

SOP Template: Approval, Escalation, and Exception Handling Steps

This SOP details the **approval, escalation, and exception handling steps** to ensure efficient decision-making and issue resolution within the organization. It covers the process for obtaining necessary approvals, criteria and procedures for escalating unresolved or critical matters to higher authorities, and standardized methods for managing exceptions to established policies or workflows. This approach aims to maintain operational consistency, minimize delays, and enhance accountability across all departments.

1. Purpose

Define the standardized process for approvals, escalation, and exception handling to ensure clarity, transparency, and accountability.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all employees, managers, and relevant stakeholders involved in decision-making, issue management, and exception processing.

3. Approval Process

- Initiation:** Submit the request with all required documentation through the designated approval system or form.
- Review:** The immediate supervisor/approver reviews the request for completeness and compliance with policy.
- Decision:** Approver either approves, rejects, or requests additional information within the defined timeframe.
- Communication:** The decision is documented and communicated to the requester and relevant parties.
- Documentation:** All approval records must be archived as per company policy.

4. Escalation Process

- Trigger:** Escalation occurs when an issue is unresolved after the initial review period or is judged as critical/urgent by responsible personnel.
- Escalation Levels:**
 - First Level: Department Manager/Supervisor
 - Second Level: Senior Manager/Director
 - Third Level: Executive Leadership/Committee
- Procedure:**
 - Document unresolved issue or decision with supporting evidence/statements.
 - Submit escalation through appropriate channel (email, system, or meeting request).
 - Track and monitor progress until resolution.
 - Inform all stakeholders regarding outcomes and further required actions.

5. Exception Handling

- Identification:** Recognize and document deviations from established policies or standard workflows.
- Submission:** Formal written request for exception is submitted with justification and supporting documents.
- Assessment:** Relevant authority reviews request to assess impact, risks, and possible alternatives.
- Decision:** Approve, conditionally approve, or reject the exception and communicate the decision.
- Record-Keeping:** All exception decisions and supporting documentation are retained and periodically reviewed for process improvement.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Requester	Submits approval or exception requests with necessary documentation.
Approver	Reviews requests, makes decisions, and communicates outcomes.
Escalation Contact	Addresses escalated issues and coordinates resolution at higher levels.

Compliance/Process Owner	Ensures adherence to this SOP and maintains relevant records.
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7. Related Documents

- [Approval Request Form](#)
- [Exception Request Form](#)
- [Escalation Log Template](#)
- [Company Policy Manual](#)

8. Revision History

Date	Version	Description	Author
2024-06-15	1.0	Initial SOP Template Creation	[Your Name]