
**Quality management — Customer
satisfaction — Guidelines for dispute
resolution external to organizations**

*Management de la qualité — Satisfaction du client — Lignes
directrices relatives à la résolution externe de conflits aux organismes*



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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see www.iso.org/patents).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation on the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see the following URL: www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 176, *Quality management and quality assurance*, Subcommittee SC 3, *Supporting technologies*.

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO 10003:2007), which has been technically revised.

The main changes compared with the previous edition are as follows:

- alignment with ISO 9000:2015;
- alignment with ISO 9001:2015;
- improved alignment with ISO 10001, ISO 10002 and ISO 10004.

Introduction

0.1 General

This document provides guidance for organizations to plan, design, develop, operate, maintain and improve effective and efficient external dispute resolution for product- and service-related complaints. Dispute resolution gives an avenue of redress when organizations do not remedy a complaint internally. Most complaints can be resolved successfully within the organization, without the need for further time-consuming and more adversarial procedures.

NOTE 1 Organizations are encouraged to develop an effective and efficient internal complaints-handling process consistent with ISO 10002.

There are different methods for resolving disputes and different terms used to describe them. These methods are facilitative, advisory or determinative (see [Annex A](#)). Each method can be used by itself or the methods can be used in sequence.

This document can be used to:

- a) design a dispute-resolution process and decide when to offer dispute resolution to complainants;
- b) select a dispute-resolution provider (hereinafter referred to as “provider”; see [3.9](#)) that is able to meet an organization’s specific needs and expectations.

NOTE 2 Providers from the public and private sectors can take various forms around the world, including industry-sector specific associations, ombudsmen and multi-sector associations.

While this document is directed towards organizations, providers can also benefit from knowing what guidance is being given to organizations. Providers can also use the guidance in their dispute-resolution process.

Organizations are encouraged to plan, design, develop, operate, maintain and improve a dispute-resolution process in conjunction with a customer satisfaction code of conduct and internal complaints-handling process, and to integrate them with the organization’s quality or other management systems.

This document can assist individuals and organizations in evaluating the effectiveness, efficiency and fairness of an organization’s dispute-resolution process. Implementation of this document can:

- provide flexible dispute resolution that, in comparison with court-based processes, can be less expensive, easier and quicker, especially in disputes across borders;
- help to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty;
- provide a benchmark against which individuals and organizations can evaluate claims by organizations and providers that they operate in an effective, efficient and fair manner;
- help to inform potential users of dispute resolution about the conditions of access, cost and the legal consequences;
- enhance the ability of the organization to identify and eliminate causes of disputes;
- improve the way complaints and disputes are handled in the organization;
- provide additional information that can contribute to improvement of the organization’s products, services and processes;
- improve the organization’s reputation or avoid damage to it;
- improve domestic and international competitiveness;
- provide confidence of fair and consistent treatment of disputes throughout the global marketplace.

NOTE 3 External dispute resolution can be the subject of statutory and regulatory requirements.

NOTE 4 The satisfaction of persons or organizations that could or do receive a product or a service from a public or a private organization is the focus of this document.

0.2 Relationship with ISO 9001 and ISO 9004

This document is compatible with ISO 9001 and ISO 9004 and supports the objectives of these two standards through the effective and efficient application of a dispute-resolution process. This document can also be used independently of ISO 9001 and ISO 9004.

ISO 9001 specifies requirements for a quality management system. The dispute-resolution process described in this document (ISO 10003) can be used as an element of a quality management system.

ISO 9004 provides guidance to achieve sustained success of an organization. The use of this document (ISO 10003) can further enhance performance in resolving disputes with complainants and increase the satisfaction of customers, complainants and other relevant interested parties to facilitate the achievement of sustained success. It can also facilitate the continual improvement of the quality of products, services and processes based on feedback from customers, complainants and other relevant interested parties.

NOTE Apart from customers and complainants, other relevant interested parties can include suppliers, industry associations and their members, consumer organizations, relevant government agencies, personnel, owners and others who are affected by the dispute-resolution process.

0.3 Relationship with ISO 10001, ISO 10002 and ISO 10004

This document is compatible with ISO 10001, ISO 10002 and ISO 10004. These four documents can be used either independently or in conjunction with each other. When used together, this document, ISO 10001, ISO 10002 and ISO 10004 can be part of a broader and integrated framework for enhanced customer satisfaction through codes of conduct, complaints handling, dispute resolution and monitoring and measurement of customer satisfaction (see [Annex B](#)).

ISO 10001 contains guidance on customer satisfaction codes of conduct for organizations. Such codes, in setting out what customers can expect from the organization and its products and services, can decrease the likelihood of problems arising and can eliminate causes of complaints and disputes. When complaints and disputes do arise, the existence of codes of conduct can assist the parties in understanding customer expectations and the organization's attempts to meet those expectations.

ISO 10002 contains guidance on the internal handling of product- and service-related complaints. This document (ISO 10003) can be used when complaints are not resolved internally.

ISO 10004 contains guidance on establishing effective processes for monitoring and measuring customer satisfaction. Its focus is on customers external to the organization. Guidelines given in ISO 10004 can support the establishment and implementation of a dispute resolution process. For example, the processes described in ISO 10004 can assist the organization in monitoring and measuring customer satisfaction with the dispute resolution process (see [8.3](#)). Likewise, information from a dispute resolution process can be used in monitoring and measuring customer satisfaction. For example, the frequency and nature of disputes can be an indirect indicator of customer satisfaction (see ISO 10004:2018, 7.3.2).

Quality management — Customer satisfaction — Guidelines for dispute resolution external to organizations

1 Scope

This document gives guidelines for an organization to plan, design, develop, operate, maintain and improve an effective and efficient dispute-resolution process for complaints that have not been resolved by the organization.

This document is applicable to:

- complaints relating to the organization's products and services, the complaints-handling process or dispute-resolution process;
- resolution of disputes arising from domestic or cross-border business activities, including those arising from electronic commerce.

This document is intended for use by any organization regardless of its type or size, or the products and services it provides, and deals with:

- guidance on determining when and how organizations can participate in dispute resolution;
- guidance on the selection of providers and use of their services;
- top management involvement in, and commitment to, dispute resolution and deployment of adequate resources within the organization;
- the essentials for fair, suitable, transparent and accessible dispute resolution;
- guidance on management of an organization's participation in dispute resolution;
- monitoring, evaluating and improving the dispute-resolution process.

This document is particularly aimed at dispute resolution between an organization and

- individuals purchasing or using products and services for personal or household purposes, or
- small businesses.

This document does not apply to the resolution of other types of disputes, such as employment disputes. It does not apply to complaints handling within an organization.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 9000:2015, *Quality management systems — Fundamentals and vocabulary*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO 9000 and the following apply.