAI but does not constitute an appeal.

### 1. Overview of Appeals Process

HQAI has robust processes in place through which findings and decisions related to audits are reviewed internally prior to an audit report being approved. As well as internal quality assurance checks, these processes include providing opportunities for auditees to comment on the audit report before it is finalised. HQAI recognises that this process as adding value to the audit report without compromising the integrity of the audit findings and decisions by HQAI. HQAI acknowledges that the thoroughness of the audit report review process serves to reduce the possibility of disagreements about the audit findings and provides a channel through which disagreements can be resolved without the lodging of an appeal.

HQAI shall ensure that auditees are made aware of the processes through which an appeal can be made through different media and at various stages of the relationship. HQAI staff and contracted personnel shall be familiar with the appeals process and able to describe this to auditees as required.

HQAI management is responsible for ensuring that there are processes in place which help to promote stakeholder confidence in the appeals process.

### 2. Scope of Appeals

Organisations that do not agree with a quality assurance decision may lodge an appeal against the decision. A quality assurance decision refers to one or more of the following:

- i) Refusal by HQAI to accept an application
- ii) Refusal by HQAI to proceed with an assessment
- iii) Corrective action requests or identified weaknesses arising from an audit
- iv) Changes in audit scope
- v) Decisions to deny, suspend or withdraw certification, or decisions that levels of compliance with other regulations are not attained
- vi) Any other action that impedes the attainment of certification or independent verification

In order to ensure the principles of impartiality and fairness are applied, all appeals shall be dealt with by the Advisory and Complaints Board (ACB). The role of HQAI in the Appeals process is to:

- Receive and acknowledge receipt of an Appeal
- Cooperate with, provide information and support to the ACB as they consider the appeal as per the request of the ACB.

### 3. Appeal Panel

Appeals shall be assessed by an Appeal Panel which will be convened by the Chair of the ACB (but does not have to include the Chair of the ACB). In considering the appeal, the Appeal Panel has the power to request new evidence through meetings, interviews and review of documentation as they see fit. The Appeal Panel shall:

- Document their findings including their decision using a prescribed format.
- Reach their decision within a reasonable timeframe.
- Convey their decision to the appellant and HQAI.

As far as possible, the Appeal Panel shall keep HQAI and the appellant informed of timeframes for the resolution of the appeal.

The decision of the ACB in considering the appeal is final and whilst HQAI shall record any dissent with the appeal decision it will not consider any further appeal relating to the same or very similar matter.

### 4. Costs

The consideration of an appeal should not involve cost for the appellant and ACB shall seek to reach an informed decision as efficiently as possible.

In rare circumstances, it may be that the assessment of an appeal incurs actual costs, and this could be the case if the Appeal Panel directed an auditor to undertake a review of information. However, no costs should be engaged without prior information to, and agreement with the appellant.

Neither HQAI nor ACB shall be liable to pay for any costs incurred by the appellant in connection with preparing the appeal or providing further evidence etc as requested by the Appeal Panel.

### 5. Record Keeping

HQAI and ACB shall maintain and store confidential and complete records of each appeal it receives in a secure location with restricted access.

### 6. Reporting of Appeals and Audit Decision Reviews

In order to promote transparency and confidence in the appeal handling process of HQAI, the Executive Director shall ensure that a brief report of appeals received by HQAI and a summary of their outcomes is made publicly available on an annual basis.

HQAI recognises the value of oversight of the processes through which HQAI reviews audit decisions in order to promote integrity and learning. On a bi-annual basis the Executive Director shall report to the ACB Chair all audit reviews that have resulted in a change in the original decision of the auditors.

### 7. Accountability, Learning and Improvement

HQAI recognises that appeals are a source of information that can assist the organisation to become aware of shortcomings and identify and implement actions that improve the quality of the services it delivers. The ACB shall regularly review the appeals management process.