



Assessor and Technical Expert Qualifications, training and performance monitoring

Preamble

Introduction and purpose of the policy

This document describes the qualifications, training and performance monitoring requirements of assessors and technical experts.

Scope

This policy refers to the recruitment, approval and training of assessors and technical experts in line with international norms. The policy applies to subcontracted assessors and to staff assessors who are also Client Managers. Assessors may be assigned to conduct or participate in document screening, assessment, surveillance, or operator visits (all covered in this contract by the term assessment) of IOAS client certification bodies. Technical expert assignments may have reduced responsibilities than what is described, however assessors may serve as technical experts, and technical experts may train up to become assessors.

Definitions

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

Related schemes: for the purpose of qualification of assessors the following groups are considered related schemes:

1. Canada Organic Regime, European Union Recognition Scheme, IFOAM
2. Global Organic Textile Standards, Textile Exchange
3. COSMOS, NATRUE
4. Food Safety (GLOBALG.A.P)

Distribution

This document is distributed to the IOAS Board and AC annually. Staff are informed of changes as soon as they have been finalized. Interested parties may obtain a copy on request.

Authority and revision

This policy is approved by the IOAS Executive Director. It is the responsibility of the IOAS Executive Director to review the appropriateness of the policy from time to time. It may be revised when the need arises. Revisions must be approved by the IOAS Executive Director. 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.



Policy

Application

1. Individuals desiring to become an approved IOAS external assessor or technical expert must apply in writing, using the application form ([FR0403](#)). A curriculum vitae (resume) and statement of interests must be included ([FR0205](#)). Applicants may be asked to attend an interview at their own expense.
2. Prior to any assessment work being undertaken, external assessors and technical experts are required to sign a contract which details their obligations, and the financial arrangements between IOAS and the assessor/technical expert ([FR0401](#)).

Assessors

1. Assessors must have knowledge of and experience in inspection and certification in a field relevant to the scheme in which they are qualified. Given the emphasis of the IOAS on organic, sustainable agriculture and food safety a core competence in these fields is desirable. A formal degree in agricultural or food science or equivalent education is a requirement. However, considerable work and experience in the field of organic agriculture and conformity assessment may substitute for formal education.
2. Good understanding of organic, sustainable and food safety practices in the categories of certification covered by the accreditation schemes are essential.
3. Candidates must have excellent analytical skills and be able to communicate clearly in concise reports in English. Familiarity with general auditing principles is also necessary.
4. It is desirable that assessors should be able to communicate in at least one other language in addition to English.
5. Prior to providing any services on behalf of IOAS, assessors must be formally approved by IOAS based on the qualifications mentioned above. Assessors must be qualified for each scheme and must maintain that qualification through annual training and/or assessment work. The training or assessment work need not always be specific to the scheme but must at least be in related schemes.
6. Assessors must abide by Management of conflict of interest policy ([PL0210](#)) and confidentiality ([PL0203](#)) and all other policies relating to their activities.
7. Assessors must demonstrate considerable familiarity with:
 - The relevant production and processing standards.
 - The relevant certification requirements.
 - IOAS procedures for conducting assessments ([PR0504](#), [PR0508](#))
8. In addition, assessors must be familiar with the international norms pertaining to their work on certification and on conducting audits. (e.g. ISO/IEC 17065, ISO 19011).



Technical experts

1. The technical expert is a person assigned by IOAS to support the assessor in the assessment of a certification body (CB) in circumstances when the technical aspects of the scheme under review is not within the capabilities of the assessor. Given the limited field of activity of the IOAS, most staff and external assessors will have sufficient knowledge to perform assessments. However, technical experts may be required in special areas and when scheme owners demand it.

Technical experts are required to either have formal qualifications in the relevant area or extensive practical experience in that industry and meet the basic requirements for assessors, however, prior experience as an assessor is useful but not essential. Technical experts must have been trained by IOAS or other organisation under the scheme on which they will support the assessors.

Initial training

1. All new assessors and technical experts receive initial training on IOAS policies and procedures relevant to their work.
2. In line with ISO 19011, trainee assessors (candidates in training to become an assessor) shall undergo an apprenticeship period that includes participating in the assessment of certification bodies (CBs) while under supervision of experienced IOAS assessor(s). Where trainee assessors have previous experience of auditing against ISO/IEC 17065 or similar norms this period may be reduced or eliminated according to the degree of experience.
3. The training activities shall include:
 - a. documentation review (screening) that is peer reviewed;
 - b. observation of physical audit activities as described below;
 - c. peer review of the first 4 audit reports with feedback and suggestions for improvement.

