JUSTICE MINISTRY EUROPE

# Appeal Criteria & Screening Process

Justice Ministry Europe | ISKCON Europe | 2026

## PART 1 — PURPOSE & ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

# PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document establishes the screening framework for the Justice Ministry Europe (JME). Once a complaint, appeal, or referral has been received via the Intake Officer, this document sets out how it is screened and routed. Its primary objective is to

1. formalise the Standing Committee's screening function, ensuring that matters are properly assessed before being admitted to the JME for processing
2. clarify the respective roles of the Intake Officer, the Standing Committee and the Appeals Committee, and
3. outline the criteria to be considered in the event of an appeal.

This document applies to all matters received by the JME, including first-instance complaints referred by the Intake Officer and appeals submitted against decisions of the Case Panel or of local or regional ISKCON justice mechanisms. It does not govern the internal proceedings of the Case Panel itself.

# 1. SCREENING ROLES AND ROUTING OF MATTERS

Matters referred by the Intake Officer to the Standing Committee are evaluated against the criteria in Part 2. Where the criteria is met, the matter is accepted by the Standing Committee and referred to the Case Manager for formal registration and processing. Where not, the Standing Committee exercises its **Right of Refusal**, stating which criterion was not met.

The Standing Committee sits at the entry point of the JME's case-handling pipeline. Before case file is allocated or referred further, it must pass through the Standing Committee's screening process.

All appeals are received through the Intake Officer and referred to the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee then confirms that they fall within the JME's appellate jurisdiction and directs them to the Case Manager. The Standing Committee does not apply the appeal criteria in Part 3: it is for the Appeals Committee to independently assess and confirm whether the grounds of further appeal are established. Where grounds are met, the Appeals Committee appoints an Appeal Panel. Where the requirements are not met, the appeal is refused, as expanded on in section 3.2.

## 1.1 Roles in Screening

The Intake Officer, the Standing Committee and the Appeals Committee each have a distinct role. The Intake Officer triages and refers; the Standing Committee decides whether the complaint is admitted and routes appeals; and the Appeals Committee decides whether further appeal within the JME structure is admissible.

| Body | Role in screening |
|---|---|
| **Intake Officer** | Provided by ISKCON Resolve Ombuds. First point of contact for every complaint, appeal or referral, whether first-instance or appellate.<br>Carries out a preliminary, non-binding assessment only: whether the matter appears to fall within ISKCON's ecclesiastical jurisdiction, whether local remedies appear to have been exhausted, and whether the submission is complete, clear and timely.<br>Explains the available fora, the process and its confidentiality limits (including the option of civil and/or criminal action); identifies urgent risks; screens for conflicts of interest; acknowledges receipt; logs the matter; and redirects it to the appropriate forum. Where the complainant or appellant opts for the JME, refers the matter to the Standing Committee and liaises with it thereafter.<br>Does not decide admission, assess whether grounds of appeal are established, or consider the merits. Reports regularly to the Head of Intake Office – Europe. |
| **Standing Committee** | **Referred Case:** applies the criteria detailed in Part 2, and either admits the matter and delegates it to a Case Manager or exercises the Right of Refusal.<br>**Appeals:** does not apply the appeal criteria in Part 3. It confirms that the submission is an appeal the JME can hear (a decision of a local or regional authority, whereupon local remedies are evidently exhausted, and not a decision |

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| | of an office with its own appeal procedure) and directs it to the Case Manager. If it is not, it returns the matter to the Intake Officer for redirection.<br>Also supports the appeals function by reviewing procedural adherence and advising on complex or escalated cases. |
| **Appeals Committee** | The body responsible for applying the appeal criteria within the JME structure.<br>**Tier 1:** assesses whether the admissibility requirements in section 3.1 are met and whether a ground of appeal in Part 3 is established.<br>**Tier 2:** if the appeal is accepted, appoints an Appeal Panel to hear it and issue a final decision.<br>The Correspondence Secretary handles all communications in the appeals process, keeping the Standing Committee duly informed. |
| **Case Manager** | Registers the case and appoints the Investigator and Case Panel. **Appeals:** coordinates the Appeal Panel on behalf of the Appeals Committee and communicates final decisions to the parties via the Communications Committee. |
| **Records Committee** | Is notified of all refusals and of appeals admitted; archives refusal and appeal decisions. |

