



ISLAMIC COMMUNITY OF SERBIA
Halal Agency Serbia – HAS, for Certifying Halal Products

Gospodar Jevremova 11, 11000 Beograd, +381 11 30 31 285, www.halal.rs, info@halal.rs

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Signed:

HAS COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Halal Agency Serbia (HAS) believes that effective investigation of complaints and learning from these are an important part of achieving high quality work. HAS is committed to ensuring that its work is of the highest quality.
- 1.2 This policy and procedure sets out the arrangements which HAS has for the investigation and resolution of complaints, and for learning from these.

2. Definition- What is a complaint?

HAS welcomes comments and suggestions about how it can improve its work. Indeed, HAS receives many comments and suggestions about its work, including its policy position on various issues. These comments may sometimes be critical. When these are heard or received they should ordinarily be responded to in a polite and constructive manner. These would not ordinarily be considered as a complaint, unless the person making the comment or suggestion indicated they wish it to be treated as such. Where a suggestion is made or where the comment may be especially critical this should always be discussed with a manager, in the latter case, to help to determine whether the critical comment is a complaint.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, either written or spoken. A complaint can be made by an individual or a group. People may wish to complain if they are not satisfied with the way they have been treated or with the service they have received from HAS.

Examples of complaints could include dissatisfaction with any aspect of the organisation's work, including a service, a campaign, a certification activity, policy, an audit result, or an HAS Halal certificate.

Most straightforward complaints will be able to be addressed immediately in conversation, by email, or by using social media at the time at which the complaint is made, wherever appropriate using the same medium of communication as used by the complainant.

It is important to bear in mind for HAS officers and officials that the seriousness of a complaint will be specific to the individual (indeed different complainants may take a different view about the seriousness of the same issue of complaint), and all complaints should therefore, be treated by HAS as serious and requiring resolution. The large part of this policy & procedure describes the steps to be taken when a complaint can't be addressed immediately and straightforwardly.



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HAS will also often receive compliments and thanks for its work. These should also be acknowledged immediately and should be forwarded to info@halal.rs so that they can be tracked, and where indicated, acted upon.

3. Principles of HAS's complaints policy and procedure

3.1 The following principles are used:

- HAS recognises that compliments and complaints are an important part of customer feedback.
- The procedure is **fair** to people using services or experiencing HAS's work, complainants and to staff, this must be in compliance with Islamic laws.
- The procedure is **accessible** to all regardless of age, disability, gender, ethnicity, belief or sexual orientation
- Making a complaint will not harm or prejudice the service that is given to the complainant
- Concerns and complaints are dealt with efficiently and are properly investigated
- Complainants are treated with respect and courtesy and receive appropriate support throughout the handling of the complaint
- Complainants receive a timely and appropriate response, identifying the outcome of any investigation, wherever possible
- Action is taken where necessary in the light of the outcome of the complaint
- Learning from complaints will be used to improve HAS's work and procedures.
- If the complainant is not happy with the result of the response to the complaint, she or he will have the right to appeal.

3.2 In line with these, in responding to complaints, HAS will

- Provide a thorough explanation
- Accept shortcomings and apologise where appropriate
- Identify actions and reduce the risk or re-occurrence.

4. Who can make a complaint?

- 4.1 This procedure is for members of the public or clients who have received a service from HAS, or have experienced any aspect of HAS's work. It is also for any partner organisation who is dissatisfied with HAS's work or products/companies certified by HAS.
- 4.2 This procedure does not cover complaints made by HAS staff, volunteers and trustees who need to follow agreed grievance, disciplinary or reporting a matter of concern (Whistle blowing) policies.
- 4.3 For complaints about HAS certified companies and products produced at these manufacturing site, HAS will pass on any complaints to the Quality teams/responsible persons at these companies/sites immediately after review and will conduct investigations in collaboration with the company and this will be reviewed independently by the HAS Complaints Committee.



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5. Section A - Complaints about HAS:

HAS's Three stage process

5.1 If a complaint is about HAS then there are three stages which can be used to try and resolve the problem. Complainants may wish to involve an advocate, friend or someone else to get support at any stage. If a complainant needs a sign language or community language interpreter, please, let the person dealing with the complaint know and every reasonable effort will be made to provide it.

