



IAF Informative Document



Information on the Transition of Management System Accreditation to ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015 from ISO/IEC 17021:2011

Issue 1

(IAF ID 11:2015)

The International Accreditation Forum, Inc. (IAF) facilitates trade and supports regulators by operating a worldwide mutual recognition arrangement among Accreditation Bodies (ABs) in order that the results issued by Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) accredited by IAF members are accepted globally.

Accreditation reduces risk for business and its customers by assuring that accredited Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) are competent to carry out the work they undertake within their scope of accreditation. Accreditation Bodies (ABs) that are members of IAF and the CABs they accredit are required to comply with appropriate international standards and the applicable IAF application documents for the consistent application of those standards.

ABs that are signatories to the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) are evaluated regularly by an appointed team of peers to provide confidence in the operation of their accreditation programs. The structure and scope of the IAF MLA is detailed in IAF PR 4 - Structure of IAF MLA and Endorsed Normative Documents.

The IAF MLA is structured in five levels: Level 1 specifies mandatory criteria that apply to all ABs, ISO/IEC 17011. The combination of a Level 2 activity(ies) and the corresponding Level 3 normative document(s) is called the main scope of the MLA, and the combination of Level 4 (if applicable) and Level 5 relevant normative documents is called a sub-scope of the MLA.

- The main scope of the MLA includes activities e.g. product certification and associated mandatory documents e.g. ISO/IEC 17065. The attestations made by CABs at the main scope level are considered to be equally reliable.
- The sub scope of the MLA includes conformity assessment requirements e.g. ISO 9001 and scheme specific requirements, where applicable, e.g. ISO TS 22003. The attestations made by CABs at the sub scope level are considered to be equivalent.

The IAF MLA delivers the confidence needed for market acceptance of conformity assessment outcomes. An attestation issued, within the scope of the IAF MLA, by a body that is accredited by an IAF MLA signatory AB can be recognized worldwide, thereby facilitating international trade.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Publication.....	5
2. Accreditation Bodies.....	5
3. Certification Bodies	5
3.1 Certification Bodies applying for accreditation	5
3.2 Certification Bodies with prior Accreditation.....	5
3.3 Preparation time	6
3.4 Transition and Implementation.....	6
4. Visits by Accreditation Bodies	6
5. Nonconformities	7
6. End of transition and Accreditation Certificate Issue	7

Issue No 1

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Issue Date: 10 March 2015

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Date: 06 February 2015

Application Date: 10 March 2015

Introduction to IAF Informative Documents

This IAF Informative Document reflects the consensus of IAF members on this subject and is intended to support the consistent application of requirements. However, being a document for information purposes only, IAF Accreditation Body Members, and the Conformity Assessment Bodies they accredit, are not under any obligation to use or comply with anything in this document.

Information on the Transition of Management System Accreditation to ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015 from ISO/IEC 17021:2011

1. Publication

ISO/IEC 17021:2011 was subject to systematic review and revision and is likely to be published early in 2015. It incorporates relatively few new requirements for third-party audit and certification of management systems. Resolution 2014-12 was passed by the IAF General Assembly in Vancouver on 15 October 2014 endorsing a 2 year transition period for the implementation of ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015.

2. Accreditation Bodies

Accreditation Bodies will need time to prepare for the transition to ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015. In particular, Accreditation Bodies should ensure they have defined, and that their assessors have achieved the necessary competence before undertaking assessments of any Certification Body to ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015.

Accreditation Bodies should make it clear to Certification Bodies that apply for accreditation following the publication of ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015 if they are to conform to ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015 immediately or to ISO/IEC 17021:2011.

3. Certification Bodies

3.1 Certification Bodies applying for accreditation

Accreditation Bodies should define a time limit after which application to ISO/IEC 17021:2011 cannot be received and must be transferred to ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015 application. This time limit should be reasonable and take into account the preparation needed by Certification Bodies to fully implement ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015. They should advise a date beyond which they cannot issue accreditation to ISO/IEC 17021:2011.

3.2 Certification Bodies with prior Accreditation

Certification Bodies accredited at the time of publication will be in conformance with ISO/IEC 17021:2011. Transition to ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015 may require translations, changes to processes, contracts, committees and other arrangements which will take time.

3.3 Preparation time

Certification Bodies should analyse and understand the requirements of ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015 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.

3.4 Transition and Implementation

Wherever possible and where there are no significant obstacles, a Certification Body should implement those parts of ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015 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 2 years following the date of publication.

4. Visits by Accreditation Bodies

Additional visits by Accreditation Bodies to assess solely against ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015 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;
- if significant issues concerning its transition are identified; or
- if the Certification Body delays its transition such that conformance cannot be verified during a normal scheduled surveillance visit.

5. Nonconformities

Accreditation Bodies should make it clear to Certification Bodies that where an assessment is conducted against ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015, any nonconformities identified should be dealt with according to the Accreditation Body's normal processes and must be cleared before accreditation to ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015 can be granted, or before the end of the transition.

6. End of transition and Accreditation Certificate Issue

Twenty-four months after publication of the new standard, all accredited Certification Bodies are expected to be in full conformance with ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015 and have had new accreditation certificates issued. Certification Bodies not conforming with ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015 after the end of the transition period will no longer be accredited.

End of IAF Informative Document for Information on the Transition of Management System Accreditation to ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015 from ISO/IEC 17021:2011.

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 the IAF website: <http://www.iaf.nu>.

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