
**Conformity assessment — General
requirements for bodies operating
certification of persons**

*Évaluation de la conformité — Exigences générales pour les
organismes de certification procédant à la certification de personnes*

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Contents

Page

Foreword	iv
Introduction	v
1 Scope	1
2 Normative references	1
3 Terms and definitions	1
4 Requirements for certification bodies	2
4.1 Certification body	2
4.2 Organizational structure	2
4.3 Development and maintenance of a certification scheme	4
4.4 Management system	4
4.5 Subcontracting	4
4.6 Records	5
4.7 Confidentiality	5
4.8 Security	5
5 Requirements for persons employed or contracted by a certification body	5
5.1 General	5
5.2 Requirements for examiners	6
6 Certification process	6
6.1 Application	6
6.2 Evaluation	7
6.3 Decision on certification	7
6.4 Surveillance	8
6.5 Recertification	8
6.6 Use of certificates and logos/marks	8
Annex A (informative) Development and maintenance of a certification scheme for persons	9
Bibliography	10

Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

International Standards are drafted in accordance with the rules given in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2.

The main task of technical committees is to prepare International Standards. Draft International Standards adopted by the technical committees are circulated to the member bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the member bodies casting a vote.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO and IEC shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

ISO/IEC 17024 was prepared by ISO/CASCO, *Committee on Conformity Assessment*.

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Introduction

This International Standard has been drawn up with the objective of achieving and promoting a globally accepted benchmark for organizations operating certification of persons. Certification of persons is one means of providing assurance that the certified person meets the requirements of the certification scheme. Confidence in the respective certification schemes is achieved by means of a globally accepted process of assessment, subsequent surveillance and periodic re-assessments of the competence of certified persons.

However, it is necessary to distinguish between situations where certification schemes for persons are justified and situations where other forms of qualification are more appropriate. The development of new certification schemes for persons, in response to the ever increasing velocity of technological innovation and growing specialization of personnel, may compensate for variations in education and training and thus facilitate the global job market. Alternatives to certification may still be necessary in positions where public services, official or governmental operations are concerned.

In contrast to other types of conformity assessment bodies, such as management system certification/registration bodies, one of the characteristic functions of the personnel certification body is to conduct an examination, which uses objective criteria for competence and scoring. While it is recognized that such an examination, if well planned and structured by the certification body, can substantially serve to ensure impartiality of operations and reduce the risk of a conflict of interest, alternative requirements have been included in this International Standard.

In either case, this International Standard should be the basis for the recognition of the certification bodies and their certification schemes, in order to facilitate their acceptance at the national and international levels. Only the harmonization of the system for developing and maintaining certification schemes for persons can establish the environment for mutual recognition and the global exchange of personnel.

This International Standard specifies requirements which ensure that certification bodies operating certification schemes for persons operate in a consistent, comparable and reliable manner. The requirements in this International Standard are to be considered as general requirements for bodies operating certification schemes for persons and therefore may have to be supplemented in response to additional demonstrated market need/desire (i.e. improvement of the profession) or specific government requirements (i.e. protection of the public).

Conformity assessment — General requirements for bodies operating certification of persons

1 Scope

This International Standard specifies requirements for a body certifying persons against specific requirements, including the development and maintenance of a certification scheme for persons.

NOTE In some countries, bodies which verify the conformity of the competence of persons against specified requirements are called “certification bodies”, in other countries “registration bodies”, in others “assessment and registration bodies” or “certification/registration/licensure bodies”, and in others still “registrars”. This International Standard uses the term “certification body”. However, this use is not limiting.

2 Normative references

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO/IEC Guide 2:1996, *Standardization and related activities — General vocabulary*

ISO 9000:2000, *Quality management systems — Fundamentals and vocabulary*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO/IEC Guide 2 and ISO 9000 and the following apply.

3.1

appeal

request by applicant, candidate or certified person for reconsideration of any adverse decision made by the certification body related to her/his desired certification status

3.2

candidate

applicant who has fulfilled specified prerequisites, allowing his/her participation in the certification process

3.3

certification process

all activities by which a certification body establishes that a person fulfils specified competence requirements, including application, evaluation, decision on certification, surveillance and recertification, use of certificates and logos/marks

3.4

certification scheme

specific certification requirements related to specified categories of persons to which the same particular standards and rules, and the same procedures apply

3.5

certification system

set of procedures and resources for carrying out the certification process as per a certification scheme, leading to the issue of a certificate of competence including maintenance

3.6

competence

demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and/or skills and, where relevant, demonstrated personal attributes, as defined in the certification scheme

3.7

complaint

conformity assessment request, other than an appeal, by any organization or individual to a certification body, for corrective action relating to the activities of that body or to those of any of its customers