The three stages are:

5.2 Stage One (Informal)

Most complaints are dealt with informally by Mufti Mustafa (CEO) and front-line staff. This is the most appropriate route for most concerns and issues especially those that do not indicate serious misconduct **and** where the complainant agrees.

Complainants should be encouraged to speak openly about their concerns and reassured that what they say will be treated with appropriate confidence and will not affect their care and treatment.

The response should aim to satisfy the complainant that his/her concerns have been taken seriously and an apology and explanation offered as appropriate. The response should also refer to any remedial action that is to be taken.

To make an informal complaint a person should speak to or email the individual(s) concerned or their line manager and try to resolve the complaint informally. The individual concerned is required to provide their name and that of their line manager if asked, however, the following list can also be used to find out who is the appropriate manager to contact.

| Department | Contact |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Certification | HAS Secretary |
| Auditing | Technical Director, HAS Secretary |
| Media, Policy and Campaigns, Information, Communications, Information | CEO, Technical Director |
| Appeals /Fundraising, Conferences and training | Technical Director or CEO |

It is also possible, at any point, to contact the Technical Director (TD) to express a concern or comment about any aspect of the organisation's work.



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There may be occasions when social media is used, e.g. Facebook or Twitter, to make a complaint or allegations about HAS. In such circumstances these should be responded to immediately by the HAS Secretary, who should liaise with the person which has responsibility for the area of concern, with the aim of resolving the issue as quickly as possible, and minimising the likelihood/probability of the concern being communicated more widely on social media. Given the reputational risk to HAS of adverse social media commentary, except only in the most serious instances, complaints should aim to be addressed much more rapidly than the time standards set out in this policy. Prompt and effective resolution of a social media complaint can reflect positively on HAS.

5.3 Stage Two (Formally registering a complaint)

If a complainant is not satisfied with the response they have received at Stage One (informal), or would prefer their complaint to be formally investigated, they should then use Stage Two of this procedure. The following arrangements are in place for Stage Two complaints.

A) Complainants can outline the details of their complaint in writing or electronically and send it to the Technical director (TD), Halal Agency Serbia (HAS). If preferred, they can register a formal complaint by talking to any of the directors mentioned above; they will take the details of their complaint, pass these to the TD's office and arrange for it to be investigated. For verbal complaints, the manager taking the complaint should, whenever possible, receive the details using a complaint proforma, attached at Appendix One. This is easily identifiable on the HAS intranet. If a complaint is about the TD then it should be addressed to the Mufti of Serbia of the Complaints Committee (CC) (marked private and confidential), which is ultimately responsible as trustees of the organisation.

All complaints will be acknowledged by the HAS Secretary to whom they have complained/been directed to, or by the TD in writing (by post or email) letter within three working days from the date it is received. The letter will contain the following information:

- Name, postal address, email address, telephone number of the person who will investigate the complaint.
- The date the investigation will start.
- An offer of support where appropriate
- Where a complainant has given the details of the complaint verbally to one of the directors identified at section 5.2 above, the letter will also include a summary of the complaint written down

Consent to access information about a person using a service for the purpose of investigating a complaint is implied when the complaint is raised by the same person. Confirmation of this should be included within the initial acknowledgement response letter. A draft proforma letter is attached at Appendix Two.

B) People will ordinarily receive a full response to their complaint within a maximum of 20 working days from the date of the acknowledgement letter in writing from the HAS Secretary or TD. The response will include the following information:



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- Details of the investigation and what has been found
- A decision about whether the complaint was upheld or not
- Details of the changes HAS will make to prevent a recurrence of the issue/s which led to the complaint
- The reason for the decision
- The redress, if appropriate, which will be offered e.g. an apology, additional help or directing to other sources of advice or support
- If it is not possible to provide a full answer to a complaint within 20 working days, the investigating officer will, in any event, write at 20 working days to provide a progress report explaining the reasons for delay and give a date of when it is expected the investigation will be completed

5.4 Stage Three (Appeal)

A) If a complainant is not satisfied with the response to their complaint, the final stage is to outline the reasons for dissatisfaction in writing or electronically to the TD, or the Mufti of Serbia (if it is about the TD himself).

B) An Appeals Panel, normally of three members, including a trustee and at least one Islamic Affairs Expert, will be convened to consider the appeal. The TD or Mufti of Serbia will be responsible for ensuring the panel is appropriately representative. Panel membership will be restricted to people who have had no previous involvement in the complaint.

