

Rights and duties of the EQUASS customers

The document “Rights and duties of the EQUASS customers” sets out mutual expectations of EQUASS customers and EQUASS Europe in the context of EQUASS Certification process.

The EQUASS customers are comprised of both the EQUASS applicants and the EQUASS certified organisations. EQUASS Europe refers to the certification body with its offices on Brussels.

The rights and duties listed below also apply to the relationship between the EQUASS customer and its Local Licence Holder, representative of EQUASS Europe in a given country, and its auditors.

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Confidentiality

EQUASS customers can expect:

- That EQUASS Europe will administer the information provided by its customers fairly, reasonably and consistently and will seek to collect no more information than needed for an efficient and effective audit process.
- That EQUASS Europe will treat the information, the customer gives, in confidence and ensures that this information will not be used or disclosed for other purposes than the EQUASS certification audit.
- That when confidential information is made available to other bodies (e.g. accreditation body, agreement group of a peer assessment scheme), EQUASS Europe shall inform its customer of this action.

- That where EQUASS Europe is required by law to release confidential information to a third party, the EQUASS customer concerned shall, unless regulated by law, be notified in advance of the information provided.

Adequate Information

EQUASS customers can expect:

- To be given the necessary information and all reasonable assistance to enable them to clearly understand the enrolment requirements for the EQUASS certification process
- To have the right to access and rectify its customer record.

EQUASS Europe expects its customers:

- To provide true and correct information in all their contacts with EQUASS Europe and to inform EQUASS Europe in a timely manner of the change of relevant information (such as application data, change of address etc.).¹
- To comply with the instructions on the “Policy governing the use of the EQUASS Quality mark”, including the instructions to inform EQUASS of key changes occurring in their organisation during the validity of their certification.

Promotion and Publicity

EQUASS customers can expect:

- To receive a printed certificate after a successful certification process, to have the right to use the EQUASS Quality Mark, following the Policy governing its use, and to have its name displayed on the EQUASS Website.
- That the EQUASS customer information, that will be used for promotional or marketing purposes by EQUASS Europe, will be clearly stated as such.

¹ The certified client must inform EQUASS Europe, without delay, of matters that may affect the capability of the management system to continue to fulfil the requirements of the EQUASS standard.

These include, for example, changes relating to:

- a) the legal, commercial, organizational status or ownership of the customer
- b) organisation and management (e.g. key managerial, decision-making or technical staff),
- c) contact address and sites,
- d) scope of operations under the certified management system, and
- e) major changes to the management system and processes.

Impartiality

EQUASS customers can expect:

- EQUASS Europe to handle their certification process in an impartial and equitable way, regardless of the customer's standing with EQUASS Europe and its associated organisation, including organisations represented in its ownership, its management board, and its Awarding Committee
- To be assigned an auditor that has signed a code of Ethics for its auditing activities, pertaining to the handling of confidential information, and its impartiality towards the customer.
- That the auditor assigned, disclose to EQUASS Europe, any conflict of interest with the EQUASS customer that may prevent her/him from performing the assessment without conflict or interest.

EQUASS expects its customers:

- To deal in an honest, truthful and forthcoming way with its assigned Auditor, when providing information, planning the audit, and facilitating the execution of the audit activities.

Professionalism and Transparency

EQUASS customers can expect:

- To be treated in a respectful and courteous manner by their auditor and that those interviewed or interacting with the auditor in the course of their site visit, including persons served, staff, stakeholders and funders be treated respectfully as well.
- To be assigned an auditor that has been properly trained, qualified and informed on EQUASS Audit procedures, and that was nominated by the EQUASS Awarding Committee.
- That the auditor shall be transparent with the customer in its audit planning, and eventual revision of the audit planning, and inform the customer in advance of any changes to the schedule of activities.
- Transparency in the certification process, both through EQUASS Europe and its Local Licence Holders.

EQUASS expects its customers:

- To accommodate the audit activities with the Auditor, schedule the collaboration of outside partners as needed, and remain flexible to the possible changes needed to the activities schedule.
- To have their documentation organised and prepared in anticipation of the audit visit.

Complaints, and Appeal

There are comprehensive complaints and appeal procedures open to all customers of EQUASS Europe, and available on its website and EQUASS encourages its customers to avail of these if they are in any way dissatisfied with the service they receive.

EQUASS customers can expect:

- That if they make a complaint, EQUASS Europe will deal with it promptly, impartially and in confidence.
- That the customer's complaint will be treated as honest, and in a serious and respectful manner.
- That availing of EQUASS Europe's own complaints procedures will never prejudice their rights to raise issues with the Ombudsman, within the statutory time limits, a formal appeal to EQUASS Europe against the outcome of an EQUASS certification audit.

EQUASS Europe expects its customers:

- To be forthcoming and truthful in their complaints, and to report its complaint in good faith.