ACCREDITATION CRITERIA FOR PRODUCT CERTIFICATION AGENCIES

AC370

February 2015
(Effective April 1, 2015)


PREFACE

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: This criteria sets forth the requirements for obtaining and maintaining International Accreditation Service, Inc. (IAS), product certification agency ("agency") accreditation and for the qualifying data that must be submitted relating to the scope of certification for which accreditation is sought. This criteria supplements the IAS Rules of Procedure for Product Certification Agency Accreditation.

1.2 References and Normative Documents: Publications listed below refer to current editions (unless otherwise stated), current editions of related construction codes published by the International Code Council or codes duly adopted by the relevant jurisdiction.


   1.2.2 IAS Rules of Procedure for Product Certification Agency Accreditation.

   1.2.3 ISO/IEC Guide 65: General requirements for bodies operating product certification systems.


   1.2.5 ISO/IEC 17000: Conformity assessment – Vocabulary and general principles.

   1.2.6 ISO/IEC 17011: Conformity assessment – General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies.

   1.2.7 ISO/IEC Standard 17020: Conformity assessment – Requirements for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspection.

   1.2.8 ISO/IEC Standard 17025: General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories.

   1.2.9 ISO/IEC Standard 17065: Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services.

   1.2.10 IAS Policy on Accreditation Certificate Validity.


2.0 DEFINITIONS

2.1 Accreditation: Third-party attestation related to a conformity assessment body conveying formal demonstration of its competence to carry out specific conformity assessment tasks.

2.2 Desk Assessment: A remote assessment tool used to evaluate compliance as part of the ongoing plan of surveillance. Desk assessments are limited in scope, typically only covering a small number of key requirements. Desk assessments rely heavily on computer-assisted auditing techniques, including teleconferencing, web meetings, interactive web-based communications, and remote electronic access to management system documentation and records. Sometimes referred to as "desktop assessments," desk assessments are not intended to replace the need for periodic on-site surveillance and reassessment of an accredited organization.

2.3 Laboratory: A body that calibrates and/or tests.

2.4 Product Certification: The issuance of a statement (e.g., mark or certificate) by a third party that the fulfillment of specified requirements has been demonstrated for a product, process, or service.

2.5 Product Certification System: Rules, procedures and management for carrying out third-party product conformity assessment.

3.0 ELIGIBILITY

3.1 Accreditation services are available to third party Product Certification Agencies that:

   3.1.1 Operate testing laboratories and inspection agencies; or

   3.1.2 Maintain a subcontract agreement with a testing laboratory and/or inspection agency meeting the requirements of ISO/IEC Standard 17065, Section 6.2.2 External Resources (outsourcing).

3.2 In addition to the requirements given in this document, Product Certification Agencies must demonstrate compliance with the following requirements:

   3.2.1 IAS Rules of Procedure for Product Certification Agency Accreditation;

   3.2.2 ISO/IEC Standard 17065: Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services;

   3.2.3 ISO/IEC Standard 17020: Conformity assessment – Requirements for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspection;

   3.2.4 ISO/IEC Standard 17025: General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories; and

   3.2.5 ISO/IEC Standard 17021: Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems.

Note 1: Requirements for testing laboratories apply only to certification schemes that require testing as part of the evaluation criteria.

Note 2: Requirements for inspection bodies apply only to certification schemes that include an inspection activity as part of the evaluation criteria.

Note 3: Requirements related to compliance with ISO/IEC 17021 apply only to those certification schemes that include the evaluation of management systems as part of the evaluation criteria.

Note 4: The extent to which these International Standards apply can be determined by consulting the certification scheme. The impartiality requirements for evaluation of personnel stipulated in the relevant standards shall always
apply. Reference ISO/IEC 17025, Section 6.2.1 Internal Resources and Section 6.2.2 External Resources (outsourcing), for additional guidance on the applicability of ISO/IEC 17020, ISO/IEC 17021 and ISO/IEC 17025 to product certification systems.

3.3 All applicants must have operated and provided certification services for at least six months in accordance with ISO/IEC 17065 and completed a minimum of one certification per major category of certification, including completion of the decision-making process and issuance of certificate.

3.4 All applicants must have completed at least one internal audit and management review in accordance with the management system requirements of ISO/IEC 17065.