C) Members of the Appeals Panel will:

- Read through the necessary papers
- Speak with relevant individuals involved with the complaint
- Make a final decision

D) The Mufti of Serbia will sit on the Appeals Panel and they will write within 30 working days of receiving the appeal, to confirm:

- The final decision about the complaint
- The reason for the decision
- The redress, if appropriate, which will be offered e.g. an apology, additional help or signposting to other sources of advice or support
- Details of the changes we will make to prevent a recurrence of the issues which led to this complaint
- Any action that may be taken in light of the complaint

5.5 Review of the process

A) If once a person has used stages one to three of the complaints procedure, and are not satisfied that HAS has followed the process properly and dealt with their complaint fairly (e.g. by giving insufficient opportunity to represent their views or ensuring all the relevant people are involved in the investigation), then they can outline the reasons for their dissatisfaction about



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the process, in writing or electronically to the TD (or the Mufti of Serbia if it is about the TD) to request a review of the complaints handling process.

B) The TD or the Mufti of Serbia will make arrangements for a review of the complaint-handling process, and will inform this person of how the review will be carried out.

C) The decision of the process review will be final. The Mufti of Serbia or TD will communicate in writing within 30 working days of receiving the appeal:

- whether or not the procedure has been followed properly and fairly
- the reason for the decision
- the redress, if appropriate, which will be offered e.g. an apology, additional help or directing to other sources of advice or support
- what action may be taken in light of the review.

6. Complaints monitoring, investigation and learning

6.1 Recording complaints

All Stage Two complaints about HAS's national work will be recorded in a single-complaints register as soon as they are received. This will be held by the HAS Secretary and will include:

- Date received and unique reference number
- Contact details of the person making the complaint
- Details of the complaint
- Investigating officer
- Dates by which initial and final correspondence is due to be sent
- Copies of all documentation, including complaint letter, investigation Report, correspondence with the person making the complaint
- Details of the whether the complaint is upheld

6.2 Investigating Complaints

All investigations will seek to:

- Identify and understand the circumstances which led to the complaint being made
- The steps which could be taken to prevent a reoccurrence of any such circumstances
- Preserve the confidentiality of the complainant other than where strictly needed for the purposes of investigation
- Present the outcome clearly and logically in writing, addressing each aspect of the complaint
- To establish whether to uphold a complaint (in full or in part) or not

All responses will be from the designated lead Executive Director, and reviewed with TD, ahead of being sent, to ensure corporate consistency of response. The Head of Planning and Governance will be able to provide assistance to Directors where complaints are especially complex.

6.3 Complaints Review and Reporting

All Stage Two complaints will be reviewed monthly by TD and HAS secretary. A summary of the complaints, all anonymised, will be reviewed by the Quality Team and by Complaints



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Committee and HAS Executive Team each quarter. An annual report will be provided to Board of Directors (BOD).

The purpose of this monitoring is to:

- ensure HAS's standards for complaints management are met
- identify at an early stage key themes/trends
- review any learning and ensure practice is changed where necessary to reflect this

6.4 Incident management and Investigation

Throughout the complaints process, the investigating officer will be responsible for identifying whether there is a need to register any aspect of the complaint as an incident, e.g. where a complaint originated from a HAS Policy not being followed. In such circumstances, it should also be recorded as an incident using the Incident Reporting proforma.

6.5 Disciplinary procedures

The purpose of the complaints procedure is to identify where things may have gone wrong not to apportion blame. However, some complaints may identify information about serious matters which indicate the need for disciplinary investigation. In such cases, HAS's Disciplinary policy would also apply and relevant papers that have been gathered during the investigation of the complaint may be passed to Mufti of Belgrade to consider whether disciplinary action is required. A complaint may be investigated even if disciplinary action is being considered. However, the two procedures will remain separate.

HAS would ordinarily not disclose details of disciplinary action that has taken place as a result of the complaint to the complainant, bearing in mind that HAS has a duty to the rights of staff to confidentiality.

6.6 Complaints from staff

Staff who have complaints about other staff or the organisations work should take forward their concerns using HAS's policies/procedures for either:

- Grievance
- Bullying and Harassment
- Raising a matter of concern (whistle blowing).

Staff may seek advice in the first instance from their line manager or the HAS Secretary or Technical Director.