## PART 2 — ADMISSION CRITERIA: CASE REFERRALS

The Standing Committee applies the following criteria when screening cases referred by the Intake Officer. All criteria must be satisfied for the matter to be admitted. Where one or more criteria are not met, the Standing Committee may exercise the Right of Refusal, refer the matter to a more appropriate forum, or request supplementation from the complainant.

| Criterion | Assessment Standard |
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| **1. Jurisdiction** | The subject matter falls within the territorial and subject-matter jurisdiction of JME. The Standing Committee confirms that neither the complainant nor the respondent is outside the JME's geographic remit. The matter must not concern a decision of an office for which a separate appeal procedure already exists. |
| **2. Exhaustion of Local Remedies** | The complainant has genuinely availed themselves of available local and regional ISKCON justice mechanisms - including resolution through local temple leadership or the ISKCON Resolve mediation process - before escalating to JME. Where local remedies have not been exhausted without adequate justification, the matter is reverted to the Intake Officer with guidance. |
| **3. Procedural Compliance** | The complaint has been submitted through the stipulated intake process and contains sufficient particulars (parties, nature of the complaint, relevant dates, prior steps taken) to enable meaningful assessment. Materially incomplete submissions may be returned for supplementation within a defined period. |
| **4. Prima Facie Merit** | The complaint discloses a matter of substance that, if established, would warrant a remedial or disciplinary response under ISKCON laws, policies, and governance standards. Frivolous, vexatious, or clearly unfounded complaints will not be admitted. |
| **5. Appropriate Forum** | JME is the correct forum for the matter, as distinct from another ISKCON body (e.g., the GBC, a local temple board, ISKCON Resolve, or other regional systems for resolving disputes and complaints). The Standing Committee may refer matters to a more appropriate forum where JME is not the right vehicle. |
| **6. No Abuse of Process** | The complaint is not being deployed as an instrument of harassment, retaliation, bad faith, or to re-litigate a matter already determined. The Standing Committee may consider patterns of conduct and prior complaint history in making this assessment.<br><br>Where there is parallel or concurrent jurisdiction, the applicant must elect one forum in which to submit, to avoid forum-shopping. This refers to pursuing the same or substantially the same matter, or seeking the same remedy, in more than one forum, whether at the same time or one after another, in the hope of obtaining a more favourable outcome.<br>Where more than one forum could have jurisdiction (for example the JME, a local temple board or council, ISKCON Resolve, the CPO or another ISKCON body, or a secular court), the applicant must select a single forum and submit under it. |
| **7. Timeliness** | A complaint must be brought within a reasonable time from when the complainant knew, or ought reasonably to have known, of the conduct in question. No fixed limitation period applies; the Standing Committee weighs the severity of the complaint, the complainant's circumstances, any impediments to earlier reporting, and any prejudice to the respondent's genuine and material ability to respond. Where conduct is ongoing, time runs from the most recent act. |
| **8. GDPR Lawful Basis** | Processing the personal data contained in the complaint can be conducted on a valid lawful basis under GDPR (Article 6). As a Data Controller, JME must |

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| | confirm this basis before admitting the matter and initiating data processing. In most cases, the applicable basis will be legitimate interest or, where required, consent. |

## 2.1 Procedure on Refusal

Where the Standing Committee refuses admission of a case, it must:

- Issue a written notice of refusal to the Intake Office within 5 business days of the decision
- State clearly which criterion or criteria were not met and the reasons
- Indicate whether re-submission is possible and, if so, what is required
- Ensure that the refusal notice does not disclose personal data of the respondent beyond what is strictly necessary

**GDPR Note**

A refusal notice must itself comply with GDPR. Personal data processed in the course of the screening assessment (even where admission is refused) must be handled in accordance with JME's data retention schedule and subject rights obligations. The Records Committee must be informed of all refusal decisions for archiving purposes.

# 3. APPEAL CRITERIA

An appeal is a formal challenge to a decision made by the appointed case panel (Panel) under the JME.

This entails a structured review of whether that decision was procedurally sound and consistent with ISKCON Law, and whether it was substantively defensible.

Appeals are handled by the Appeals Committee through a two-tier process, as set out in section 3.3.

