

## **BENCHMARK HOLDINGS, LLC**

### **APPEALS PROCESS DESCRIPTION**

Benchmark Holdings, LLC, representing Benchmark International, LLC and Benchmark Consulting and Inspection, LLC (collectively referred to as “Benchmark”), provides an appeals process for clients who wish to request reconsideration of a previous complaint or dispute decision made by Benchmark.

This process is available when Benchmark has issued a decision under its Customer Complaint and Dispute Process (OP-003) and the client wishes to formally appeal that decision.

#### **1. What Is an Appeal?**

An appeal is a formal written request asking Benchmark to reconsider a prior complaint or dispute decision made under Benchmark’s Customer Complaint and Dispute Process (OP-003).

An appeal is not the same as an initial complaint or dispute. Complaints and disputes must first be submitted and processed under Benchmark’s Customer Complaint and Dispute Process before they may be appealed.

#### **2. When to Submit an Appeal:**

A client who wishes to appeal a complaint or dispute decision must submit the appeal in writing within thirty (30) business days of Benchmark’s complaint or dispute decision. Benchmark is under no obligation to accept or process appeals received after (30) business days from the date the original complaint or dispute decision was issued.

Benchmark does not accept or process verbal appeal requests. Written appeals are required so the appeal can be reviewed accurately, fairly, and impartially.

#### **3. How to Submit an Appeal:**

You may submit a written appeal using one of the following methods:

- Send an email to **info@benchmark-intl.com**;
- Complete the contact form available through the Benchmark website at <https://benchmark-intl.com/contact/>; or
- Send a written request by postal mail to:

**Attn: BMH Appeals**  
c/o Benchmark Holdings, LLC  
2710 West 5th Avenue  
Eugene, OR 97402

#### **4. What to Include in Your Appeal:**

Your written appeal should clearly explain the basis for the appeal and include all relevant supporting documentation. To help Benchmark review the appeal efficiently, please include:

- The complaint or dispute decision, or the specific part of the decision, that you are appealing;
- Any part of the complaint or dispute decision that you are not appealing;
- The facts, evidence, or documentation that support your appeal;
- The reasons why you believe the original complaint or dispute decision was incomplete or incorrect;
- Any documents, records, correspondence, photographs, or other information that support your position.



Benchmark will consider only the specific matters identified in the written appeal. Any factual matter not identified in the appeal may be considered accepted by the appellant. Benchmark will not consider blanket or general appeals that do not identify specific issues for review.

All supporting documentation should be included with the appeal request.

#### **5. Acknowledgment of the Appeal:**

Within ten (10) business days after receiving the appeal, Benchmark will acknowledge the appeal in writing. If you do not receive written acknowledgement from Benchmark within 10 business days, please call our offices directly at +1 (541) 484-9212 to verify we received the information.

Benchmark will also confirm whether the appeal relates to third-party inspection, product certification, laboratory testing, or other applicable Benchmark services or activities.

#### **6. How Benchmark Reviews Appeals:**

Benchmark assigns appeals to an appeals panel consisting of at least two (2) members of Benchmark management and/or Benchmark's Impartiality Committee.

The appeals panel is appointed by Benchmark's President/Founder or another designated member of Benchmark Senior Management.

Benchmark will not select personnel to process an appeal if they were directly involved in the inspection, certification decision-making process, or original complaint or dispute decision related to the appeal.

For certification-related appeals, Benchmark will also avoid using personnel who provided consultancy to, or were employed by, the relevant client within the prior two (2) years.

#### **7. Appeal Decision and Timing:**

Within thirty (30) business days after receiving the appeal, the appeals panel is responsible for investigating, validating, documenting, and resolving the appeal.

The appeals panel will make its decision based on the facts and evidence provided. Benchmark will notify the appellant of the decision in writing.

The decision of the appeals panel is considered Benchmark's final decision.

#### **8. Referral to an Independent Arbitrator:**

If the appeals panel disputes any or all of the information provided by the appellant, or if Benchmark cannot form an appeals panel of previously uninvolved members capable of making a fair and impartial decision, the appeal may be referred to an independent arbitrator.

In that case, Benchmark will provide the arbitrator with the relevant information concerning the appeal. The arbitrator will investigate the matter and make a final decision.

The decision of the arbitrator is considered final.

#### **9. Accreditation Body Involvement:**

For matters referred to an arbitrator that directly relate to Benchmark's conformance to accreditation requirements under ISO/IEC 17065, ISO/IEC 17020, ISO/IEC 17025, or JAS Law, Benchmark will notify the appropriate accreditation body. The accreditation body has the right to attend and participate in the appeals process.

For matters involving Benchmark's conformance to applicable accreditation criteria under ISO/IEC 17065, ISO/IEC 17025, or ISO/IEC 17020, the relevant Benchmark Accreditation Body is the final level of appeal. The relevant accreditation body is determined by the Benchmark accreditation documents applicable to the service involved.



For matters involving Benchmark's conformance with accreditation criteria under JAS Law, MAFF/FAMIC is the final level of appeal.

Benchmark will abide by decisions made by the relevant Accreditation Body as they relate to Benchmark's conformance with applicable accreditation criteria.

**10. Non-Discrimination:**

Submitting an appeal, participating in an appeal investigation, or receiving an appeal decision will not result in discriminatory action against the appellant.

**11. Questions About This Process:**

Questions about submitting an appeal may be directed to Benchmark by calling our offices at +1 (541) 484-9212, by submitting an Inquiry Form using the Benchmark website at <https://benchmark-intl.com/contact/>, or by sending an email to [info@benchmark-intl.com](mailto:info@benchmark-intl.com).