

1 Appeals and Complaints

Higher Education Institutions and other ZEvA clients can lodge appeals or complaints in connection with all ZEvA procedures. For this purpose, ZEvA has set up an Appeals Commission consisting of experienced university teachers and representatives of professional practice and the student body. The current composition of the Appeals Commission can be found here:

<https://www.zeva.org/en/agency/appeals-commission/>

ZEvA distinguishes between **appeals** against the formal outcome of a procedure and **complaints** against procedural steps or professional conduct of the persons involved:

1. Appeals against Formal Decisions and Outcomes

An appeal against the formal outcome of a procedure can be lodged if the institution comes to the conclusion that this outcome is not based on sound evidence, that the relevant criteria have been applied incorrectly or that the outcome has been tainted by inconsistently applied processes.

In cases where procedures conclude with formal decisions by ZEvA (e.g. an accreditation or certification decision or a final evaluation report), appeals against these decisions can be lodged within 4 weeks after receipt of the decision. If the formal decision is made by the German Accreditation Council, appeals must be sent directly to the Council.

If an appeal against a formal outcome is sustained, the result may be a change of the decision, e.g., the deletion/modification of a condition or recommendation or the conversion of a refusal into an accreditation.

2. Complaints Regarding Procedural Steps and Professional Conduct

ZEvA's clients may lodge complaints against any procedural step if they consider it not to have been properly carried out in accordance with the contract and the procedural rules. This may concern, for example, the conduction of the site visit or the preparation of the assessment report. They may also file complaints against the professional conduct of ZEvA's staff or the experts involved in the respective procedure. These complaints can be lodged at any time during the procedure until it concludes with the final formal outcome.

If a complaint against a procedural step or against the professional conduct of staff or experts is sustained, it may result in a repetition, modification, or supplementation of a procedural step, e.g., a renewed site-visit, a revision of an assessment report or a supplementary opinion by an additional expert. The agency may also decide to assign a different staff member or exchange individual experts.

Appeals and Complaints Procedure

Complaints and appeals must always be substantiated in writing and have to be addressed to ZEvA's management. If necessary, a detailed substantiation can be submitted after a formal complaint to observe the 4-week deadline. The complaint or appeal, including the justification, is forwarded together with an assessment by ZEvA's management to ZEvA's Appeals Commission, which then makes a recommendation as to the extent to which the complaint or appeal should be upheld. This

recommendation, together with the appeal or complaint, is sent to the ZEvA Commission (ZEKo), which takes the final decision. Once the ZEKO has taken its decision, no further appeal or complaint can be lodged against the same issue.