Document review

1. Upon completion of the initial orientation training, any assessor may be assigned document reviews based on their qualifications and experience.
2. At minimum, the first 3 screenings assigned will require a peer review. Additional peer review may be conducted depending on the assessor's performance.

Assessors

1. For general qualification as an IOAS assessor for each group of related schemes the apprenticeship period will include attendance at an on-site assessment/surveillance (CBs offices, operator visits) as a trainee, accompanying an experienced assessor. As part of the training the trainee could be asked to participate though the IOAS assessor will always be leading and will present the results to the CB at the exit meeting.
2. To complete the apprenticeship period, the trainee will be observed by an experienced IOAS assessor (trainer). The trainer could give some support to the trainee in case he/she runs out of time and a proper assessment of the CB is in risk or if he/she misses some critical point, but the



trainee will present the results to the CB in any case, as he/she will be still under observation. The assessor trainer will complete a report on the trainee using form [FR0308](#).

3. To be initially approved as an assessor for any particular scheme the trainee assessor must attend a scheme specific training (which may be remote or face to face), demonstrate proficiency in document screening for that scheme, or observe the conduct of an assessment relevant to that scheme.
4. Within the first three years of work for the IOAS, assessors performing more than one assessment per year shall attend a recognised lead auditor course.
5. Approved assessors must attend any training courses as requested by IOAS to maintain their approval status. IOAS may require assessors to attend specific courses organized by third parties. The assessors shall keep IOAS updated on the training they attend on a yearly basis.
6. The necessary qualifications, experience and training shall be documented for each scheme in the 'Assessor competence master list' spreadsheet. This master list is available to view by all staff but can only be updated by Management.
7. IOAS may qualify and contract assessors who have been working with other ABs if they are able to meet the following requirements:
 - a. Having conducted at least 10 assignments as an assessor in the last 3 years in fields related to the scope of IOAS work;
 - b. Having attended a recognised lead auditor course;
 - c. To qualify for specific schemes in which they have had no previous direct experience having attended a scheme specific training (which may be remote or face to face), or demonstrate proficiency in document screening for that scheme, or observe the conduct of an assessment relevant to that scheme.
8. Each assessor used by IOAS will have the schemes for which they are qualified indicated by check boxes in their record in the FMP Internal database, and this will be updated as necessary or at least once per year. The determination of qualifications for staff assessors will be made at the performance review including any training needs.

Technical experts

Before doing an assessment, technical experts must have completed a training on the IOAS assessment procedures and be briefed by the Client Manager on the CB that is the subject of the assessment.

Technical experts shall maintain IOAS updated on a yearly basis on any training or professional development relevant to the correspondent schemes in case they are not being trained by IOAS.

Performance monitoring

Assessor/Technical Expert performance is assessed in the following ways:



- Staff peer review of all visit reports (Form [FR0591](#))
- Accreditation Committee feedback on visit reports;
- Feedback from CBs requested at the time of the exit meeting at each office visit using form [FR0408](#) Assessor's assessment;
- Complaints process;
- Each assessor and technical expert shall be observed on-site by another assessor (IOAS Observer) at least once every 3 years. Such observation events can take place at remote assessments and also be performed remotely (with the assessor on site and the observer remote where technology and circumstances allow). These shall form part of the schedule planning performed by the Programme Manager. More frequent observed audits of individuals may be done if concerns are raised over the continued competent performance of any individual. Less frequent observed audits may be conducted if there is sufficient supporting evidence that the assessor continues to perform competently. Both scenarios may be informed by feedback from clients or through external audits and peer review. The IOAS Observer will evaluate the assessor but will not participate in the assessment.
- Any individual can be observed and/or assessed by a supervisory authority of IOAS or other applicable authority such as scheme owners. These observations may replace IOAS ones in case the performance of the assessor was considered good but may also prompt additional on-site observations if performance was not satisfactory.
- The result of any observation of the individual may also be considered in the assessor's performance review.

IOAS staff who conduct assessment visits (ie CMs) shall be subject to all the above provisions. The performance of staff assessors will, additionally, be assessed at annual performance reviews in line with document [PL0302](#).

Records

Full records shall be kept of all training, approvals and monitoring processes to demonstrate conformance with this policy.