



Procedures for handling complaints and appeals:

ACE-PT Inc. works hard to meet and exceed its client's needs and expectations. If you feel that we have failed to meet your needs or expectations, or, if you have a suggestion about how we can improve, please call the ACE-PT Inc. PT Program Coordinator (Mr. Richard Bright) at 1-410-869-3253 or e-mail him at the following address: rbright@acil.org

Notwithstanding this, Clause 4.9.3 of ISO/IEC 17043:2010 requires each Proficiency Testing Provider to have a formal, documented process that enables participants to appeal against the evaluation of their performance, and, to communicate this process to each participant of each PT Scheme. [ACE-PT Inc.'s evaluation of each participant's performance is, of course, contained in the *PT Analysis Report* that has been issued for the most recent "Round" of a PT Scheme].

ACE-PT Inc.'s policy is to make a timely notification to each participant in each "Round" of each PT Scheme of their right to appeal. This notification will be included as a part of the e-mail that is sent to each participating Test Laboratory whenever a *PT Analysis Report* for a "Round" of an PT Scheme is published.

In the event that a participating Test Laboratory wishes to appeal against the evaluation of their performance that appears in a specific *PT Analysis Report*, the following procedure shall be followed in order to resolve the issue(s) that lead to the appeal:

1. The appeal must be delivered in writing (by e-mail) to the PT Program Coordinator at the following e-mail address: rbright@acil.org within 21 days after the publication date of the *PT Analysis Report* that contains the evaluation of participant performance that is the subject of the appeal. Because time is of the essence, late appeals will NOT be accepted. The appeal must contain the name, title, e-mail address, and direct telephone numbers (office and cellular) of an easily reachable, knowledgeable individual who can discuss the technical details that constitute the basis of the appeal.
2. The PT Program Coordinator shall immediately forward the e-mail containing the appeal request to the ACE-PT Inc. PT Program Technical Manager. Additionally, because time is of the essence, the ACE-PT Inc. PT Program Coordinator shall telephone the ACE-PT Inc. PT Program Technical Manager to advise him of the appeal.
3. The ACE-PT Inc. PT Program Technical Manager shall reply by e-mail to the ACE-PT Inc. PT Program Coordinator that he has received the written copy of the appeal.
4. The ACE-PT Inc. PT Program Technical Manager shall study the contents of the appeal carefully. If the appeal is based upon an assertion that the *PT Analysis Report* contains measured PT data that does not match what was submitted by the Test Laboratory, this assertion shall be checked carefully. If the assertion is found to be true, the entire *PT Analysis Report* shall be withdrawn immediately, and the appellant and all other participating Test Laboratories and all interested third-parties (e.g., the ABs) shall be notified within 48 hours by e-mail that the *PT Analysis Report* has been withdrawn pending correction or amendment (as applicable). The ACE-PT Inc. PT Program Technical Manager shall then take the actions specified in Step 5 below.

If the assertion is found to be false, the appellant shall be advised of this, and the appeal shall be deemed to be closed with no further action being required. ***[Note: if the appellant claims to have made an error and had somehow submitted incorrect PT data, this shall not be accepted as legitimate grounds for either an appeal or a refund of fees].***

If the appeal is based upon the grounds that the statistical basis of the PT Scheme is inherently invalid in some significant manner, the appeal shall be automatically rejected, and the appellant shall be advised of this, and for the reason for the rejection. The reason for the rejection shall be stated more or less as follows: Your appeal has been rejected because ACE-PT Inc.'s AB (i.e., A2LA) has judged that the statistical basis of the PT Scheme in question is fully consistent with ISO 13528:2015, and has therefore been determined to be valid.

If the appeal is based upon other grounds than those listed above, ACE-PT Inc. PT Program Technical Manager shall make telephone contact with appellant so as to learn full details. Based upon the telephone conversation or conversations, ACE-PT Inc. PT Program Technical Manager shall take whatever steps are necessary to determine if the grounds for the appeal are valid or not.

If the grounds are found to be valid, the appellant and all other participating Test Laboratories and all interested third-parties (e.g., the ABs) shall be notified within 48 hours by e-mail that the *PT Analysis Report* has been withdrawn pending correction or amendment (as applicable). The ACE-PT Inc. PT Program Technical Manager shall then take the actions specified in Step 5 below.

If the grounds for the appeal are found to be invalid, the appellant shall be advised of this fact and of the reasons why his/her grounds for the appeal are found to be invalid.

If the appellant refuses to accept the decision, the appeal will be brought to the PTAB for a final resolution. The PTAB members shall discuss the appeal by telephone with the ACE-PT Inc. PT Program Technical Manager, and, by telephone with the appellant. The PTAB members shall then adjourn for private discussion, and shall then vote. A simple majority of the members of the PTAB shall be sufficient to decide in favor of or against the appeal. Their decision shall be final.

If the PTAB has decided to reject the grounds for the appeal, both the appellant and the ACE-PT Inc. PT Program Technical Manager shall be advised of this fact in writing (by e-mail), and the appeal shall be deemed to be closed with no further action being required.

If the PTAB has decided to accept the grounds for the appeal as being valid, both the appellant and the ACE-PT Inc. PT Program Technical Manager shall be advised of this fact in writing (by e-mail), and the ACE-PT Inc. PT Program Technical Manager shall take whatever actions are necessary, including notification of the appellant and all other participating Test Laboratories and all interested third-parties (e.g., the ABs) within 48 hours by e-mail that the *PT Analysis Report* has been withdrawn pending correction or amendment (as applicable). The ACE-PT Inc. PT Program Technical Manager shall then take the actions specified in Step 5 below.

5. The ACE-PT Inc. PT Program Technical Manager shall correct whatever errors are deemed to exist in the (withdrawn) *PT Analysis Report*, and shall publish a corrected or amended *PT Analysis Report* within 15 days; the corrected or amended *PT Analysis Report* shall specifically state that it is a corrected or amended report that replaces the original report (cf. Annex A.8 of this QSM). Then, the procedures detailed in Annex A.9 of this QSM shall be followed such that the corrected or amended *PT Analysis Report* is uploaded to the ACIL Web Site, and, that the appellant and all other participants and all other interested parties are notified by e-mail of this. Furthermore, the ACE-PT Inc. PT Program Technical Manager shall perform and document a root-cause analysis of the underlying issue(s) that lead to the appeal, and shall take and document whatever corrective and/or preventative actions are necessary.