ACCREDITATION CRITERIA FOR BODIES OPERATING CERTIFICATION OF PERSONS

AC474

February 2015
(Effective April 1, 2015)

(Previously issued October 2011 and June 2013)

The attached accreditation criteria has been issued to provide all interested parties with guidelines on implementing performance features of the applicable standards referenced herein. The criteria was developed and adopted following public hearings conducted by the International Accreditation Service, Inc. (IAS), Accreditation Committee and is effective on the date shown above. All accreditations issued or reissued on or after the effective date must comply with this criteria. If the criteria is an updated version from a previous edition, solid vertical lines (|) in the outer margin within the criteria indicate a technical change or addition from the previous edition. Deletion indicators (→) are provided in the outer margins where a paragraph or item has been deleted if the deletion resulted from a technical change. This criteria may be further revised as the need dictates.

IAS may consider alternate criteria provided the proponent submits substantiating data demonstrating that the alternate criteria are at least equivalent to the attached criteria and otherwise meet applicable accreditation requirements.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope: These accreditation criteria set forth requirements for personnel certification bodies to obtain and maintain International Accreditation Service, Inc. (IAS), accreditation, and for the qualifying data and systems which must be demonstrated relating to the scope of personnel certification for which accreditation is sought. These criteria supplement the IAS Rules of Procedure for Accreditation of Personnel Certification Bodies.

1.2 References and Normative Documents: Publications listed below refer to current editions (unless otherwise stated).

   b) ISO/IEC 17024, Conformity assessment – General requirements for bodies operating certification of persons.
   c) IAS Rules of Procedure for Accreditation of Personnel Certification Bodies.
   d) AERA/APA/NCME, Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing.
   e) IAS Policy on Accreditation Certificate Validity.
   f) International Accreditation Forum (IAF) MD 12, Assessment of Certification Activities for Cross-Frontier Accreditation.

2.0 BASIC INFORMATION

Applicants must submit the following basic information:

2.1 Data showing compliance with the IAS Rules of Procedure for Accreditation of Personnel Certification Bodies.
2.2 Data showing compliance with Section 4.0, Required Data, of these criteria.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

3.1 Accreditation Committee: A committee appointed by the IAS Board of Directors to monitor the work of and to develop accreditation criteria for IAS.

3.2 Certification Body (CB): A body that issues certification of persons as evidence of professional competency.

NOTE: In cases where a Certification Body is part of an organization that provides additional services other than the certification of persons, the term “Certification Body” refers only to those parts of that organization that are involved in the certification of persons. As used herein, the term “Certification Body” refers to a body that carries out personnel certification at or from a permanent location.

3.3 Validation: Provision of objective evidence that examinations fulfill specified requirements which are established by professional norms, statutes, and by the CB.

4.0 REQUIRED DATA

4.1 Applicable Standards: The applicant shall demonstrate compliance with all applicable requirements for the administration of personnel certification, with these accreditation criteria, and with IAS Rules of Procedure for Accreditation of Personnel Certification Bodies.

4.2 Organization: When a CB is part of a larger organization which provides other services, a clear relationship between certification of persons and other activities must be clearly delineated through an organizational chart or supplemented with narrative description to demonstrate that the other activities do not compromise the confidentiality and impartiality of its certification decisions.

4.3 Certification Requirements: The applicant shall define all certification requirements through a certification scheme which complies with all requirements of ISO/IEC 17024. A certification scheme for persons must include scope, job and task description, required competence, abilities (when applicable), prerequisites (when applicable) and code of conduct (when applicable). Certification process requirements include criteria for initial certification, surveillance and recertification, assessment methods for initial and recertification, criteria for suspending and withdrawing certification and criteria for changing the scope or level of certification (if applicable). When there is a change in the certification scheme which requires additional assessment, the certification body shall develop processes and/or mechanisms for ensuring that all certified persons who were certified in the past comply with the changed requirements within a specified period of time.

4.4 Certification Decisions: The CB shall identify staff who are authorized to make the decision on certification. The CB shall confine its decisions on certification to those matters specifically related to the requirements of the certification scheme.

4.5 Subcontracted Work: When the applicant subcontracts any portion of the work to an outside agency, there must be evidence that the CB is assessing the subcontractor regarding the contracted functions and the CB staff has the competence in the area being assessed.

4.6 Job or Practice Analysis: The applicant shall demonstrate correlation of examinations with job or practice analysis research which is representative of competent professional practice for the intended market. Job or practice analysis shall identify tasks for successful performance, identify the required competence for each task, identify prerequisites (if applicable), confirm the assessment mechanisms and examination content, and identify the recertification requirements and interval.

4.7 Validation Studies: The applicant shall provide satisfactory evidence of the validity of examinations and associated certification decisions through administration to a minimum of twenty candidates. Upon award of accreditation, the applicant shall maintain continuing
evidence of the validity of the program. Examinations must be reviewed at least on an annual basis to determine if the examinations are fair, valid and reliable.

4.8 Staffing: The applicant shall provide a listing of all staff, and evidence of their training and qualifications for their respective responsibilities.

5.0 ON-SITE ASSESSMENTS AND ACCREDITATION

On-site assessments are required to determine the degree of compliance with these accreditation criteria. A team of trained assessors and subject matter experts shall visit each applicant organization to conduct a thorough review of the organization and its compliance with accreditation requirements.

5.1 Preassessment: Prior to scheduling the full on-site assessment, IAS may require a two-day visit to the applicant by a lead assessor and a subject matter expert, to review and comment on its degree of compliance with these accreditation criteria.

5.2 Full Assessment: In consultation with the applicant, a full on-site assessment is scheduled to verify compliance with these accreditation criteria.

Upon conclusion of the on-site visit, the team leader provides the applicant with verbal feedback and a preliminary report which includes specific information on corrective action requests, concerns, or comments, if any. Within 30 days of the assessment, a formal written assessment report is relayed to the applicant by IAS.

5.3 Follow-up Assessment: In some cases, the team leader may recommend to IAS that a follow-up assessment take place to verify implementation of corrective measures taken by the applicant in response to corrective action requests or concerns cited during the full assessment. Typically, follow-up assessments include the team leader and another member for one or two days on-site.

5.4 Accreditation: If the full assessment report indicates compliance with all requirements, and when the applicant has satisfactorily resolved all corrective action requests and concerns which were identified in the report, the applicant is placed on a list for final review and decision by IAS to grant accreditation.

5.5 Surveillance Assessment: Accredited agencies are subject to an on-site surveillance assessment at the conclusion of the initial year of accreditation. Typically, surveillance assessments include the team leader and another member for one or two days on-site.

5.6 Reassessment: At the end of every two-year term commencing from the date of the surveillance assessment, the certification body will be subject to on-site reassessment by IAS.

5.7 Key Activities: For surveillance assessment and reassessment IAS requires all premises with one or more key activities to be assessed within the two-year reassessment cycle. At surveillance assessments, premises with key activities not visited during the initial assessment will require review based on client files or, where appropriate, by an on-site assessment.

6.0 REPORT ON CHANGES

To maintain accredited status, the certification body must, at all times, remain in compliance with these accreditation criteria and IAS rules of procedure. The certification body shall promptly (i.e., within 30 days) notify IAS of any changes in key staff, facilities, operating procedures, or any problems that could potentially impact the body’s accredited status.