Quality & Impartiality Management Policy

A Preamble

1   Introduction and purpose of the policy

This document establishes the policy related to quality and impartiality management within the IOAS.

2   Scope

The policy provides a quality statement, quality objectives and the means by which quality and impartiality is developed and maintained within the IOAS. It is related to PL0106 Quality Improvement Policy.

3   Definitions

Reference is made to the IOAS General Operating Manual for definitions.

4   Distribution

This document is distributed to the Board and Accreditation Committee annually or available in the IOAS web site 'client area'. Staff are informed of changes as soon as they have been finalized. Interested parties may obtain a copy on request.

5   Authority and revision

This policy is approved by the IOAS Board of Directors (BoD). It is the responsibility of the Executive Director (ED) and the BoD to review the appropriateness of the policy from time to time. It may be revised when the need arises. Its effectiveness in meeting the quality policy of the IOAS will be assessed during Internal Review and any measures for improvement notified to the Executive Director and the Board.

B Quality Statement

> **The IOAS is committed to provide an effective assessment and accreditation service of high quality that complies with relevant international norms, is of high integrity and provided at the lowest possible cost to certification bodies active in sectors relevant to the IOAS mission.**

1. The IOAS offers voluntary accreditation to certification bodies worldwide.

2. It is the only sector specific, international, accreditation body operating in this field.

3. This specificity, global scope and the expertise so developed, means that the IOAS enjoys a high reputation within the trade and regulatory sectors.

4. IOAS is committed to:

- **Worldwide equivalency -** ensuring that the accredited certification bodies enforce equivalent standards and operate according to the same scheme criteria wherever they may be in the world.
- **Compliance with international norms** – maintaining compliance as verified by peer review or other third parties with the current version of ISO/IEC 17011: Conformity assessment — Requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies

- **Close cooperation and satisfactory service to scheme owners** – working closely with scheme owners to ensure scheme owners objectives are met and providing feedback to assist in continuous improvement
- **Rigor and empathy**- implementing its accreditation services to the highest quality standard possible, taking into consideration the agroecological, legal and social environment in which the certification body operates.
- **Integrity at reasonable cost -** providing a quality service of high integrity at the lowest possible cost to certification bodies.
- **Impartiality -** ensuring that IOAS service is carried out and perceived to be carried out objectively, meaning that there is no bias arising from for example self-interest, self-review, advocacy, over-familiarity, intimidation or competition.

C Aims and objectives

The aims and objectives of the IOAS as stated in the articles of incorporation are as follows:
- To inform the general public about organic and other ecologically-sound methods of production which respect the environment and the rights and welfare of all participants.
- To assist in the development of such organic and other ecologically-sound methods of production by contributing to the development of credible standards for producers and requirements for their certification.
- To provide internationally recognised mechanisms for the assessment and accreditation of organisations which certify such products and activities meeting respected standards.
- To contribute to the work of both private sector organisations and government organisations to regulate the trade in certified products and services.
- To provide other technical and training services related to conformity assessment systems which contribute to the above goals.
- To be a member of other nonprofit corporations whose purpose contributes to the above goals.
- To establish for-profit or nonprofit organizations where appropriate whose purpose contributes to the above goals.

D Quality Objectives

IOAS has developed the Quality Objectives as measurable parameters to ensure all commitments, aims and objectives are being achieved.

Competence
- The corporation has adequate human and financial resources.
- The BoD, committee members and management have been selected from the most distinguished in relevant sectors to ensure professional competence and expertise.
- Standards and criteria are comprehensive.
- A quality system is in place and all personnel understand its requirements and their responsibilities.
Parameters:
- Any deficiencies are caused by insufficient human or financial resource and if so, recommend appropriate remedies.
- The criteria for appointment of all personnel have been followed in appointments.

- Training has occurred according to stated policies.
- Deficiencies noted by the personnel reviews have been appropriately dealt with.
- The procedures on distribution of documents have been followed.
- The accreditation process and complaints and appeals have been dealt with in a timely manner.

Independence
- The corporation is so structured to enable it to operate without undue influence from vested interests.
- The BoD and respective committees within the corporation are constituted to ensure a well-balanced representation of the different sectors within the industry without any one sector being dominant.

Parameters:
- The conflict of interest declarations are on file and that the exclusions specified in conflict of interest policies have occurred accordingly.
- The Board and Accreditation Committee compositional criteria have been met.

