

## ALS Appeal Procedure

### Change History

Version number	Effective date	Description of changes
ALS_02_N	26/09/2022	Changes to appeal processing timeline. Fee for rejected appeal is introduced. Assessors can choose to have a new Quality Panel process the appeal.
ALS_01_T	20/07/2020	Appeal form is online. More time allowed to submit an appeal.
ALS_02_I	04/09/2017	Procedure to appeal ALS Quality Panel feedback is developed.

### Associated Documentation

Document Reference	Document Name
N/A	Online Appeal Form
ALS_01_O	Appeal Result Form

## 1. Purpose

This procedure describes the HCVN appeal procedure for licensed assessors to appeal a report evaluation result of 'unsatisfactory' by an HCVN Quality Panel (QP).

## 2. Scope and Procedure

### 2.1. Appeal Scope

One appeal form may be submitted at each stage of evaluation (i.e., submission, 1<sup>st</sup> resubmission, 2<sup>nd</sup> resubmission, if relevant).

Upon receipt of an 'unsatisfactory' report evaluation result the licensed assessor may submit an appeal when there is evidence that all or some of the

QP “unsatisfactory” markings for Key Issue sections may be unfounded or partially unfounded and concern:

- Requirement(s) that go beyond what is set out as mandatory by relevant ALS documents. In this case, the appeal shall provide the explanation of how the report section complies with the relevant ALS documents (with section and page number references for both report content and relevant ALS document).
- Requirement(s) that contradict relevant ALS documents. In this case, the appeal shall provide the reference to the ALS document (with section and page number) that is contradicted by the requirement(s) listed in the QP feedback.
- Requirement(s) to provide information that is already present in the report. In this case the appeal shall include reference to the section of the report (page number) where the information can be found.

## 2.2. Appeal submission

The assessor shall complete **a single Online Appeal Form** for all QP requirements to be appealed. The online form allows for more than one section or Key Issue to be appealed in one form.

**The form shall be submitted to the HCVN Quality Manager (QM) within 30 working days<sup>1</sup> of receiving the QP finding(s).**

When submitting the appeal form, the assessor may request **to have the appeal processed either by individuals from the same QP that evaluated the assessment report or by a new QP.** This option may take longer as a new QP member will need time to read the report before processing the appeal.

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<sup>1</sup> For working days and holidays, refer to UK holiday calendar.

### 2.3. Receipt of an appeal

Appeals are processed by ALS staff who, within 15 working days shall:

- verify if the appeal has been submitted within the 30-working day deadline and completed using the Online Appeal Form
- estimate the cost of the appeal (see 2.4)
- request the assessor's agreement to proceed which must be provided within 10 working days from ALS staff communication. At this stage the assessor may decide to withdraw the appeal. If there is no response, it will be assumed the assessor does not agree to proceed and the appeal is automatically withdrawn. The original feedback is valid, and the assessor must address outstanding requirements and resubmit the report in 30 calendar days (as per ALS Specification). If the resubmission is not received in that timeframe, the report will be considered unsatisfactory.
- Add the appeal to the public record of the report on the HCVN website, once the appeal is ready to be processed.

An appeal will not be processed if:

- it is not submitted using the Online Appeal Form.
- it was submitted past the allowed appeal period (30 working days).
- the assessor already submitted an Online Appeal Form for the same stage of evaluation.
- it concerns previously accepted requirements (i.e., the requirement has been issued and has not been appealed in a previous round of evaluation).

### 2.4. Appeal Fees

The cost of processing an appeal is estimated by the HCVN based on:

- the number of requirements being appealed and

- the number of QP members needed to process the appeal and
- the assessor's request to maintain the original QP or to form a new QP to process the appeal. Appeals processed by a new QP have a higher cost due to the additional time needed to read the report and become familiar with the case.

*Table 1 Elements that make up the potential of appeal fee. Fees are only charged for rejected appeals.*

Standard administrative fee to cover receipt of appeal, allocation to QP, communication with assessor, update of report record, etc.	+	Number (and type) of requirements appealed (which determines number of QP members to be involved)	+	Supplemental fee for hiring new QP (if relevant)	=	<b>Total potential cost of appeal</b>
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## 2.5. Appeal processing

The appeal proceeds once the assessor agrees to the potential fee.

### Steps:

QP members are assigned to process the appeal.

QP members shall refer to the evidence and justification presented in the assessor's appeal form and the relevant documents on report requirements and evaluate if the report section complies with the relevant ALS documents.

QP member shall complete a draft Appeal Response Form and submit it to the QM, within the agreed timeframe.

An ALS staff member will:

- collate appeal response forms from all QP members.

- update the QP Feedback in the ALS Community (Salesforce) as relevant.
- Inform the assessor of appeal results, any fees due and report resubmission deadline, if relevant.

When the **original QP processes** the appeal, processing shall take up to **10 working days** from the date the assessor agrees to the potential appeal fee.

When a new **QP processes the appeal**, processing shall take up to **20 working days** from the date the assessor agrees to the potential appeal fee.

Note: Appeal processing will focus on requirements (from key issue sections) being appealed. However, if a substantial error is discovered in the report that would impact the designation and/or delineation of HCVs and/or HCS forest, and it was not identified during the evaluation, it must be reported to the QM and addressed.

## 2.6. Results

Appeal processing results in the following outcomes:

**Valid:** Assessor provided sufficient evidence and justification for why all the requirements raised by the QP were unfounded. The report marking will be changed to 'satisfactory' and no fee is incurred by the assessor. The cost of processing valid appeals will be covered by the HCVN.

**Partially valid:** Assessor provided sufficient evidence and justification for why at least one of the requirements raised by the QP was unfounded. The cost of a partially valid appeal will be proportionally shared between the HCVN and the assessor (only the time spent in rejected sections of the appeal will be charged to the assessor).

The outstanding requirements must be addressed, and the report must be resubmitted (for reports with resubmission options). When relevant, the deadline for resubmission is updated. Report resubmission will not be

processed until the appeal fee is paid. If all resubmission options have been used, the final report marking will be 'unsatisfactory'. (.

**Rejected:** Assessor failed to provide sufficient evidence and justification for why QP requirements were unfounded. The cost of a rejected appeal will be invoiced to the assessor.

The outstanding requirements must be addressed, and the report must be resubmitted (for reports with resubmission options). When relevant, the deadline for resubmission is updated. Report resubmission will not be processed until the appeal fee is paid. If all resubmission options have been used the final report marking will be 'unsatisfactory'.

All appeal submissions and appeal results will be public on the HCVN website.