



International Organization for Standardization



International Accreditation Forum

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Accreditation Auditing Practices Group

Guidance on:

Auditing a CAB's Conformity to ISO/IEC 17021-1 Clause 5.2.3

ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015 Clause 5.2.3 requires that a “certification body shall have a process to identify, analyze, evaluate, treat, monitor, and document the risks related to conflict of interests arising from provision of certification including any conflicts arising from its relationships on an ongoing basis. ... The risk assessment process shall include identification of and consultation with appropriate interested parties to advise on matters affecting impartiality including openness and public perception. The consultation with appropriate interested parties shall be balanced with no single interest predominating”.

This requirement has replaced the requirement in the previous versions of ISO/IEC 17021 on establishing a committee for safeguarding impartiality within a CAB's structure, which is commonly referred as the “impartiality committee”.

Moreover, the Note 3 to ISO/IEC 17021:2015 Clause 5.2.3 states “One way of fulfilling the consultation requirement of this clause is by the use of a committee of these interested parties”. If a CAB goes for this option, AB assessors can seek to verify the appropriateness of the constitution and the effectiveness of the operation of the committee by:

- Checking the composition of, the interests represented by, and the expertise brought to the impartiality committee (when necessary);
- Verifying the observance of the documented terms of reference and rules of procedure and the way the committee achieves its tasks in general;
- Considering the ability of the impartiality committee to intervene in a timely fashion in response to the changing needs of the CAB.
- Evaluating the adequacy and effectiveness of the output from the impartiality committee.
- Considering the content and accuracy of the information from the CAB to the impartiality committee, this is expected to include management reports of CAB, the results of external assessments, and any recommendations made by the AB.

Assessors could collect evidences through:

- reviewing agendas, the minutes, or other documents from the meetings of the impartiality structure;

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- checking the participation at the meetings (including the presence of technical or other specific expertise in the discussions, where necessary), and/or
- having AB representatives taking part in the meeting as observers.

When a CAB opts not to use a committee to satisfy the requirements on consultation, to confirm effective consultation, assessors could look for clear evidences of two way communications, i.e.:

- documented information demonstrating that the CAB has explained its needs for inputs from interested parties on identifying and managing risks related to impartiality arising from the provision of certification, including any conflicts arising from its relationships
- documented information demonstrating relevant feedback from interested parties on such issues.

In addition, assessors need to review the identification of appropriate interested parties, e.g. whether the persons reached through consultation can actually represent relevant parties and have the necessary competence in matters related to e.g. risk assessment, management system certification and governance issues.

Typical examples of documented information demonstrating the effectiveness of this process could be:

- risk assessment matrixes,
- internal and external communications,
- corrective action records, or
- relevant personal records.

If a CAB has not established a formal impartiality committee, it may be more complicated to demonstrate the effectiveness of this process.

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:

www.iso.org/tc176/AccreditationAuditingPracticesGroup

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