



# casco2014



Information for National  
Standards Bodies and Consumer  
Organizations **on complaints**  
**relating to Management**  
**System Standards**



This is designed to help National Standard Bodies (NSBs) and consumer organizations deal with complaints about organizations claiming certification to an ISO management system standard. It is an information toolkit that contains an example of a complaints procedure. A list of useful publications on the certification system, management system standards (MSSs) and conformity assessment is available below. This document should not be seen as a step-by-step description of a complaints procedure but rather as a tool to assist complaints handling at national level to be resolved efficiently. The implementation of any of the suggestions below is at the discretion of the NSB and consumer organization.

ISO receives an increasing number of complaints from consumers about organizations certified to an ISO management system standard (MSS).

As a standards developing organization, we can neither perform, nor arbitrate disputes about certification. However, we can provide support by encouraging and facilitating the dialogue between the complainant and other parties involved, in addition to giving procedural advice to complainants and clarifying the roles of the organizations involved. We believe that more guidance at the national level about the procedure to follow will help solving MSS-related complaints. National standards bodies and consumer organizations can play a key role by offering suitable information to consumers. You can inform on the MSS complaints procedure and on the options available nationally to the consumers to pursue their case.

## Recommendation

In order to help consumers with their complaints related to management system standards, we suggest that you dedicate a part of your website to "MSS complaints handling" with:

- A description of the steps to guide the complainant on how to make a complaint (see **page 7** an example of a typical complaints process)
- A list of options available in your country for finding a resolution to the complaint. See the Standards Australia website (**[www.standards.org.au](http://www.standards.org.au)**) for an example of this type of information (text reproduced in the box **page 8**)
- A list of useful publications on the certification system, management system standards (MSS) and conformity assessment to provide more information to the complainant on the system

To help you with this we have described a complaints procedure you can reproduce on your website and a list of useful publications.



We suggest that you dedicate a part of your website to "MSS complaints handling".

## ISO standards and the certification system

ISO is a standards development organization and as such is only involved in the development of standards. ISO is not in any way involved in the certification of organizations to any of ISO standards. The certification to ISO standards is done by independent organizations called certification bodies. They certify organizations against ISO standards and then they issue a certificate under the name and logo of the certification body itself but referring to the ISO standard e.g. ISO 9001. The certification body is the organization that has issued the certificate and has responsibility for the certificate.

Certification bodies can be accredited. Accreditation is the independent evaluation of conformity assessment bodies against recognized standards to ensure their impartiality and competence. The organization that accredits the certification body is usually the accreditation body of the country in which the certificate is issued.

## Example of a typical complaints process

A consumer complains about an organization that claims to have certification to an ISO management system standard and would like to know how to proceed. The process described explains the different steps that can be followed to address a complaint.

If the certification is valid the certification body will investigate the complaint.

## A complainant

**1)** Submits a complaint to a company that claims to be certified

**2)** If dissatisfied with the answer from the company, the complainant submits a complaint to the organization that has certified that company (a certification body)

The name of the certification body is always mentioned on the certificate of the company. Ask the latter for a copy of the certificate or check its website as this information can often be found next to the certification statement.

**3)** Is the name of the certification body known?

**Yes**

- Check the website of the certification body to follow its complaints procedure
- Submit a complaint
- If the certification is valid the certification body will investigate the complaint
- The certification body investigation leads to a decision on the validity of the complaint

**No**

- Submit the complaint directly to the NSB or consumer organization

*NOTE: The NSB to provide contact points and details of available options for the complainant.*

**4)** If dissatisfied with the handling of the complaint by the certification body, check its website to see if it is an accredited certification body and complain to the relevant accreditation body

## Example of information on Standards Australia website

### Compliance with Australian Standards

Compliance of products and services in the Australian market with Australian Standards is normally voluntary, unless the products or services are regulated by Government. Standards Australia develops Australian Standards but does not have a direct role in ensuring the compliance of products or services with these standards.

Information on which products and services are regulated can be sought from the Australian Government Website. If you purchase a product or service that claims to meet an Australian Standard but you think it does not then the following steps could be considered:

1. Raise your concern with the retailer, wholesaler or manufacturer from which you purchased the product
2. If the product is certified contact the relevant certification body that certified the product
3. Contact the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) or the relevant State or Territory Office of Fair Trading

For further information, visit the ACCC Product Safety Website at: [www.productsafety.gov.au](http://www.productsafety.gov.au) and also the Section on "Compliance with Australian Standards" in the publication "Australia's Standards and Conformance Infrastructure" at: [www.innovation.gov.au](http://www.innovation.gov.au)



## List of relevant publications

On the ISO ([iso.org](http://iso.org)) and International Accreditation Forum ([iaf.nu](http://iaf.nu)) websites you will find many helpful publications on MSS certification. These are intended as background reading.

### MSS certification and benefits of accreditation ([iaf.nu](http://iaf.nu))

- Why use an accredited certification body?
- Expected Outcomes for Accredited Certification to ISO 9001
- Expected Outcomes for Accredited Certification to ISO 14001

### Management System Standards ([iso.org](http://iso.org))

- ISO 9001 – What does it mean in the supply chain?
- Selection and use of the ISO 9001 family
- Quality management principles

### Conformity assessment ([iso.org](http://iso.org))

- Conformity assessment – do's and don'ts

### Consumers ([iso.org](http://iso.org))

- ISO and the consumers

### ISO and standards ([iso.org](http://iso.org))

- + 10 things standard do for SME
- Fast forward – National Standards Bodies in Developing Countries
- VIDEO – What ISO standards do for you on ISO website

## Conclusion

Given the increasing number of complaints ISO receives from consumers about organizations certified to ISO management system standards (MSSs), the availability of a complaints system became key to reach a satisfactory resolution. The NSB's direct involvement in handling complaints at national level will help improve the implementation of ISO MSSs. Using the information provided in this toolkit on your website will give consumers an important source of information that will guide them towards the resolution of their complaints.

The ISO Committee on Conformity assessment (CASCO) has cooperated with the ISO Committee on consumer policy (COPOLCO) to bring you this toolkit.



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**International Organization  
for Standardization**

ISO Central Secretariat  
1, chemin de la Voie-Creuse  
Case postale 56  
CH – 1211 Genève 20  
Switzerland

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