

Solar Stewardship Initiative

Complaints and Appeals Mechanism

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Intellectual Property notice

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The Solar Stewardship Initiative

The Solar Stewardship Initiative (SSI) works with manufacturers, developers, installers, and purchasers across the global solar value chain to collaboratively foster responsible production, sourcing, and stewardship of materials. The SSI's mission is to enhance end-to-end transparency, sustainability, and ESG performance across the solar supply chain. Businesses actively involved in the solar value chain can apply to join the SSI and get certified against the SSI Standards.

The SSI's core objectives are to:

- Ensure the energy transition is just, inclusive, and respects people's human rights.
- Establish mechanisms to enhance supply-chain integrity in the global solar industry.
- Enable continuous improvement of ESG performance.
- Build confidence of regulators, customers, business partners and other stakeholders in the sustainability of the solar value chain.

About this document

The Solar Stewardship Initiative (SSI) Complaints & Appeals Mechanism ensures expressions of dissatisfaction related to SSI activities, governance, members, certified

sites, and approved Assessment Bodies (ABs) are addressed in a timely, fair, comprehensive, consistent, transparent, and effective manner.

This document explains the types of grievances the SSI Secretariat will review, the process and the potential outcomes.

This mechanism also incorporates ISEAL best practices, promoting accessibility, transparency, fairness, confidentiality, impartiality, and continuous improvement.

Version history

Version	Date	Description
1.0	November 2023	First version issued as approved by the SolarPower Europe and SEUK Board.
2.0	March 2025	Second version issued, reflecting improvements in Scope, Key Principles and Process, and approved by the SSI Board.

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1. Scope

The SSI Complaints and Appeals Mechanism addresses the following grievances:

- SSI Secretariat and Governance:
 - Complaints regarding SSI policies, procedures or decisions related to certification, membership, or assessment body approval.
- SSI Members:
 - Complaints against members' non-compliance with the SSI Principles, [SSI Standards](#) and [the Claims Guide](#).
- SSI Certified Members:
 - Complaints related to non-conformance with the SSI Standards and/or the Claims Guide.
- Approved SSI Assessment Body or Assessor:
 - Complaints involving SSI-approved Assessment Body or assessor

2. Key Principles

2.1. Accessibility

This Mechanism is available to all stakeholders, with submission accepted via [the SSI Website](#) or email at contact@solarstewardshipinitiative.org.

Stakeholders based in foreign countries can participate remotely in grievance proceedings to reduce logistical and financial burdens.

2.2. Transparency

This Mechanism clearly defines processes, timelines, and outcomes (see Section 3 "Making a Complaint or Appeal").

A summary of the Complaints and Appeals received will be published in the SSI Annual Report, including the nature of the grievance and resolution, while maintaining confidentiality where necessary.

2.3. Fairness

Independent, impartial investigators and decision-making panels support this Mechanism.

2.4. Confidentiality

A Complainant raising a Complaint with the SSI does not need to disclose their identity if they choose to maintain anonymity. Where individuals raising a confidential concern identify themselves, their identity will not be further disclosed to persons assessing the Complaint without the individual's consent.

If Complaints are raised confidentially, the SSI Secretariat will make every effort to withhold the identity of those raising it and will only proceed to investigate the Complaint under the SSI Complaints & Appeals Mechanism if the person raising it agrees to the matter being disclosed.

The right to anonymity does not apply if the SSI Secretariat believes there is a legal or regulatory obligation to disclose the concern.

2.5. Cost-Effectiveness

The SSI Secretariat aims to minimise the Complaints & Appeals process costs for all parties. Where a formal investigation is contemplated or initiated, parties to the Complaint/Appeal must agree on sharing the costs. An equal sharing of costs should be the starting point for negotiation.

SSI will generally waive the costs of Complaints in the case of individual whistle-blowers, unless the Complaint is found to be disingenuous.

2.6. Continuous Improvement

The SSI Secretariat regularly analyses the grievances received for systemic improvements and to adapt to evolving stakeholder needs and ensure alignment with international best practices.

The SSI Secretariat will raise awareness among stakeholders about the Mechanism's existence, processes, and purpose.

3. Making a Complaint or Appeal

3.1. Submission of a Complaint

Complaints should generally be lodged at the lowest level first before escalating. Wherever possible, this includes raising the Complaint directly with the person/organisation subject to the Complaint and giving the Respondent the opportunity to respond and rectify the situation. For example, a Complaint against an AB should first be attempted to be resolved via the AB's complaint mechanism.