3.8

evaluation

process that assesses a person's fulfilment of the requirements of the scheme, leading to a decision on certification

3.9

examination

mechanism that is part of the evaluation, which measures a candidate's competence by one or more means such as written, oral, practical and observational

3.10

examiner

person with relevant technical and personal qualifications, competent to conduct and/or score an examination

3.11

qualification

demonstration of personal attributes, education, training and/or work experience

4 Requirements for certification bodies

4.1 Certification body

4.1.1 The policies and procedures of the certification body and their administration shall be related to the criteria in which certification is sought, shall be fair and equitable among all candidates, and shall comply with all applicable regulations and statutory requirements. The certification body shall not use procedures to impede or inhibit access by applicants and candidates, except as provided for in this International Standard.

4.1.2 The certification body shall define policies and procedures for granting, maintaining, renewing, expanding and reducing the scope of the desired certification, and suspending or withdrawing the certification.

4.1.3 The certification body shall confine its requirements, evaluation and decision on certification to those matters specifically related to the scope of the desired certification.

4.2 Organizational structure

4.2.1 The certification body shall be structured so as to give confidence to interested parties in its competence, impartiality and integrity. In particular, the certification body:

- a) shall be independent and impartial in relation to its applicants, candidates and certified persons, including their employers and their customers, and shall take all possible steps to assure ethical operations;

- b) shall be responsible for its decisions relating to the granting, maintaining, renewing, expanding and reducing the scope, or suspending and withdrawing the certification;
- c) shall identify the management [group(s) or person(s)] which shall have overall responsibility for
 - 1) evaluation, certification and surveillance as defined in this International Standard, the applicable competence standards and other relevant documents,
 - 2) the formulation of policies relating to the operation of the certification body, with regard to certification of persons,
 - 3) decisions on certification,
 - 4) the implementation of its policies and procedures,
 - 5) the finances of the certification body, and
 - 6) the delegation of authority to any committees or individuals to undertake defined activities on its behalf;
- d) shall have documents establishing it as a legal entity or part of a legal entity.

4.2.2 The certification body shall have a documented structure which safeguards impartiality, including provisions to assure the impartiality of the operations of the certification body. This structure shall enable the participation of all parties significantly concerned in the development of policies and principles regarding the content and functioning of the certification system, without any particular interest predominating.

4.2.3 The certification body shall appoint a scheme committee, which shall be responsible for the development and maintenance of the certification scheme for each type of certification being considered. The scheme committee shall fairly and equitably represent the interests of all parties significantly concerned with the certification scheme, without any particular interest predominating. Where a certification scheme is developed by organizations other than the certification body, the respective developer of the scheme shall adhere to the same principles.

4.2.4 The certification body

- a) shall have the financial resources necessary for the operation of a certification system and to cover associated liabilities,
- b) shall have policies and procedures that distinguish between the certification of persons and any other activities, and
- c) shall assure that the activities of bodies related to it do not compromise the confidentiality and impartiality of its certification.

4.2.5 The certification body shall not offer or provide training, or aid others in the preparation of such services, unless it demonstrates how training is independent of the evaluation and certification of persons to ensure that confidentiality and impartiality are not compromised.

4.2.6 The certification body shall define policies and procedures (e.g. code of conduct) for the resolution of appeals and complaints received from applicants, candidates, certified persons and their employers, and other parties about the certification process and criteria, as well as policies and procedures for the performance of certified persons. These policies and procedures shall ensure that appeals and complaints are resolved independently, in an unbiased manner.

4.2.7 The certification body shall employ or contract enough people with the necessary education, training, technical knowledge and experience to perform certification functions relating to the type, range and volume of work performed, under a responsible management.

4.3 Development and maintenance of a certification scheme

4.3.1 The certification body shall define the methods and mechanisms to be used to evaluate the competence of candidates, and shall establish appropriate policies and procedures for the initial development and continued maintenance of these methods and mechanisms.

NOTE Annex A provides guidelines for the development and maintenance of a certification scheme.

4.3.2 The certification body shall define a process for the development and maintenance of certification schemes that includes the review and validation of the scheme by the scheme committee.

4.3.3 The certification body shall, where applicable, give due notice to representatives of the scheme committee of any changes in its requirements for certification. The certification body shall take into account the views expressed by the scheme committee before deciding on the precise form and effective date of the changes. Following decision on, and publication of, the changed requirements, the certification body shall, where applicable, inform the interested parties and the certified persons appropriately. The certification body shall verify that each certified person complies with the changed requirements within such a period of time as is reasonable for the certification body in consultation with the scheme committee.

