



COTTON
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AFRICA



CmiA Appeals Committee Guidelines

Version 1 (January 2022)

Introduction

1. The purpose of the CmiA Appeals Committee is to provide impartial, coherent, and evidence-based decisions for Managing Entities appealing against a CmiA licensing decision. The issuing of a CmiA certificate depends on the decision of the CmiA Verification Manager, which is based on the outcomes of the self-assessment and third-party independent verification. Managing Entities (or CmiA Units) may appeal against a licensing decision by submitting a written application, along with objective evidence, within 15 working days of being informed of the cancellation or denial of a CmiA certificate.

Responsibilities of Appeals Committee Members

2. Members of the Appeals Committee are required to commit sufficient time to participate in case-specific appeals procedures. Once they have agreed to join the Appeal Task Force for the case in question, the members must ensure:
 - a) the thorough and timely review of the application;
 - b) proper preparation for the Appeal Task Force meeting;
 - c) participation in the Appeal Task Force meeting; and
 - d) assistance for the CmiA Verification Manager with the write-up of the final decision on the appeal.
3. Members of the Appeals Committee must ensure objectivity and fairness in the discussions and decisions on appeals. Decisions are to be based on the written requirements set out in the CmiA Standard and on the objective evidence provided by the third-party verifiers and by the appellant.
4. Any conflict of interest needs to be transparently declared to the CmiA Verification Manager in advance of accepting an assignment to the Appeal Task Force.

Membership of the Appeals Committee

5. The composition of the Appeals Committee is the following:
 - a) The CmiA Verification Manager, who presents the case to the Appeals Task Force, acts as the moderator, and documents the meeting but does not have a vote
 - b) The AbTF Head of Standard & Outreach
 - c) One other member of the CmiA Management Team without involvement in the verification process
 - d) At least one nominated lead verifier from each accredited assurance provider
 - e) External consultants with a thorough understanding of the CmiA standards system, i.e. at least three years of experience in implementation support for verified partners
6. External members are appointed as individuals, i.e. not as representatives of their organisations or employers. All external members are expected to represent their individual viewpoints during appeals decisions.
7. External members will be selected based on their demonstrated experience with the CmiA standards system and on their confirmed interest and availability to participate. They will be appointed by AbTF's management and will serve a one-year term, subject to extension by mutual consent.

Appeal Task Force Responsibilities

8. Out of a pool of Appeals Committee members, the CmiA Verification Manager appoints a panel of (at least) three members who constitute a valid quorum to resolve each appeal received (this is the Appeal Task Force).
9. Should a member of the Appeal Task Force resign or otherwise cease to be a member, the CmiA Verification Manager will nominate one of the members of the Appeals Committee as a replacement.
10. The CmiA Verification Manager co-ordinates all communication with the assigned Appeal Task Force, organises virtual meetings to discuss each eligible appeal received, and takes minutes of these meetings.
11. Members of the Appeal Task Force follow agreed timelines to review the assigned appeal, including preparation, participation in scheduled meetings, and the finalisation of the decision. The Appeal Task Force decides on the presented case by simple majority vote.
12. To succeed in communicating final decisions to appellants within 25 working days of receiving an (eligible) appeal submission, it is critical that all members of the Appeal Task Force deliver on their agreed responsibilities and deadlines. All decisions of the Appeal Task Force have to be communicated in writing, with a clear rationale outlined for each decision.
13. Members of the Appeal Task Force maintain full confidentiality regarding any information related to an appeal. All information and evidence provided by the appellant, the CmiA Verification Manager, and third-party verifiers to support an appeal application or decision must be considered confidential and must not be shared outside the AbTF Standard & Outreach team and members of the Appeal Task Force.
14. Any questions or concerns around the independence or functioning of the Appeal Task Force, or the legitimacy of an appeal application, should be addressed directly and immediately to the AbTF Standard & Outreach team.

Representation Allowance

15. External members (i.e. not an employee of AbTF) of the Appeal Task Force will be compensated for their time at a fixed rate. This rate must be negotiated before confirming participation in the Appeal Task Force.
16. External members are required to track their hours spent and let the CmiA Verification Manager know if they are in danger of exceeding the estimated time commitment.
17. External members must invoice AbTF within 15 working days of completing an appeal decision.