Transparency
- The quality system operated by the IOAS is fully documented.
- Standards and criteria for accreditation, as well as organisational structures, financial sources, policies & procedures, etc. are publicly available to interested parties upon request.

Parameters:
- The quality system has been maintained and that all policies and procedures are fully documented.
- Forms are up to date.
- The document register is up to date and that access is defined for all documents.
- The annual report has provided sufficient and accurate information to the public.

Objectivity
- The services of the corporation are provided impartially.
- Review and evaluation activities are based on an objective assessment of relevant factors, following a comprehensive protocol.
- Application is open to all certification bodies engaged in organic, sustainable and related sector certification without regard for membership or any other extraneous factors.
- The corporation maintains a record system that is able to demonstrate the way in which each accreditation policy and criteria are applied.
- The corporation has procedures for the consideration of appeals.

Parameters:
- The assessment and decisions on accreditation have been based on the relevant requirements and been applied in an impartial and consistent manner.
- The records of assessment and decisions are up to date and complete and that any conditions of accreditation have been monitored effectively and the monitoring recorded in a transparent manner.

Responsibility
- The corporation assumes full responsibility for any activities or tasks related to the accreditation system which are subcontracted or in any other way are carried out by another body, agency or individual.

Parameters:
- The contracts with contracted parties are up to date and that all appropriate measures have been included.

Continuous improvement
- The corporation recognizes a dynamic development in the sectors in which it works, the field of accreditation and the regulatory environment in which its clients operate, and strives for continuous quality improvement through periodic review and on-going self-assessment.

Parameters:
- The internal audit, quality system review and the personnel reviews have been carried out in the time and manner specified in policies.
- Accurate reports, reflecting any deficiencies found and with recommendations for corrective actions, are brought before the Board of Directors.
- The Executive Director has taken those measures within their power to correct deficiencies noted in personnel reviews.
- The appropriateness and efficiency of policies and procedures are assessed periodically.
- All corrective actions resulting from the internal audits and personnel reviews are carried out in an effective and timely manner. The Quality Manager shall report on such corrective actions to the subsequent Board meetings.
- All corrective actions resulting from appeals, complaints and disputes have been effectively implemented.
- The comments contained in the evaluation feedback forms are considered and acted upon as appropriate.

Safeguard of impartiality
- IOAS has established an Impartiality Committee (IC) for effective involvement of interested parties for safeguarding impartiality. IOAS ensures a balanced representation of interested parties with no single party predominating (doc PL0209).
- IOAS has developed a procedure on management of the risk to impartiality (PR0517) and maintains an Impartiality Matrix to identify, analyse, monitor and document the risks to impartiality arising from its activities including any conflicts arising from its relationships or from the relationships of its personnel. The process includes identification of and consultation with the IC to advise on matters affecting impartiality.

Parameters:
- The IC compositional criteria has been met.
- The IC has assessed that IOAS assessment and decisions on accreditation have been based on the relevant requirements and been applied in an impartial and consistent manner.
- Comments from the IC assessment have been taken into account

E Quality Management & Quality Team

1. The IOAS has developed a quality system of documented policies, procedures, criteria and other related documents to assure and demonstrate that it adheres to the objectives listed above.

2. To ensure that these objectives are met is the responsibility of the ED.

3. The realisation and maintenance of these quality objectives is achieved through ensuring an understanding of IOAS quality objectives amongst all personnel, encouraging a quality culture

throughout the organisation and by designation of senior personnel as responsible for the quality function.

4. The mechanism for carrying out this responsibility is the annual internal audit and management review (PL0106) and the management and staff performance reviews (PL0302).

5. A Quality Manager (QM) is appointed by the ED and the duties of that person are described in a job description (PL0315). Other personnel may support the QM in performing these tasks. The QM reports through the ED to the BoD.

6. The QM shall ensure that the quality system has been effectively understood and implemented at all levels of the system. It shall do so by checking that all policies and procedures have been followed by staff; contracted personnel; committees and the BoD. It shall also check training requirements have been met and that the training has provided to personnel the necessary understanding of the quality system.

7. The QM shall ensure that the procedures for ensuring that the quality policy is understood, maintained and implemented at all levels (PR0101) have been followed.

8. It is the function of the QM to ensure that the internal audit is carried out in a planned and systematic manner and according to the policies and procedures for these tasks.

9. The BoD may also designate quality responsibilities to a member of the BoD including participation in the internal audit.

10. It is the function of the AED to ensure that the performance reviews are carried out in a planned and systematic manner and according to the policies and procedures for these tasks.