4.3.4 The criteria against which the competence of a person is evaluated shall be those defined by the certification body in accordance with this International Standard and other relevant documents. If explanation is required as to the application of these documents to a specific certification scheme, it shall be developed by experts, endorsed by the scheme committee, and published by the certification body.

4.3.5 Certification shall not be restricted on the grounds of undue financial or other limiting conditions, such as membership of an association or group. Successful completion of an approved training course may be a requirement of a certification scheme, but recognition/approval of training courses by the certification body shall not compromise impartiality, or reduce the demands of the evaluation and certification requirements.

4.3.6 The certification body shall evaluate the methods for examination of candidates. Examinations shall be fair, valid and reliable. Appropriate methodology and procedures (such as collecting and maintaining statistical data) shall be defined to reaffirm, at least annually, the fairness, validity, reliability and general performance of each examination and all identified deficiencies corrected.

4.4 Management system

4.4.1 The certification body shall operate a management system which is documented and covers all the requirements of this International Standard, and ensures the effective application of these requirements.

NOTE A documented quality management system based on ISO 9001 which addresses the requirements of this International Standard would be one method of satisfying this requirement.

4.4.2 The certification body shall ensure that

- a) a management system is established and maintained in accordance with this International Standard, and
- b) its management system is understood and implemented at all levels of the organization.

4.4.3 The certification body shall have document control and internal audit and management review systems in place, including provisions for continual improvement, corrective and preventive actions.

4.5 Subcontracting

4.5.1 When a certification body decides to subcontract work related to certification (e.g. examination) to an external body or person, a properly documented agreement covering the arrangement, including confidentiality and prevention of a conflict of interest, shall be drawn up. The decision on certification shall not be subcontracted.

4.5.2 The certification body

- a) shall take full responsibility for such subcontracted work and maintain its responsibility for granting, maintaining, renewing, expanding and reducing the scope, and suspending or withdrawing certification;
- b) shall ensure that the subcontractor is competent and complies with the applicable provisions of this International Standard and is not involved, either directly or through their employer, with training or the maintenance of the certification of persons in such a way that confidentiality and impartiality could be compromised, and
- c) shall maintain a list of its subcontractors, and assess and monitor their performance in accordance with documented procedures.

4.6 Records

4.6.1 The certification body shall maintain a record system appropriate to its particular circumstances and to comply with regulations, including a means to confirm the status of a certified person. The records shall demonstrate that the certification process has been effectively fulfilled, particularly with respect to application forms, evaluation reports, surveillance activities and other documents relating to granting, maintaining, renewing, expanding and reducing the scope, and suspending or withdrawing certification.

4.6.2 The records shall be identified, managed and disposed of in such a way as to ensure the integrity of the process and the confidentiality of the information. The records shall be kept for an appropriate period of time to demonstrate continued confidence for at least one full certification cycle, or as required by recognition arrangements, contractual, legal or other obligations.

4.7 Confidentiality

The certification body shall, through legally enforceable commitments, keep confidential all information obtained in the process of its activities. These commitments shall cover all individuals working within the body, including committee members, and external bodies or individuals acting on its behalf. Such information shall not be disclosed to an unauthorized party without the written consent of the organization or individual from whom the information was obtained, except where the law requires such information to be disclosed. When the certification body is required by law to release such information, the organization or individual concerned shall be informed beforehand of what information will be provided.

4.8 Security

All examinations and related items shall be maintained in a secure environment by the certification body, or its subcontractors, to protect the confidentiality of these items throughout their useful life.

5 Requirements for persons employed or contracted by a certification body

5.1 General

5.1.1 The certification process shall define the competence requirements for employed or contracted persons involved in the certification process.

5.1.2 The certification body shall require its employed or contracted persons to sign a document by which they commit themselves to comply with the rules defined by the certification body, including those relating to confidentiality and those relating to independence from commercial and other interests, and from any prior and/or present link with the persons to be examined that would compromise impartiality.

5.1.3 Clearly documented instructions shall be available to the employed or contracted persons describing their duties and responsibilities. These instructions shall be kept up to date. All personnel involved in any aspect of certification activities shall possess appropriate education, experience and technical expertise which

satisfies defined competence criteria for the tasks identified. They shall be trained for their specific responsibilities and made aware of the significance of the certification offered.

5.1.4 The certification body shall establish and maintain current documentation on the relevant qualifications of each individual. The information shall be accessible to the employed or contracted individual(s) concerned and shall include the following:

- a) name and address;
- b) organization affiliation and position held;
- c) education and professional status;
- d) experience and training in the relevant field;
- e) their specific responsibilities and obligations within the certification body;
- f) performance appraisals;
- g) date of most recent updating of records.

5.2 Requirements for examiners

5.2.1 Examiners shall meet the requirements of the certification body based upon applicable competence standards and other relevant documents.

