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## IAS Lead Assessor Course Chapter 3 – Meetings and Interviews

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### Course Outline



1. Introduction
2. Accreditation and Assessment Basics
3. Planning and Conduct of Assessments
- 4. Meetings and Interviews**
5. Writing Assessment Findings
6. Writing Assessment Reports
7. Addressing and Closing out Findings
8. Final Exam

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## Types of Meetings



There are four formal meeting types and a few informal ones. The formal ones include:

- the opening meeting,
- interviews of CAB staff,
- wash up meetings, and
- the closing meeting.

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## Opening meeting Agenda



### Agenda

1. Introduction and thanks,
2. Confirm scope of testing and/or calibration covered by the CAB application,
3. Confirm purpose of the assessment and the functions of the assessment team, and confirmation that CAB staff understand the assessment procedure,
4. Confirm assessment methods, document review, interview and observation
5. Review CAB responses to findings raised in any previous assessment,
6. Review role of CAB representatives in the assessment,
7. Determine closing meeting time and venue,
8. Review assessor adherence to confidentiality,
9. Confirm logistics issues during the assessment,
10. Confirm assessment process, working hours, lunch breaks, offsite travel arrangements,
11. Respond to questions.
12. Depart for Tour of Facilities

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## Assessor Approaches



### **Assessment Secret**

Open every meeting with “Thank you for agreeing to.....”

This includes the opening meeting, the intermediate wash-up meetings and the closing meeting.

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## Assessor Approaches



The success of the entire assessment rests with the assessor. Included with this accountability is the authority to conduct meetings, ask questions, observe processes, exercise judgments, raise issues, investigate, and write findings. In other words, the assessor is the one doing all the work, and theirs is the responsibility for the resulting report.

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## Communication Styles



Typically, assessors tend to either want to:

- “get to the point” in discussions or
- “get a feeling for the circumstance.”

These are very different communication styles. They each have their advantages. In an assessment, where those being assessed are already frightened of the assessor, the softer approach is the one that is preferred.

Direct questions and crossed arms indicate the closed mind of a hunter. Standing at ease with an open posture asking, “How do you do this process...” questions indicate an open mind that is interested in what CAB staff has to say. Avoid the former. Do more of the latter.

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## Communication Styles



- Ask “how” they do something, not “why” they do it.
- Ask for records to confirm details, not to prove they are right or wrong.
- Focus on obtaining evidence that demonstrates conformance and competence, not on whether their approach matches the written requirement. There will always be discussion when it does not.

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## Interview Agenda



Interviews can be the most stressful part of an assessment, for both the assessor and CAB personnel. It is important that, like other events in the assessment, the interview can be considered confirmation of agreements made to date.

The aim of any interview is to acquire an understanding of how CAB staff envisions and executes their processes. Assessors are trying to understand how the CAB staff perceives requirements. Assessors must develop the common language of the process, or any resulting finding is just one more thing being forced on them.

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## Facing Conflict during Interviews



An assessment can be a stressful activity for all concerned. Many assessors and CAB staff do not have a great deal of comfort within themselves in this type of circumstance. The responsibility for the conduct of the interview, as in all things associated with an assessment lies solely with the assessor.

If challenges from CAB staff occur that may impede the conduct of the assessment, the responsibility for the solution rests with the assessor, or if the assessor is part of a team, the lead assessor.

If the issue cannot be resolved with the intercession of the quality manager, CAB manager or team leader, remove the challenge or amend the assessment plan.

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## Facing Conflict during Interviews



The best course of action to take involves the following:

- assessors remain neutral or withdraw from the area of conflict,
- inform the lead assessor,
- inform the quality manager or CAB manager,
- if the problem persists, pause the assessment until the conflict is resolved.
- if resolution is not possible, contact the AB.

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## Selecting Records during Interviews



There are two effective techniques:

- discuss the process and pick up records along the way, or
- ask for some records which help document how the process works – then discuss as you examine records.

If there are few process records and the process is relatively simple, the first approach works best. If there are many records and the process is complex, the second approach works best.