6.7 Complaints about Products certified by HAS or Companies certified by HAS.

Staff will review these complaints with the HAS Secretary, CEO and Technical Director. The company/site manufacturing the product will be informed and HAS staff will work in collaboration with the company to resolve the dispute. If the company/site have been negligent or have wilfully not complied with HAS's Halal and contractual requirements, HAS will take action following the complaints procedure and suspension of certification procedure.



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7. Responsibilities

7.1 Technical Director

- Executive lead for complaints /Accountable MET member for complaints management
- Provides assurance to the Board of Directors (BOD) on compliance with Halal and Technical standards and legal requirements.
- Ensures effective systems are in place for the management of complaints
- Oversees the investigation of complaints and appointment of the Investigating officer, the completion of a response and subsequent action plan
- Undertakes a regular review of all ‘active’ complaints
- Ensures safeguarding referrals & incident reporting arrangements are in place where necessary
- Preparation of final responses

7.2 HAS Secretary

- Coordinates and oversees the management and investigation of complaints.
- Liaises with HAS Staff to ensure the timely progress of the complaint and provide support and advice where appropriate
- Escalates problems in cases of delayed responses
- Maintains contact by phone and letter with the complainant as appropriate, particularly in protracted investigations
- Ensures a comprehensive response is drafted which adequately addresses all concerns highlighted
- Maintains the complaints database, to include a record of all action plans and changes to practice resulting from complaints
- Provides regular reports which will enable the Trust to monitor performance in relation to the handling of complaints; identify issues for organisational learning; and, through these, identify areas for review of policy or practice
- Interprets whether a communication is a complaint or not; this will usually be undertaken in liaison with the relevant Mufti.
- Informs the Technical Director if a complaint requires investigation under the Incident policy, or if there is an interface with an employment policy

7.5 All Staff

All staff and managers have a responsibility to be aware of and comply with HAS’s Complaints Policy and Procedure. In following this procedure all staff and Managers should ensure that:

- All complainants are listened to and treated with respect and courtesy at all times
- Where possible verbal complaints are constructively resolved at team/departmental level, making sure that complainants receive a full response with an apology where appropriate
- Refer letters of complaint immediately to their Director or TD’s office.

7.6 Quality Team

- Reviews all complaints received and identifies trends



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- Establishes ‘learning’ actions for implementation
- Co-ordinates the implementation of changes as a result of complaints
- Signs off an Annual report for HAS Board of Directors/Mufti’s

7.7 Dealing with media interest

Any media interest in a complaint should be immediately referred to the HAS Secretary, and to the Technical Director, if out of hours. You can contact the HAS Info-line for help with this on 00 381 11 3031285 or 00 381 11 26 22 337 or email: info@halal.rs.



Appendix One

VERBAL COMPLAINTS REPORTING PROFORMA

| | |
|--|--|
| Name of complainant: | |
| Address of Complainant: | |
| Complainants email: | |
| Complainants phone no. | |
| Date complaint made | |
| Department/s complaint concerns: | |
| Description of complaint, itemising in individual complaints (where relevant) | |



Appendix Two

PROFORMA LETTER

[Insert name]
[Insert address]
[Insert date]

Dear

Your complaint

I have received your letter/e-mail dated confirming that you wish to make a formal complaint under Stage 2 of our complaints process. I am sorry that it has not been possible to resolve your concerns informally.

My name is and I will be investigating your complaint. My contact details are [insert postal address, tel. number and email address]. From your letter/email/telephone conversation with....., I understand your complaint to be as follows:

- List in bullet point form the grounds of complaint

If my understanding of your complaint is incorrect, please contact me to let me know as soon as possible.

I appreciate that making a complaint can be difficult and stressful. Some advocacy services may be able to help you through the process, so it might be worth finding out whether there are any advocacy services in your area. You can contact the HAS Info-line for help with this on 00 381 11 3031285 or 00 381 11 26 22 337 or email: info@halal.rs.

If you need extra support throughout the complaints process, please contact me to let me know. We can, for example:

- arrange for letters to be produced in large print, easy read, audio or Braille
- arrange for letters to be translated into another language, or
- communicate with you in another way if you find writing and/or receiving letters difficult.

I expect to start my formal investigation of your complaint on [insert date] and I will write to you within 20 working days of this date to confirm the outcome of my investigation – i.e. by [insert date].

Please contact me if anything in this letter is unclear.

Yours sincerely
[Insert name]
[Insert job title]