The selection process shall ensure that examiners assigned to an examination or part of an examination at least

- a) are familiar with the relevant certification scheme,
- b) have a thorough knowledge of the relevant examination methods and examination documents,
- c) have appropriate competence in the field to be examined,
- d) are fluent both in writing and orally in the language of examination, and
- e) are free from any interest so that they can make impartial and non-discriminatory judgements (assessments).

5.2.2 If an examiner has a potential conflict of interest in the examination of a candidate, the certification body shall undertake measures to ensure that confidentiality and impartiality of the examination is not compromised (see 4.2.5). These measures shall be recorded.

6 Certification process

6.1 Application

6.1.1 The certification body shall provide on request a current detailed description of the certification process, appropriate to each certification scheme (including fees), and the documents containing the requirements for certification, the applicants' rights, and the duties of a certified person which includes a code of conduct, if applicable (see 6.6.2).

6.1.2 The certification body shall require the completion of an application, signed by the applicant seeking certification, which includes

- a) the scope of the desired certification,

- b) a statement that the person agrees to comply with the requirements for certification and to supply any information needed for the evaluation,
- c) details of relevant qualifications, confirmed and supported by evidence, and
- d) general information on the applicant, for example name, address and other information required to identify the person.

6.2 Evaluation

6.2.1 The certification body shall review the application to confirm that

- a) the certification body has the capability to deliver the requested certification,
- b) the certification body is aware of and can, within reason, accommodate any special needs of applicants, such as language and/or disabilities, and
- c) the applicant has the required education, experience and training specified by the scheme.

6.2.2 The certification body shall examine competence, based on the requirements of the scheme, by written, oral, practical, observational or other means.

6.2.3 Examinations shall be planned and structured in a manner which ensures that all scheme requirements are objectively and systematically verified, with sufficient documented evidence produced to confirm the competence of the candidate.

6.2.4 The certification body shall adopt reporting procedures that ensure the performance and results of the evaluation are documented in an appropriate and comprehensible manner, including the performance and results of examinations.

6.3 Decision on certification

6.3.1 The decision on certification of a candidate shall be made solely by the certification body on the basis of the information gathered during the certification process. Those who make the certification decision shall not have participated in the examination or training of the candidate.

6.3.2 The certification body shall provide a certificate to all certified persons. The certification body shall maintain sole ownership of the certificates.

The certificate may take the form of a letter, card or other medium, signed or authorized by a responsible officer of the certification body.

6.3.3 These certificates shall contain, as a minimum, the following information:

- a) the name of the certified person and a unique certification number;
- b) the name of the certification body;
- c) a reference to the competence standard or other relevant documents, including issue, on which the certification is based;
- d) the scope of the certification, including validity conditions and limitations;
- e) the effective date of certification and date of expiry.

6.4 Surveillance

6.4.1 The certification body shall define a pro-active surveillance process to monitor certificants' compliance with relevant provisions of the certification scheme.

6.4.2 The certification body shall have procedures and conditions for the maintenance of certification in accordance with the certification scheme. These conditions, including the frequency and content of surveillance activities, shall be endorsed by the scheme committee. The conditions shall be adequate to ensure that there is impartial evaluation to confirm the continuing competence of the certified person.

6.5 Recertification

6.5.1 The certification body shall define recertification requirements according to the competence standard and other relevant documents, to ensure that the certified person continues to comply with the current certification requirements.

6.5.2 The certification body shall have procedures and conditions for the maintenance of certification in accordance with the certification scheme. These conditions, including the frequency and content of recertification activities, shall be endorsed by the scheme committee. The conditions shall be adequate to ensure that there is impartial evaluation to confirm the continuing competence of the certified person.

6.6 Use of certificates and logos/marks

6.6.1 A certification body that provides a certification mark or logo shall document the conditions for use and shall appropriately manage the rights for usage and representation.

6.6.2 The certification body shall require that a certified person sign an agreement

- a) to comply with the relevant provisions of the certification scheme,
- b) to make claims regarding certification only with respect to the scope for which certification has been granted,
- c) not to use the certification in such a manner as to bring the certification body into disrepute, and not to make any statement regarding the certification which the certification body may consider misleading or unauthorized,
- d) to discontinue the use of all claims to certification that contains any reference to the certification body or certification upon suspension or withdrawal of certification, and to return any certificates issued by the certification body, and
- e) not to use the certificate in a misleading manner.

6.6.3 Inappropriate references to the certification or misleading use of certificates and marks or logos in publications, catalogues, etc. shall be addressed with corrective measures, such as the suspension or withdrawal of certification, publication of the infraction and, if appropriate, additional legal action.