4.0 SUPPLEMENTAL REQUIREMENTS

4.1 When the certification system used as the basis for a certification activity requires surveillance at the point of manufacturing or assembly, the certification agency must have requirements that every manufacturing or assembly plant producing certified products be visited to perform surveillance activities for certified products. In the absence of a generally recognized minimum surveillance frequency, the certification agency shall require that each manufacturing or assembly location authorized to produce the certified product be visited for the purpose of surveillance a minimum of once per year or in accordance with the scheme, whichever is more frequent.

4.2 Inspection agencies and testing laboratories must meet one of the following criteria:

4.2.1 Accreditation by IAS, or by another signatory to the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) or the Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (APLAC) Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA); or

4.2.2 Comply with ISO/IEC 17020 and/or ISO/IEC 17025 as applicable, determined through assessment of the inspection agency and/or testing laboratory by qualified certification agency personnel. In addition to the requirements given in ISO/IEC 17020 and/or ISO/IEC 17025, evidence of compliance shall include the qualifications of personnel conducting the assessment, and a system for determining continued compliance that includes periodic on-site assessments, review of assessment reports, and corrective action reports.

4.3 Certification programs for processes and services must have requirements for determining continued compliance that include assessment of the management system and the actual process or service at least once per year.

5.0 ON-SITE ASSESSMENT

5.1 Prior to accreditation, certification agencies shall be subject to an on-site assessment by IAS. This assessment is to determine compliance with this criteria (AC370), including evaluation of expertise in the area(s) of certification where accreditation is sought.

5.2 After the initial year of accreditation, product certification agencies are subject to an on-site surveillance assessment. The surveillance assessment of the agency shall include, at a minimum, review of the management system, including the following: internal audit reports, minutes of management review meetings, any changes in key personnel, facilities or any other significant changes in the scope of accreditation or other related systems of the agency.

5.3 A full reassessment visit by IAS is required at the end of every two-year term commencing from the date of the surveillance assessment for verification of continued compliance with IAS accreditation requirements.

5.4 Where required and when appropriate conditions prevail (e.g., scope expansions, relocation of premises, follow-up assessments, etc.), IAS may consider a combination of desk assessments and/or on-site witness visits. IAS’ decision to grant a desk assessment is final when this option is requested by the PCA. Desk assessments are not intended to replace the need for periodic on-site surveillance and reassessments of an accredited organization.

6.0 WITNESSING INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

When the certification scheme used as the basis for a certification activity requires the on-site evaluation of the production process or management system, IAS will periodically witness actual on-site inspections by each accredited certification agency.

6.1 For initial accreditation, a sampling from the categories of certification shall be witnessed prior to the granting of accreditation.

6.2 A minimum of one inspection activity based on sampling of the major categories of certification shall be witnessed during on-site assessments.

6.3 The selection of locations for a witness activity shall be made by IAS in consultation with the certification agency. The geographic distribution of manufacturing or assembly locations authorized to produce certified products shall be considered.

7.0 WITNESS TESTING

All witness testing activities conducted at a manufacturer’s facility must be witnessed by technically competent certification agency staff who are trained not only in the test being witnessed, but in the appropriate sections of ISO/IEC Standard 17025. If the certification scheme to which the product is to be certified contains specific requirements or limitations pertaining to witness testing, the requirements of the certification scheme shall also apply. Appropriate measures must be taken for long-term testing or sample collection, where constant witnessing is not feasible, to ensure tampering of the sample or testing equipment does not take place.

8.0 USE OF MANUFACTURER’S DATA

If a certification agency plans to use data generated and submitted by a manufacturer that is not part of witness testing, the certification agency must have a program in place to ensure validity and independence of the data. The certification agency shall consider the following possible elements for such a program and shall have justification for those it chooses not to utilize: auditing the manufacturer to appropriate elements of ISO/IEC Standard 17025; performing random duplicate analyses; having the manufacturer participate in proficiency testing
programs, where available; technical review of the raw data rather than acceptance of just a number or result; limiting testing to only those client’s analysts who have been approved by the certification agency to perform the testing; outside accreditation of the manufacturer’s laboratory; random unannounced visits to the manufacturer’s laboratory during product testing; and review of in-plant quality assurance/quality control results.

If the certification scheme to which the product is to be certified contains specific requirements or limitations pertaining to the use of manufacturer’s data, the requirements of the certification scheme shall also apply.

1 Transition to ISO/IEC 17020: All IAS-accredited inspection bodies must demonstrate compliance with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17020:2012 by January 1, 2015.

2 Transition to ISO/IEC 17065: All IAS-accredited certification bodies must demonstrate compliance with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17065 by July 1, 2015.