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## Recording Assessment Observations



All circumstances of note should be recorded, as these may eventually become part of the assessment report. This includes the good and the bad. Both may appear on an assessment report and assessment findings require evidence.

Observations may include times, processes, locations, equipment, records, and procedures. All of these can be cited as evidence of a finding.

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## Recording Observations during Document Review



Observations are normally written in the space provided on the checklist forms AF04 and AF07 from the Assessor Tool Kit.

They are retained until the assessment, and may be raised as issues to allow evidence to be gathered to either confirm or deny the validity of the observation.

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## Recording Observations during Onsite Assessment



When an observation seems to indicate a non-conforming activity or circumstance, CAB staff present should be made aware of this possibility. **It is important to NOT declare a finding**, but it is important that the reasons behind the possibility of one are made known. This prevents surprises in the closing meeting.

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## Selling the Observations during Onsite Assessment



Assessors must “sell” the idea that the condition observed may not meet requirements – and a finding may have to be written. Evidence should be clear, and the circumstance should be obvious. Start with: “We have found this. What would you like me to do?”

Any hint at not reporting it is obviously unethical and CAB staff may have no choice but to ask you to document the observation as a potential finding. Do so. You have their concurrence.

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## Washup Meetings and Agenda



- Held at the end of each day, or the beginning of the next.
- Discuss observations only – they are not yet findings and may never become findings.

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## Closing meeting Agenda



### Agenda

1. Introduction and thanks,
2. Confirm scope of testing and/or calibration covered by the CAB application,
3. Confirm assessment methods, document review, interview and observation,
4. Confirm confidentiality of all information obtained during the assessment,
5. Present the assessment report, including recommendations and findings,
6. Explain the significance of each type of finding,
7. Confirm desired scope of accreditation,
8. Present AB requirements for CAB responses to findings, timelines and content,
9. Respond to questions.

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## Closing Meetings



- The honeymoon is now over.
- We tried to find only evidence of conformance, but we did not entirely succeed.
- Bad news is about to be delivered, and the assessor(s) is/are now delivering it. The closing meeting can be the most stressful of all assessment meetings. It can also be the most rewarding.

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## Exercise 4 – Conduct Opening Meeting



You are part of the re-assessment team that has been assigned to conduct the re-assessment of MOTIVA CAB Inc. ABC staff has recently sent you the Sample Assessment Package provided separately. You are now working the night before the re-assessment begins and you are preparing for the opening meeting to be held the next morning at the CAB.

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## Exercise 4 – Conduct Opening Meeting



You are to accomplish the following:

1. Use the assessment schedule created during Exercise 3: “AF01-Assessment Schedule” of the **Assessor Tool Kit**).
2. Conduct an opening meeting at MOTIVA CAB Inc, to start the assessment process and deliver the “AF01-Assessment Schedule” of the **Assessor Tool Kit** to meet the following requirements:
  - Use the Agenda shown in “AS01 Assessment Preparation Procedure” of the **Assessor Tool Kit**
  - The agenda is to show the assessment of three methods shown in the desired scope of accreditation
  - Use all the forms normally associated with an opening meeting, including “AF08-Attendance List” of the **Assessor Tool Kit**.

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## Exercise 4 – Conduct Opening Meeting



### Reaching Agreement with the CAB

During the presentation, obtain agreement from the CAB on the approach to be used.

Answer the quiz questions regarding the opening meeting that follow this presentation.

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## Exercise 5 – Conducting Interviews



You are part of the re-assessment team that has been assigned to conduct the re-assessment of MOTIVA CAB Inc. Staff has recently sent you the re-assessment package associated with this re-assessment. See the Sample Assessment Package provided separately. You are part of a team that has been herded into the conference room of the CAB to conduct the interview of key staff, in this case, the quality manager. You are to interview the quality manager.

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## Exercise 5 – Conducting Interviews



You are to accomplish the following:

- 1.Refresh your document review of CAB quality system processes to prepare for the interview of key staff.
- 2.The following quiz makes use of checklist question for your interview so that the CAB staff can demonstrate the conformance of their processes to you.
- 3.Review the answers given to you by the CAB staff to document the conformance (or non-conformance) of their processes.

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