



IOAS ACCREDITATION and ASSESSMENT Applicant Information

SUMMARY OF PROCEDURES

This document guides a certification body (CB) through the accreditation/assessment application process. If a CB has any questions at any time, they should contact IOAS immediately. Key documents of IOAS are available to clients via the IOAS web site 'Client area'. Each CB will be provided a username and password within the application acceptance letter.

1. The applicant certification body (CB) requests information from IOAS about the accreditations or assessments that are applicable or required for them.
2. IOAS will provide an application pack and appropriate information for the accreditation(s) or assessments requested. We are happy to arrange a conference call at this stage to clarify questions on schemes and scopes. A sample assessment contract and the current fee schedule are provided as part of the application pack and should be reviewed before submitting an application. The assessment contract cannot be customized to individual CB needs.
3. The CB completes the application, indicating the scope of accreditation being sought as well as the applicable Standard(s) and categories, and includes the signature of an authorized person to indicate commitment.
4. After receipt of the application and supporting documents, the quote is prepared based on the assessment requirements of the schemes applied for, and the application is reviewed and either accepted or rejected. If the application is rejected the reasons will be clearly stated.
5. If accepted IOAS will provide a document submission list to the applicant CB along with the IOAS service contract and application fee invoice (all details of fees are contained in the fee schedule [LS0503](#)).
6. The CB collates and submits the necessary documentation after paying the application fee and signing the accreditation service contract.
7. The documentation is checked by IOAS to see if it is sufficiently comprehensive and contains required text in English. All main procedural and policy documents must be translated into English, whether they are in the Quality Manual, an Operating Manual, or are individual documents. The CB is informed of necessary additional information or translations needed.
8. IOAS conducts a comprehensive review of the documentation and prepares a document review report, including any noted findings.
9. IOAS informs the applicant of any findings found in the review of documentation. These are noted as 'critical non-conformities' (CNCs), 'non-conformities' (NCs) and 'opportunities for improvement' (OFIs). If the issues raised are not considered serious enough to prevent the accreditation process from moving forward, the assessment visit is organised. Prior to the visit, the CB must work on corrective actions to address the preliminary findings and/or gather information to be discussed during the visit. If CNCs are raised, IOAS shall determine whether there is sufficient overall compliance to proceed or whether the application will be terminated.
10. If the decision is made to proceed, IOAS prepares and sends an assessment visit plan. The plan includes name(s) of assessor(s), a proposed visit schedule, and any specific instructions the assessor



or CB requires. The duration of the visit is dependent on the complexity and size of the CB, the number of schemes applied for, and specific requirements set by the scheme owner.

11. An invoice is sent to the CB for the visit fees, based on the visit plan. This invoice must be paid in full prior to the visit.
12. The assessor will conduct the visit with the applicant CB. The assessment will be carried out according to the visit plan, covering all applicable scheme(s) requirements, and a report compiled.
13. IOAS will review the report send the final version to the CB . The CB will be required to correct all NCs within 6 weeks in order for the accreditation process to continue. If critical non-conformities are raised from the visit, the report will be reviewed by the IOAS Accreditation Committee, who may decide to terminate the application.
14. The CB may appeal IOAS decisions and may also object to individual non-conformities within certain timelines.
15. If applicable, an additional invoice for actual travel time and travel/accommodation expenses will be sent to the CB after the visit is complete and expense receipts are submitted and processed.
16. Once all NC responses are accepted by the assessor and the post-visit invoice is paid in full, the IOAS Accreditation Committee reviews the visit report and corrective actions and, if all NCs have been satisfactorily resolved, accreditation will be granted or recommended, depending on the scheme requirements. If the AC determines that NCs have not been satisfactorily resolved, an additional period for corrective actions may be allowed (under a threat of suspension/application termination) or the CB will be informed of IOAS's decision not to accredit, including the reasons therefor.
17. Once accreditation is granted, the appropriate Annual Fee is invoiced and paid by the CB.
18. For formal accreditation, a Certificate of Accreditation will be issued to the accredited CB. Where an assessment is being made for regulatory purposes, a report and/or recommendation is made available.

Note: The above is meant only as a quick guide and does not substitute for the full procedures.

Abbreviations used: AC - Accreditation Committee, CB - Certification Body, CM - Client Manager, CSM – Client Services Manager.

Notice to Applicants on Scheduling Time

The purpose of this notice is to inform the CB of the likely demands on staff time and budget in the various stages of the processing of an accreditation or assessment application to IOAS. CBs should use this information to assist in forward planning, thereby minimising delays and potential disruption of the CB's normal office routines.

Pre-Application

This is probably the most time-consuming stage for the applicant, particularly if the documents require translations.

To avoid confusion and subsequent delay, it is important that the document submission is completed fully.

It is essential that, before application, the CB has read the scheme requirements and prepared suitable system documentation; otherwise, IOAS may raise non-conformities which, in turn, will delay the accreditation process.



IOAS Document Review

Shortly after receiving the CB documents, the IOAS CSM will begin arrangements for the document review which is normally completed remotely as a desk audit. The CSM will assign a qualified assessor and will provide the CB with a document review plan, communicating the approximate dates of completion and the assigned assessor. On receiving the plan, the CB will be given a week to consider any objection to the assigned assessor due to conflict of interest. If no objection is received within that time, the document review shall proceed.