To be accepted by the SSI as a formal Complaint, the Complaint must:

- Be in the scope of the SSI Complaints & Appeals Mechanism (see Section 1 "Scope").
- Include specific and objective evidence to support the claim.
- Be submitted using [the SSI Complaint & Appeals Form](#) which can be accessed through the SSI website, and can be submitted anonymously; alternatively, the Complaint may be submitted through email at contact@solarstewardshipinitiative.org
- Be submitted in English. Other languages can be accepted on an ad-hoc basis. A request to submit a complaint in a different language should be agreed with the SSI Secretariat in advance.

A Complaint or Appeal will not be accepted if:

- It is a legal matter that should be handled through the legal system.
- It is trivial, vexatious or manifestly unfounded.
- It is not supported by objective evidence.

Any Complaint based upon hearsay cannot be accepted. In such a case, the SSI Secretariat will request further information from the Complainant to assess whether the Complaint can be substantiated. If no response is received within thirty (30) calendar days, the Complaint will be considered withdrawn and therefore closed.

The SSI will aim to acknowledge receipt within five (5) calendar days of submission and will accept or reject the Complaint within fifteen (15) calendar days of submission, based on the acceptance criteria. If the Complaint is rejected, the Complainant will be informed of the reason and their options for re-submitting the Complaint. If the Complaint is accepted, the Complainant can opt for informal mediation before proceeding.

3.2. Submission of an Appeal

If an individual or entity wishes to appeal a complaint decision, they must do so within 30 days of the decision being issued.

For an appeal to be formally accepted by the SSI, the Appellant must:

- Meet the criteria for submitting a formal complaint.
- Provide details of the adverse membership, approval, or certification decision being appealed.

- Clearly specify how the SSI Secretariat has misinterpreted or failed to follow its procedures or requirements.

Additionally, before the appeal process can proceed, both the SSI Secretariat and the Complainant/Appellant must sign a Confidentiality Agreement.

3.3. Investigating a Complaint or Appeal

Once accepted as a Complaint or Appeal, the SSI Secretariat seeks to investigate it in a fair, balanced, and impartial manner, resolving it efficiently and effectively.

Attempts will be made to resolve the Complaint or Appeal via direct dialogue. If direct dialogue does not result in a resolution, the SSI Secretariat will then appoint an independent (externally- appointed) person to conduct the review of the Complaint/Appeal ("the Investigator").

If the Complaint relates to a member of the SSI Secretariat, an externally appointed, impartial agent will be appointed as the Investigator.

Appeals will be investigated by an individual(s) with knowledge and experience of the subject matter. All complaints/appeals must be investigated by an Investigator who has not directly been involved in the decision for which a reconsideration is being sought (Appeal) or resolution (Complaint).

The Investigator will contact all the parties (Complainant/Appellant and Respondent) to conduct the review, including seeking responses from the parties. The Investigator will objectively analyse and assess the Complaint/Appeal using all available and relevant information.

The Investigator may request further information from the Complainant/Appellant to determine the full nature and extent of the Complaint/Appeal, specifying that the Complainant/Appellant has thirty (30) calendar days to provide this. If the Complainant/Appellant fails to respond within thirty (30) calendar days following a request for information or an acknowledgement at any point in the investigation, the SSI reserves the right to consider the Complaint/Appeal withdrawn and therefore closed.

Based on the information provided, the Investigator will draft a report containing:

- A summary of the nature of the Complaint/Appeal.
- A summary analysis of the main arguments made by each party.
- A proposed determination as to the validity of the Complaint/Appeal, which will be one of the following:

- Not upheld.
- Not upheld, but an improvement plan was proposed and included in the report.
- Upheld, with a corrective action plan proposed and included in the report.

The draft report will be circulated to all parties to the Complaint/Appeal (Complainant/Appellant and Respondent) for comment and to identify any errors of fact within ten (10) calendar days. Comments received from the Parties should be included in a revised report, which will go to a designated ad hoc Complaints/Appeals Panel for a final decision.

Any membership, approval or certification decision that is the subject of an Appeal will remain valid during the Appeals process until and unless a change is required as a conclusion to the Appeal.

