



PROCESS FOR PERSISTENT, UNREASONABLE AND HOSTILE ENQUIRIES

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FURTHER INFORMATION

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

This document outlines the process Global Accreditation Cooperation Incorporated (Global ACI) will follow in dealing with and managing persistent, unreasonable and hostile enquiries.

1.2 Scope

Global ACI-MS-004 *Procedure for Handling Disputes, Complaints and Appeals* outlines the process for the investigation and resolution of complaints. This document provides additional guidance on the management of enquiries addressed to Global ACI that are deemed persistent, unreasonable or hostile, and sets out the appropriate actions that Global ACI will take in these instances.

2. GENERAL

- 2.1 It is the duty of Global ACI to receive and manage feedback from users, including complaints and enquiries. All feedback is valued and if appropriate, it is used to identify and implement improvements.
- 2.2 Global ACI aims to treat users in a fair and equal manner, without any preference or prejudice towards them; however, Global ACI does not tolerate persistent, unreasonable or hostile behaviour from enquirers. If this does occur, the necessary action(s) will be taken to protect the wellbeing of Global ACI's personnel and Members, the integrity of Global ACI's processes, and the reputation of the Global ACI Arrangement.

3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 **User:** Employed in its widest sense, to encompass, at a minimum, individuals or organisations who use any of the services of Global ACI, Global ACI Members, or conformity assessment bodies accredited by Global ACI Members.
- 3.2 **Complaint:** Expression of dissatisfaction, other than appeal, by any person or organisation to Global ACI, relating to the activities of Global ACI, Global ACI Members, or conformity assessment bodies accredited by Global ACI member accreditation bodies (ABs), where a response is expected.
- 3.3 **Enquiry:** A request for information or action.

4. IDENTIFYING PERSISTENT, UNREASONABLE AND/OR HOSTILE ACTIONS AND/OR BEHAVIOUR

- 4.1 In applying this process, Global ACI shall first identify that an enquirer is acting unreasonably, persistently or with hostility, before taking any related actions.
- 4.2 Apart from the detail of the enquiry, it is necessary to review both the context and the history of communications with the enquirer in order to identify whether an individual/organisation is demonstrating inappropriate behaviour.

4.3 The following should be taken into consideration to identify whether an enquiry is persistent, unreasonable or hostile.

4.3.1 Factors which might indicate that the enquiry is persistent:

- 4.3.1.1 If requests from the same individual or group of individuals are for information previously provided to them in full.
- 4.3.1.2 If the enquiry aims to reopen issues, without any new information being submitted, that have already been closed with the same individual(s).
- 4.3.1.3 If the enquirer was informed that the issues are not within the scope of Global ACI and has been informed where the enquiry should be directed (when known) but refuses to accept this response.

4.3.2 Factors which might indicate that the communication is hostile:

- 4.3.2.1 If the enquirer uses harassing, hostile, abusive, obscene, racist, homophobic, sexist, ageist, or otherwise discriminatory, offensive or threatening language in written or verbal communications.
- 4.3.2.2 If enquiries are combined with accusations and/or insults.
- 4.3.2.3 If meetings, telephone calls and conversations have been electronically recorded without the prior knowledge and consent of the person involved.
- 4.3.2.4 If the enquirer attempts to coerce or intimidate Global ACI contractors or representatives, or to abuse/distress them via language, tone of voice, body language or other behaviour, during written or verbal communications.

