


EQUASS Appeal procedure



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The European Quality in Social Services has established the following appeal procedure for an EQUASS applicant, who receives a decision **not to be certified** with the EQUASS certification. The appeal procedure is designed to offer the EQUASS applicant the opportunity to appeal the outcome of the external audit on which the decision of the EQUASS Awarding Committee is based.

The following is a brief overview:

1. If a decision **not to certify** the EQUASS applicant for EQUASS certification is rendered, the applicant is notified of the decision, the reason for it and the applicant’s right to appeal the external audit.
2. The applicant must submit a written notice of their decision to request an Appeal Review of the external audit within 30 days of the date of the letter in which the decision is stated.
3. The applicant is billed for the cost of the Appeal Review at the recent current fee structure. Date and time for the Appeal Review is scheduled by the EQUASS Key Expert. If the result of the Appeal Review is eligible, the cost for appeal will be reimbursed.
4. EQUASS auditor(s) will assess the applicant’s application and submitted documentation and investigate at the applicant's site the applicant's conformance with the criteria of the EQUASS certification program when the audit is under appeal. The audit is based on the application and all supporting documentation, which have been submitted at the first application.

5. If the decision of the EQUASS Awarding Committee is affirmed, the applicant is informed of this result and the reason for it. The decision of the EQUASS Awarding Committee after the Appeal Review is final.

The Appeal Process

- **Eligibility**

When a decision **not to nominate** the applicant for awarding the EQUASS Excellence is rendered, the EQUASS management notifies the applicant of the decision, the rationale for the decision, and the right to appeal. The appeal procedure is sent to the applicant with the audit report.

An applicant, who receives a decision not to be nominated for awarding, may initiate an appeal by submitting a written notice of its decision to appeal to the EQUASS office. The written notice must be received in the EQUASS office no later than 30 calendar days following the date of EQUASS' letter notifying the applicant of the decision.

The written notice to EQUASS must state the specific reasons for the appeal, detailing the recommendations and/or the statements in the audit summary section of the audit report to which the applicant objects. If this action is not appealed properly and in a timely manner, it becomes final.

- **Procedures, and Processes for Appeal Review**

Within seven calendar days of receipt of the written notification of intent to appeal, the EQUASS coordinator will send the applicant written confirmation of its receipt and an invoice for the on-site Appeal Review (= second opinion). The invoice for an Appeal Review will be based upon EQUASS' current audit fee structure. The applicant is required to submit payment for the Appeal Review within ten calendar days of receipt of the invoice. If payment is not received within this time frame, the appeal

process will be closed and the decision of the EQUASS Awarding Committee not to certify with EQUASS certification the applicant will become final.

EQUASS management will schedule the Appeal Review, and notify the organisation of the date(s) and auditor(s) no more than ten working days after payment is received.

- **Appeal Review**

EQUASS auditor(s) will be assigned to assess the application and the submitted supported documentation and an on-site review. The number and identity of the EQUASS auditor(s) will be determined by EQUASS Key Expert. The format of the on-site review will be:

- To have an orientation meeting with a selected number of persons of the applicant to explain the appeal review and process.
- To review the material that was available at the earlier audit.
- This material should focus on those areas that were instrumental in the decision to render a preliminary audit outcome. Generally these are reflected in the recommendations and audit summary sections of the report. The organisation should present information it believes was either misinterpreted or in error in the earlier outcome determination. The EQUASS auditor(s) will not consider actions taken subsequent to the dates of the site visit under review.
- To have interviews, as appropriate and necessary for the Appeal Review, with staff, board members of the organisation, persons served and other relevant stakeholders.
- To have an exit meeting and to share information with the applicant about areas of conformance and non-conformance with the criteria of EQUASS certification.

The Appeal Review auditor team will submit the audit report of the Appeal Review to the EQUASS Key expert within five calendar days after the site visit has ended. Within thirty working days after receipt of this report the preliminary decision for nomination should be upheld, rejected, or

revised. The decision of the EQUASS Awarding Committee after Appeal Review will be the *final decision* of EQUASS.

- **Other Provisions**

- The appeal procedure, the basis for consideration of the appeal will be the applicant's conformance with the criteria for EQUASS certification at the time of the audit. Prior audit and the actions the applicant has taken since the completion of the application, the submitted documentation and the site visit in question will not be addressed or considered during the appeal procedure.
- The applicant will be responsible for all expenses related to the audit and the site visit at the recent current fee structure. If the decision of the EQUASS Awarding Committee will be revised the cost for the Appeal Review will be reimbursed.
- When a decision of the EQUASS Awarding Committee after an appeal becomes final. If the appeal has not been eligible the organisation may submit a new EQUASS application under the general policies and procedures of EQUASS. A new audit will not be carried out, however, prior to six months following the date on which the decision not to award the applicant.
- This appeal procedure incorporates the other policies and procedures of EQUASS to the extent that they are not in conflict therewith.