An appeal will be admitted only where one or more of the following grounds are established.

| Ground of Appeal | Description |
|---|---|
| **A. Procedural Irregularity** | The adjudication process was materially defective in a way that prejudiced the appellant's right to a fair hearing. This includes failure to provide adequate notice, denial of the opportunity to be heard, bias or conflict of interest in the Panel, or failure to follow JME's established procedures. |
| **B. Error of Law or Policy** | The Panel misapplied ISKCON laws, policies, or governance standards in reaching its decision. A mere disagreement with how the Panel weighed the evidence is not sufficient; there must be an identifiable legal or policy error. |
| **C. Unreasonable Finding** | The Panel's factual findings were so contrary to the evidence before it that no reasonable Panel properly directing itself could have reached them. The threshold is high; the Appeals Committee does not substitute its own view of the facts. |
| **D. New and Significant Evidence** | Evidence has come to light that was not available at the time of the original hearing and that is of sufficient weight that it could reasonably have affected the outcome. Evidence that was available but not adduced by the appellant will not ordinarily satisfy this ground. |
| **E. Disproportionate Outcome** | The sanction or remedy imposed by the Panel was manifestly disproportionate to the nature and gravity of the findings. Minor adjustments of degree do not meet this threshold; the disproportion must be clear and significant. |

## 3.1 Admissibility Requirements

In addition to establishing a ground of appeal, an appeal submission must satisfy the following admissibility requirements:

- The appeal is lodged within 28 calendar days of the date of the Panel's written decision (extensions may be granted by the Appeal Committee in exceptional circumstances)
- The appeal is submitted in writing using the designated JME appeal form and contains sufficient particulars to identify the ground(s) relied upon
- The appellant is a party to the original proceedings (or has standing as a directly affected person, subject to the Appeal Committee's determination)
- The appellant has not previously exhausted the appeal process in respect of the same decision
- The matter is not sub judice in any civil, criminal, or other ISKCON proceedings that would require this appeal to be stayed. Where there is parallel or concurrent jurisdiction, the applicant must elect one forum in which to submit, to avoid forum-shopping.
- Decisions of an office that has its own separate appeal procedure fall outside this appellate authority.

**Records Committee Notification**

Once an appeal is admitted, the Appeals Committee notifies the Records Committee that the matter is sub judice for appeal purposes. Enforcement of the Panel's decision is stayed pending the outcome of the appeal unless the Appeals Committee directs otherwise on grounds of urgent necessity.

## 3.2 Procedure on Refusal - Appeals

Where an appeal is refused as inadmissible, the Appeals Committee must:

- Issue a written notice of inadmissibility within 10 business days, stating which admissibility requirement was not met and/or which ground of appeal was not established
- Notify the Records Committee, which is responsible for archiving the decision
- Direct the Correspondence Secretary to notify the appellant, ensuring they are informed of any right to seek reconsideration within a defined period and handling all further communications arising from the decision
- Ensure the Communications Committee is briefed for any external correspondence required.

## 3.3 Two-Tier Review

Parties may appeal decisions in accordance with the process below. Appeals are reviewed in two tiers:

- **Tier 1.** The Appeals Committee makes a preliminary assessment to determine whether the grounds of appeal are established and the appeal is admissible (section 3.1).
- **Tier 2.** If the appeal is accepted, the Appeals Committee appoints an Appeal Panel, coordinated by the Case Manager, to hear the appeal and issue a final decision.

The Case Manager, via the Communications Committee, communicates the final decision to all relevant parties.

# 4. STANDARD TIMELINES

## 4.1 First Screening by Standing Committee

| Stage | Target Timeframe |
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| **Receipt of referral from Intake Officer** | Day 0 |
| **Standing Committee initial review** | Within 10 business days |
| **Request for supplementation (where submissions are materially incomplete)** | Within 10 business days of Day 0 |
| **Supplementation received** | Within 10 business days of request |
| **Admission / Refusal decision** | Within 10 business days of completed submission |
| **Notification to parties and Intake Officer** | Within 5 business days of decision |

## 4.2 Appeal Admissibility Screening

| Stage | Target Timeframe |
|---|---|
| **Receipt of appeal submission** | Day 0 (receipt must be within 28 days of Panel decision) |
| **Standing Committee threshold check and direction to Appeals Committee** | Within 5 business days of receipt |
| **Appeals Committee admissibility review & decision** | Within 10 business days of referral from the Standing Committee |
| **Notification to parties and Appeals Committee** | Within 5 business days of decision |
| **Records Committee notified (if admitted)** | Within 5 business days of admission |