During the review of documentation, the assessor may contact the CB for clarification, further translations, or additional documents. The extent to which this is likely depends largely on the care with which the CB has completed the document list and followed instructions regarding translations. In cases where substantial portions of the documentation are missing, the document reviewer may issue Critical NCs that may result in termination of the application.

After the Document Review

Once the CB's documentation has been reviewed against the relevant requirements, the CB will be sent both the document review report and a list of findings. The list will be divided into **Critical Non-Conformities (CNCs)**, **Non-Conformities (NCs)** and **Opportunities for Improvement (OFIs)**. In cases where substantial portions of the documentation are missing or where serious issues are identified, the document reviewer may issue Critical NCs that may result in termination of the application. If the decision is made to continue with the accreditation process, the CB must implement corrective actions for the non-conformities identified during the document review. It is essential that this be done prior to the assessment visit to facilitate a positive outcome.

Arranging the Visit

Shortly after completing the document review, the CSM will contact the CB to start arranging the visit. During preparation of the visit plan, the CSM will request additional information to work out the details of the visit, including travel requirements if applicable, and the CB will be asked to provide information to assist this process. To avoid delays, the CB should provide as comprehensive a response to the CSM's questions as possible. Distances and travel times to the various regions in which the CB operates can be compiled beforehand and thus aid in completing this process as swiftly as possible.

On receiving the visit plan, the CB will be given a week to consider any objection to the assigned assessor/s or accompanying observer/s, if applicable. If no objection is received after that week, IOAS will proceed with the logistics of the visit (ticket purchase, accommodation booking, etc.). The necessary CB staff included on the visit plan must be available during the visit, as well as members of any of the CB committees, if requested.

Without delays, this process would normally take approximately 1 month, as time is needed for the assessor to prepare sufficiently for the visit. If the CB objects to the assigned assessor, and the objection is accepted by IOAS, additional time will be needed to make alternative arrangements.

The Visit

The visit consists of interviews with CB personnel, review of company and quality system files, and review of operator files. There will also be witness and review audit visits to operators being inspected in accordance with the scopes being assessed. IOAS will choose one or more operators to carry out "witness



audits” (i.e. accompany the inspector on his/her visit to observe the process) and “review audits” (i.e. visiting operators to check the accuracy of the previous inspection reports) during the normal scheduled inspection. The assessor visit will make considerable demands on the time of the CB’s staff. Interviews will be conducted with key personnel, including relevant Board or Committee members, and the assessor will require the CB’s assistance in locating information in the files. A certain amount of disruption to normal office procedures should be expected.

CBs may choose whether they wish to provide transport for the assessor, rather than bearing the cost of car hire, where applicable.

In case the operator files in the office are not in English or in a language that the IOAS assessor can understand or if the on-site visits are carried out in a language other than English, the CB shall arrange for translation to the IOAS assessor or IOAS shall hire a translator at the CB’s expense (see IOAS Translators Policy PL 0509).

Following the Visit

A report will be compiled following the visit. This will include any issues already noted by the assessor at the visit exit interview. As before, the list will be divided into critical non-conformities, non-conformities and opportunities for improvement. If critical non-conformities are raised, the case will be referred to the IOAS Accreditation Committee for consideration. Critical NCs may result in termination of the application process. The CB will be required to take corrective actions to resolve all critical non-conformities and non-conformities. The time period allowed for these corrective actions is 6 weeks. If the assessment visit revealed significant failings in performance, IOAS may decide that a verification visit will need to take place to check on the corrective actions that have been made before accreditation is possible.

Annual Update and Surveillance

Once accredited, the CB is subject to ongoing monitoring. The annual update requires the CB to report on changes that have occurred in the previous year. Detailed instructions are sent to all CBs well in advance of the surveillance visit due date.

Review of the annual update report will be followed by a surveillance visit. At this visit the CB will be required to have on hand all documentary evidence of compliance with the applicable requirements.

Seeking Assistance

If, at any stage in the process, the CB is unclear as to the requirements, assistance may be sought from the assigned CSM. This can considerably reduce later delays resulting from incorrect or deficient submissions.

It is not possible to give an exact timetable for the completion of the assessment and accreditation processes. There are a number of factors that can delay completion of any of the stages in the process. Applicant CBs should be aware of these and attempt to plan ahead to avoid delays as much as possible.



Neutrality of the Accreditation Process

The neutrality of the accreditation process is ensured through the structure of IOAS and by means of a number of procedures and policies. These are summarised in the IOAS General Operating Manual and separate scheme requirements.

Declarations of interests are held on file for all assessors and for the members of the IOAS staff, Board and Committees. These are updated and reviewed at least annually to determine any conflicts. A list of CBs from which individuals will be excluded is maintained and available at the IOAS web site:

<https://ioas.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/IOAS-Declarations-Web-Summary.pdf>

It should be noted that IOAS AC members do not normally receive the original CB information such as their policies and procedures. Unless there is good reason, they receive only the document review report, assessment visit reports and the non-conformities.

Applicant CBs may themselves object to particular members of the AC being involved in their accreditation decision. Such objections should be made at the time of application and must be in writing, stating the reasons for the objection. However, please note that all members of IOAS AC are appointed in their own right as individuals and not as representatives of organisations. Accreditation decisions are conducted in a spirit of neutrality and fairness.

Applicant and accredited CBs are able to check the composition of the IOAS Board of Directors, the Impartiality Committee and the Accreditation Committee by referring to the IOAS web site.