



WEST AFRICAN ACCREDITATION SYSTEM (SOAC)

RECUSALS, COMPLAINTS, AND APPEALS (C07.02)

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1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This document describes SOAC's provisions on the disqualification of assessors, complaints, and appeals.

2 REFERENCES

ISO/IEC 17011, Conformity assessment - Requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies

3 EFFECTIVE DATE AND REVIEW

This document is applicable from the date specified on the cover page. It will be updated as necessary.

4 SUMMARY OF CHANGES

Version 00: creation.

Version 01: revision and update for a new disposition addressed.

Version 02: revision and update for some sections.

5 TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Complaints or claims: expression of dissatisfaction, other than that mentioned under the term "appeal", issued by any person or organization to SOAC and relating to its operations or those of an organization it has accredited, where a response is expected.

Complainant: a natural person or legal entity who expressed dissatisfaction.

Appeal: a request by an accredited organization or candidate for accreditation to SOAC for reconsideration of any adverse decision made by SOAC related to its desired accreditation status.

Mail: electronic mail or hard copy

6 RECUSAL

6.1 Right to recuse

SOAC offers a team of assessors to the organization for acceptance. Within **07 calendar days** from the date of receipt of the proposal, the organization may recuse in writing, all or part of the proposed assessment team, provided that it gives reasons for its position.

6.2 Grounds for recusal

The grounds for recusal are classified into two families:

6.2.1 Conflict of interest

In principle, SOAC replaces the assessor there are problems of independence or impartiality, particularly in cases of direct commercial competition

This ground is not admissible if the assessor is a permanent member of SOAC except for conflict of interest related to previous employment for less than **2 years**.

6.2.2 Behaviour

In principle, this ground is admissible only if SOAC has previously received in writing, from one or more organizations, observations on the behavior of the respondent assessor.

6.3 Treatment of the recusal

SOAC examines the admissibility of the challenge and informs the organization of its position within **07 calendar days**.

If it considers the challenge admissible, it shall propose to the organization a new composition of the evaluation team.

If it considers it inadmissible, it shall inform the body in writing, stating the reasons. The latter has the opportunity to contest SOAC's arguments within **07 calendar days** of receipt of SOAC's letter.

SOAC and the organization must reach an amicable agreement.

The right to challenge, which is in principle not limited, must not lead, by its repetition, to an exceeding of the maximum period between assessments surveillance or renewal, which would, ipso facto, lead to the suspension of accreditation.

7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

7.1 Receipt of the complaint or appeal

The complaint or appeal must be lodged written and addressed to the Director-General of SOAC.

An e-mail can trigger the processing of a complaint or appeal.

When a complaint is expressed verbally, it must be confirmed within **14 calendar days** by letter by providing the information likely to support the request under penalty of suspension of treatment. It is the responsibility of the complainant to provide the justifications and evidence relating to the complaint.

When a CAB challenges SOAC's decision on its accreditation the organization shall have **30 calendar days** from receipt of the accreditation decision to lodge an appeal in writing to SOAC, together with the reasons and justifications.

A complaint or an appeal formulated does not suspend the decision of SOAC.

7.2 Handling the complaint or appeal

According to SOAC Statutes section 13:

- Any member of the Board of Directors or a Technical Committee, in particular, the Accreditation Committee, having been asked to give an opinion on a given file, cannot participate in the decision on the corresponding appeal file.
- Appeals concerning SOAC decisions, including those relating to accreditation, are brought before the Board of Directors.
- Appeals concerning the decisions of the Board of Directors, other than those relating to accreditation decisions, are brought before the General Assembly.
- Complaints other than appeals are handled by General Management, which reports to the Board of Directors at least once a year.

SOAC records the complaint or appeal and notifies the applicant of the receipt of the request within **07 calendar days**.

Upon receipt of a complaint, SOAC verifies whether the complaint is related to its activities, those of its assessors, an accredited organization or a third party. If so, the complaint is dealt with, otherwise, it is stopped and the complainant is informed.

Any complaints about an organization accredited by SOAC should be addressed to the latter. If, however, the accredited organization is unable to resolve the complaint satisfactorily, the case will be referred to SOAC.

The staff selected to conduct the investigation of the complaint/appeal must be independent of the complaint/appeal. The person must investigate the complaint/appeal such as to obtain all the relevant facts relating to the complaint/appeal.

As appropriate, SOAC could involve other parties to the investigation and communicate the information received from the complainant.

SOAC collects and verifies all necessary information to validate the complaint or appeal.

Once validated, SOAC identifies appropriate actions to be implemented to deal with the complaint/appeal and inform the complainant/appellant.

SOAC remains responsible for all decisions at all levels of the complaints and appeals process.

Depending on the complexity and duration of treatment, SOAC informs the complainant of ongoing activities and associated deadlines. At the end of the treatment of any complaint/appeal, SOAC notifies the complainant/appellant of the end of the current process.

Under no circumstances shall analyses and decisions relating to complaints and appeals result in discriminatory actions against the complainant or appellant.

SOAC verifies that all appropriate actions have been taken in due time and monitors the progress of complaints and appeals in order to improve the effectiveness of its provisions.

7.3 Specific provisions for appeals

After examination, the General Management forwards records on the appeal to the SOAC Board of Directors for decision. However, the Board may establish a subcommittee from among its members to consider and respond to the appeal. The decision of the SOAC Board of Directors shall be notified to the appellant within **30 calendar days** from the date of receipt of the appeal by the General Management. During the processing of an appeal, SOAC ensures that the appellant is regularly informed by sending progress reports and the results obtained.

In case of disagreement on the outcome of the decision of the Board of SOAC, the appellant is free to file a complaint against SOAC with AFRAC, IAF, and ILAC.

8 TABLE OF MODIFICATIONS

No.	Source	Modification in brief (Relevant changes)
C07.00- 24 January 2019		
Creation		
C07.01- 30 July 2019		
1	§ 7.2	Section 7.2 has been updated to define the handling process for complaints other than appeals and the periodicity
C07.02- 03 September 2019		
1	§ 1	This section has been revised
2	§ 2	References have been revised in line with the wording of the standards