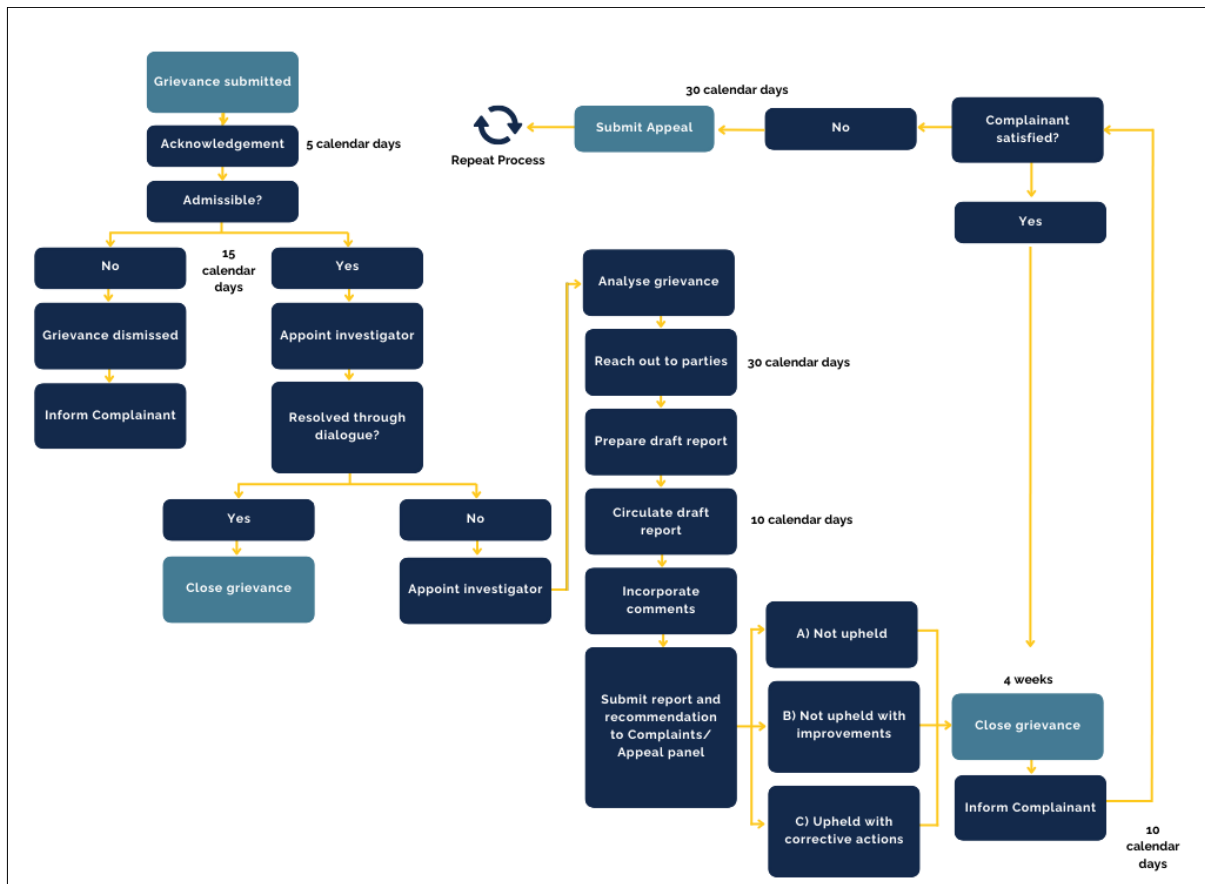
3.4. Complaint or Appeal Decision

A designated ad hoc Complaint/Appeal Panel will review the draft report provided by the Investigator and decide whether to accept the Investigator's determination and the improvement plan or corrective action plan if proposed. A final decision should be reached via consensus. Depending on the nature of the Complaint/Appeal, a decision should be made within four (4) weeks.

Within ten (10) calendar days of the final decision, the Investigator will inform the Complainant/Appellant and other Parties of the decision, along with any agreed improvement plan or corrective action plan and the timeline for implementation.

The Investigator will oversee any implementation of the improvement plan or corrective action and report back to the Complaint/Appeal Panel on any agreed milestones and completion of the actions.

Graphic 1: Complaints and Appeal Process



4. Annex

4.1. Glossary

Term	Definition
Appeal	Request by an organisation, Member of SSI or Assessment Body for reconsideration of any adverse decision made by SSI.
Appellant	A person, organisation or a representative of an organisation filing an Appeal requesting reconsideration of any adverse membership, approval or certification decision made by SSI.
Complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction, other than Appeal, by any person or organisation relating to the activities of the SSI, of an SSI-approved Assessment Body or of an SSI member.
Complainant	A person, organisation or a representative of an organisation filing a Complaint.
Direct Dialogue	Attempt to resolve a Complaint or Appeal through discussion, prior to appointing an investigator.

Investigator	Individual appointed to review the Complaint or Appeal and who provides a proposed determination for review by the SSI Appeals/Complaints Panel for decision.
Respondent	SSI Secretariat, SSI Member, SSI-approved Assessment Body or Assessor against whom a Complaint or Appeal is lodged.