

International Accreditation Forum, Inc.



IAF Guidance Document

Informative Guidance on the Transition to ISO/IEC 17021 Accreditation from ISO/IEC Guide 62 and ISO/IEC Guide 66

Issue 1

(IAF GD 8:2007)

Accreditation reduces risk for business and its customers by assuring them that accredited bodies are competent to carry out the work they undertake within their scope of accreditation. Accreditation bodies which are members of the International Accreditation Forum, Inc. (IAF) are required to operate at the highest standard and to require the bodies they accredit to comply with appropriate international standards and IAF Guidance to the application of those standards.

Accreditations granted by accreditation body members of the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA), based on regular surveillance to assure the equivalence of their accreditation programs, allows companies and persons with an accredited conformity assessment certificate in one part of the world to have that certificate recognized everywhere else in the world.

Therefore certificates in the fields of management systems, products, services, persons and other similar programs of conformity assessment issued by bodies accredited by members of the IAF MLA are relied upon in international trade.

Issue No 1

Prepared by: IAF Technical Committee

Approved by: IAF Members

Date: 2 April 2007

Issue Date: 10 May 2007

Application Date: 10 May 2007

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1. Publication

ISO/IEC 17021 was published on 15 September 2006. It replaces ISO/IEC Guide 62 and ISO/IEC Guide 66 and incorporates the majority of the guidance contained in their respective IAF guidance documents, GD2 and GD6. IAF has agreed not to issue immediate guidance on ISO/IEC 17021 other than stand-alone documents which will be derived from all the Annexes to IAF GD2 and GD6.

Resolution 2006-09 was passed by the IAF General Assembly in Cancun 14 November 2006 endorsing a 2 year transition period to ISO/IEC 17021.

2. Accreditation Bodies

Accreditation Bodies will need time to prepare for the transition to ISO/IEC 17021. In particular, accreditation bodies should ensure they have defined, and that their assessors have achieved the necessary competence before undertaking assessments to ISO/IEC 17021.

3. Certification Bodies

Accreditation Bodies should make it clear to Certification Bodies that apply for accreditation following the publication of ISO/IEC 17021 if they are to comply with ISO/IEC 17021 immediately or to ISO/IEC Guide 62 or ISO/IEC Guide 66. Accreditation bodies should define a time limit after which application to ISO/IEC Guide 62 or ISO/IEC Guide 66 cannot be received and must be transferred to ISO/IEC 17021 application. They should advise a date beyond which they cannot issue accreditation to ISO Guide 62 and / or ISO Guide 66.

3.1. Pre-existing accredited Certification Bodies

Certification Bodies accredited at the time of publication will be in conformance with ISO/IEC Guide 62 (QMS) and / or ISO/IEC Guide 66 (EMS). Transition to ISO/IEC 17021 may require translations, changes to procedures, contracts, committees and other arrangements which will take time.

3.2 Preparation time

Certification Bodies should analyse and understand the requirements of ISO/IEC 17021 and commence identification of differences between the standard and their current management system immediately. Certification Bodies are advised to make a transition plan to determine both the changes to their management system and the time frame required to execute them in order to conform to the standard. Certification Bodies are further advised to agree their transition plan with their Accreditation Body.

3.3 Transition and Implementation

Wherever possible and where there are no significant obstacles, a Certification Body should implement those parts of ISO/IEC 17021 that it can without delay.

Assessment by an Accreditation Body should cover a Certification Body's plans for effectively managing its transition. The examination of these plans should enable the Accreditation Body to identify those points of the standard which have been interpreted differently, by Certification Bodies, and which may eventually lead to the need for additional IAF advice. The examination of these transition plans should also enable the Accreditation Body and Certification Body to agree upon an end date for the transition process, which should not go beyond 15 September 2008.

3.4 Phased Approach

Certain changes resulting from ISO/IEC 17021 will be easier to complete more quickly than others. More complex, time consuming and potentially costly changes could include software systems; contract renewal, and certificate re-issue. In recognition of the need to limit the disruption to a Certification Body's clients, certain changes may be more appropriately carried out during the normal business cycle at the time of contract renewal or certificate re-issue.

These changes may require a phased approach that may not be possible to complete fully by the end of the two year transition period. Certification Bodies should therefore be able to identify and document any such changes and the date by which they will have been completed should be agreed with the relevant Accreditation Body, thus avoiding any adverse effect on the transfer of accreditation to ISO/IEC 17021 by 15 September 2008.

4. Visits by Accreditation Bodies

Additional visits by Accreditation Bodies to assess solely against ISO/IEC 17021 are not normally required. The implementation should be verified during normal scheduled surveillance activities. However, additional assessments may be necessary for a Certification Body requesting accreditation within an accelerated time frame.

5. Nonconformities

Accreditation Bodies should make it clear to Certification Bodies that where an assessment is conducted against ISO/IEC 17021, any nonconformities identified should be dealt with according to the accreditation body's normal processes and must be cleared before the end of transition before accreditation to ISO/IEC 17021 can be granted.

Where full implementation of specific exceptional changes (see clause 3.4) previously identified and agreed in advance has not been completed by the end of transition, such changes should be raised as observations and should not adversely affect accreditation and should not preclude the issue of an accreditation certificate to ISO/IEC 17021.

6. End of transition and Accreditation Certificate Issue

On 15 September 2008, twenty four months after publication of the new standard, all accredited Certification Bodies are expected to be in full compliance with ISO/IEC 17021 and have had new accreditation certificates issued.

7. New Schemes

It is expected ISO/IEC 17021 will be applied immediately to applications by Certification Bodies to Accreditation Bodies for accreditation to programmes based on ISO/IEC 17021. The standard to be used for any other new schemes should be made clear to Certification Bodies by Accreditation Bodies.

End of Informative Guidance on the Transition to ISO/IEC 17021 Accreditation from ISO/IEC Guide 62 and ISO/IEC Guide 66.

Further Information

For further Information on this document or other IAF documents, contact any member of IAF or the IAF Secretariat.

For contact details of members of IAF see - IAF Web Site - <<http://www.iaf.nu>>

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