4.3.3 Factors which indicate that the communication is unreasonable:

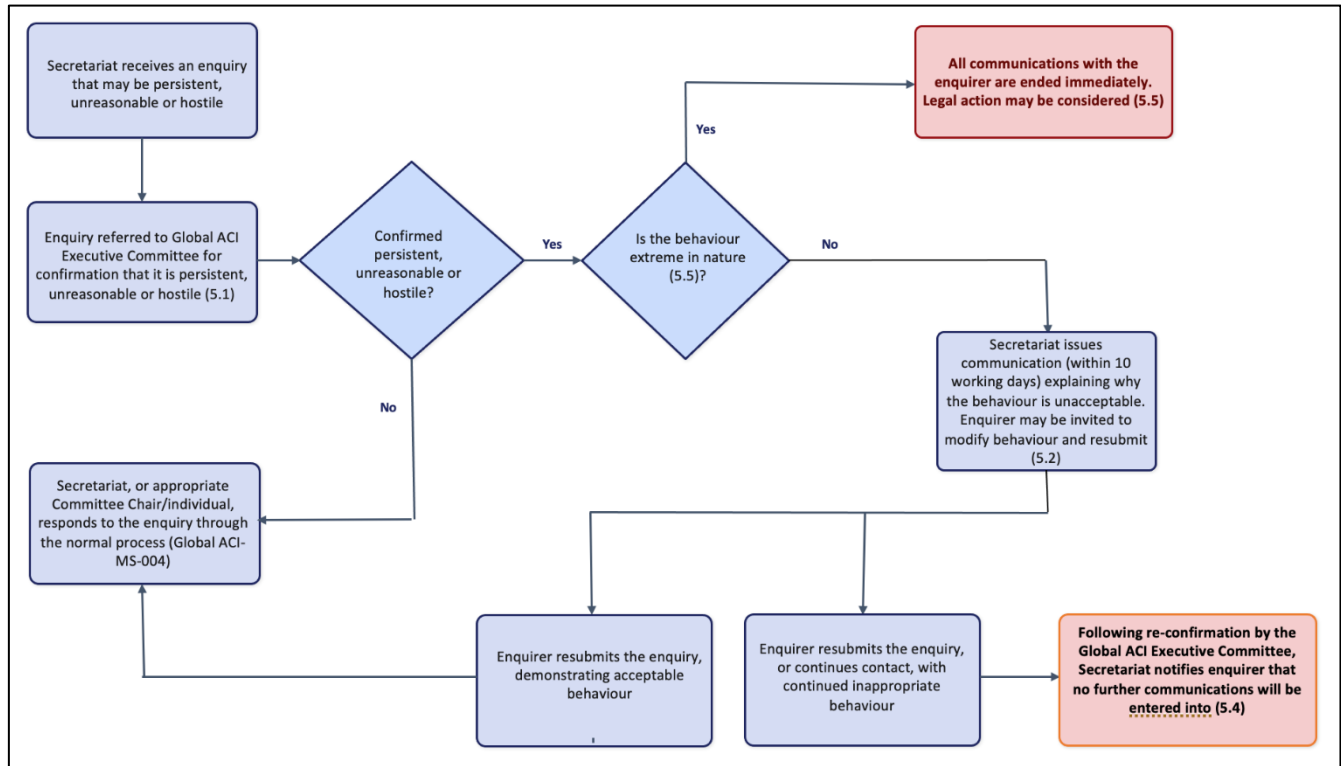
- 4.3.3.1 If an enquiry is subjective with no evidence provided to justify claims made, with no evidence forthcoming following requests by Global ACI.
- 4.3.3.2 If unnecessarily excessive demands are being made on the time and resources of staff whilst the enquiry is being looked into (e.g. making excessive or lengthy phone calls or emails, telephoning or sending emails to numerous staff, writing lengthy complex letters every few days and expecting immediate responses, or otherwise expecting action within an unreasonable time frame) so as to cause an unnecessary burden on the staff.
- 4.3.3.3 If there is persistent contact via multiple channels demanding responses.
- 4.3.3.4 If an enquirer makes unreasonable demands on Global ACI through the amount of information they seek or the nature and scale of service they expect.
- 4.3.3.5 If the enquirer is making false or baseless statements intended to injure the reputation of Global ACI.
- 4.3.3.6 If the enquirer changes the basis for an enquiry as the investigation proceeds without supplying supporting information and/or denies statements made at an earlier stage.

- 4.3.3.7 If the enquirer intentionally supplies evidence or information that is false or manufactured.

5. MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS

- 5.1 If the Global ACI Secretariat receives an enquiry that it considers is persistent, unreasonable, or hostile, it shall be referred to the Global ACI Executive Committee for its confirmation that the enquiry shall be handled in accordance with the process contained within this document.
- 5.2 A response to the enquirer will be sent by the Global ACI Secretariat on behalf of the Global ACI Chair within 10 working days, noting their behaviour and explaining why it is considered unacceptable. The communication will also state that no further action will be taken; however, enquirers demonstrating unreasonable or hostile behaviour may be given the option to modify their behaviour and resubmit the enquiry or complaint.
- 5.3 Initial complaints may be investigated in accordance with the Global ACI-MS-004 *Procedures for Handling Disputes, Complaints and Appeals* even if deemed potentially unreasonable/hostile in nature. In this case the Global ACI Secretariat will alert the individual(s) handling the complaint.
- 5.4 If the inappropriate behaviour continues, following confirmation from the Global ACI Executive Committee, the Global ACI Secretariat shall notify the enquirer that there will be no further communications relative to the enquiry received.
- 5.5 Where behaviour is of such an extreme nature that the immediate safety or welfare of Global ACI staff or representatives is threatened, or otherwise may be illegal, all communications with the enquirer shall be ended and legal action may be considered.
- 5.6 The Global ACI Secretariat shall maintain a register of all enquirers with whom correspondence has been ended in accordance with 5.4 or 5.5 in order to facilitate future decision-making regarding communications.
- 5.6.1 Enquirers with whom correspondence has been ended in accordance with 5.4 may be removed from the register after a period of no less than six years.
- 5.6.2 Enquirers with whom correspondence has been ended in accordance with 5.5 shall not be removed from the register.
- 5.7 If the enquiry is related to a Global ACI member AB, Global ACI shall notify the member of its decision about the cessation of communications with the enquirer.

6. PROCESS



7. AMENDMENT TABLE

Section	Previous Version	Summary of Changes
All	IAF QMS-004:2023 IAF Process for Persistent, Unreasonable or Hostile Enquiries and Complaints	New issue of the establishment of Global ACI