



International Organization for Standardization



International Accreditation Forum

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Accreditation Auditing Practices Group **Guidance on:**

Criteria for Competence of AB Assessors and Assessment Teams

This paper provides guidance on how to establish and evaluate competence requirements for assessors and assessment teams used by Accreditation Bodies (ABs) in order to improve the effectiveness of the accreditation process and foster the harmonization of the approaches followed by different ABs.

1. Competence criteria

In general terms, AB assessors should:

- be familiar with the relevant accreditation and conformity assessment standards and their AB's accreditation procedures;
- be suitably trained in the profession;
- have a good knowledge and understanding of different assessment methods;
- be appropriately experienced and skilled for the job.

Guidance on the application of the above criteria can be found in ISO 19011.

An AB assessor should be able to apply a process based approach to conducting assessments and should be capable of understanding the processes of an evaluated conformity assessment body (CAB) and in relating them to the requirements of relevant international standards and guides. Additionally, an AB's assessors should have the ability to trace back non conformities or deficiencies to the CAB's processes or management system (see the Accreditation Auditing Practices Group paper on "[Process approach based accreditation audits](#)").

The AB shall have defined the criteria for the competencies needed to carry out accreditation assessments, including office assessments and witnessing activity, as required. The criteria may be differentiated between lead assessors, assessors and trainee assessors. The criteria should be based on the requirements of ISO 17011 and should be approved by the policy making body of the AB.

The competency criteria may be defined in terms of basic (generic) requirements and specific requirements (related to a particular scheme and sector and to other specific features).

In the following differing competency criteria are highlighted that an AB should consider when selecting its assessors and assessment teams for a particular assessment:

Basic (generic)

a) Procedures and standards

- Knowledge of the procedures of the AB,
- Knowledge of the AB standard (ISO/IEC 17011) and of the standards applicable to the assessed CABs (ISO/IEC 17021, ISO/IEC Guide 65, ISO/IEC 17024, ISO/IEC 17020) and related IAF Mandatory and Informative documents.
- Knowledge of ISO 19011.

b) Personal attributes (see ISO 19011)

The personal attributes of individual assessors should be evaluated using a variety of methods. The results should be used to determine the assignment of an assessor to a specific assessment or assessment team.

c) Generic knowledge and skills

- Ability to understand the business processes of a CAB and to assess such processes;
- Ability to formulate judgements.

Specific

d) Scheme/sector related and regulatory requirements

- Knowledge of management system (MS) standards, for MS certification accreditation schemes;
- Understanding/familiarity with products, processes and technologies related to the business activities (economical and social) covered by the accredited MS certifications;
- Knowledge of product standards, production technologies, use of products and related problems, for product certification accreditation schemes (*);
- Knowledge of applicable standards and know-how and skills of concern for the different professional figures, for personnel certification accreditation schemes;
- Knowledge and understanding of relevant tools and instructions in order to be able to determine if regulatory requirements are properly managed by the CABs as far as applicable.

(*) Similar requirements apply, with due adaptation, to the assessment for accreditation of inspection of products, processes, plants, designs, etc..

The above sectoral knowledge should be derived, by assessors/assessment teams, from:

- * their direct working experience in the related industry/service sectors, or
- * educational, research and standardization activity in the area, or

- * consulting and audit activity, or
- * combination of such elements.

When such knowledge is not adequate, assessors or assessment teams should be supported by experts.

e) Characteristics of the CAB that is due to be assessed

These characteristics should be taken into account when selecting assessors/assessment teams, e.g. the size of the CAB, the number of its operational units, the countries it operates in, etc..

f) Culture and language

These aspects should also be carefully considered when planning assessments and choosing assessors/assessment teams, being particularly critical for cross-frontier accreditation assessments (both office and witness audits).

Regarding the requirements for the assessment teams, the AB should ensure that the assessment team collectively has the competence needed for a particular assessment – with reference to points from a) to f) – including any specific technical competence that may be identified as needed. As already mentioned, it may be necessary to include experts in the team in case the specific technical expertise is not available by the assessors.

2. Qualification process

The assessor/expert qualification process should cover the initial selection, training, ongoing training and periodic evaluations that may be required to maintain and confirm continued competence. Assessors and experts need to be:

- selected (based on education, knowledge, experience and skills possessed);
- trained in the accreditation rules and methods and in the AB's accreditation procedures, criteria and any relevant provision, by suitable training courses or equivalent means;
- continuously monitored and evaluated by appropriate techniques (see ISO 19011).

For further information on the Accreditation Auditing Practices Group, please refer to the paper: *Introduction to the Accreditation Auditing Practices Group*

Feedback from users will be used by the *Accreditation Auditing Practices Group* to determine whether additional guidance documents should be developed, or if these current ones should be revised.

Comments on the papers or presentations can be sent to the following email address: charles.corrie@bsigroup.com.

The other papers and presentations may be downloaded from the web site:

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