International Accreditation Forum, Inc.

IAF Informative Document

IAF Informative Document
for
the Transition of
Management System
Accreditation to ISO/IEC 17021:2011
from ISO/IEC 17021:2006

Issue 1

(IAF ID 2:2011)

The International Accreditation Forum, Inc. (IAF) operates programs for the accreditation of bodies that provide conformity assessment services, and such accreditation facilitates trade and reduces demands for multiple certifications.

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Accreditation reduces risk for business and its customers by assuring them that accredited Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) are competent to carry out the work they undertake within their scope of accreditation. Accreditation Bodies (ABs) which are members of IAF and their accredited CABs are required to comply with appropriate international standards and IAF mandatory documents for the consistent application of those standards.

AB members of the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) conduct regular evaluations of each other to assure the equivalence of their accreditation programs. The IAF MLAs operate at two levels:

- A MLA for the accreditation of CABs to standards including ISO/IEC 17020 for inspection bodies, ISO/IEC 17021 for management systems CABs, ISO/IEC 17024 for personnel CABs and ISO/IEC Guide 65 for product CABs, is considered a framework MLA. A framework MLA provides confidence that accredited CABs are equally reliable in the performance of conformity assessment activities.

- A MLA for the accreditation of CABs that also includes the specific conformity assessment standard or scheme as a scope of accreditation provides confidence in the equivalence of certification.

An IAF MLA delivers the confidence needed for market acceptance of certification. An organization or person with certification to a specific standard or scheme that is accredited by an IAF MLA signatory AB can be recognized worldwide thereby facilitating international trade.

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Introduction to IAF Informative Documents

This IAF Informative Document reflects the consensus of IAF members on this subject and is intended to support the consistent application of requirements. However, being a document for information purposes only, IAF Accreditation Body Members, and the Conformity Assessment Bodies they accredit, are not under any obligation to use or comply with anything in this document.

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Information on the Transition of Management System
Accreditation to ISO/IEC 17021:2011
from ISO/IEC 17021:2006

1. Publication

ISO/IEC 17021 was revised on 1 February 2011. It incorporates new requirements for third-party certification auditing of management systems and the competence of personnel involved in the certification process. This was originally developed as ISO/IEC 17021 Part 2.

Resolution 2010-12 was passed by the IAF General Assembly in Shanghai 29 October 2010 endorsing a 2 year transition period to ISO/IEC 17021:2011.

2. Accreditation Bodies

Accreditation Bodies will need time to prepare for the transition to ISO/IEC 17021:2011. In particular, Accreditation Bodies should ensure they have defined, and that their assessors have achieved, the necessary competence before undertaking assessments to ISO/IEC 17021:2011.

3. Certification Bodies

Accreditation Bodies should make it clear to Certification Bodies that apply for accreditation following the publication of ISO/IEC 17021:2011 if they are to comply with this version immediately or to the 2006 version. Accreditation Bodies should define a time limit after which application to ISO/IEC 17021:2006 cannot be received and must be transferred to ISO/IEC 17021:2011 application. They should advise a date beyond which they cannot issue accreditation to ISO/IEC 17021:2006.

3.1. Certification Bodies with prior Accreditation

Certification Bodies accredited at the time of publication will be in conformance with ISO/IEC 17021:2006. Transition to ISO/IEC 17021:2011 may require translations, changes to procedures, training and other arrangements which will take time. In particular, time will be needed for Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) to establish processes and systems for them to be able to demonstrate the competence of its certification personnel.

3.2 Preparation time

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Certification Bodies should analyse and understand the requirements of ISO/IEC 17021:2011 and commence identification of new requirements in the standard without delay. Certification Bodies are advised to make a transition plan to determine both the required changes to their management system and the time frame required to execute them in order to conform to the standard. Certification Bodies are further advised to agree their transition plan with their Accreditation Body.

3.3 Transition and Implementation

Wherever possible and where there are no significant obstacles, a Certification Body should implement those parts of ISO/IEC 17021:2011 that it can without delay.

Assessment by an Accreditation Body should cover a Certification Body's plans for effectively managing its transition. The examination of these plans should enable the Accreditation Body to identify those points of the standard which have been interpreted differently or implemented insufficiently by Certification Bodies, and which may eventually lead to the need for additional IAF advice. The examination of these transition plans should also enable the Accreditation Body and Certification Body to agree upon an end date for the transition process, which should not go beyond 1 February 2013 (2 years from publication).

Certain changes resulting from ISO/IEC 17021:2011 will be easier to complete than others. More complex, time consuming and potentially costly changes could include setting up training regimes, software systems and the implementation of systems to demonstrate competence. In recognition of the need to limit the disruption to a Certification Body's clients, certain changes may be more appropriately carried out during the normal business cycle at the time of contract renewal or certificate re-issue.

4. Visits by Accreditation Bodies

Additional visits by Accreditation Bodies to assess solely against ISO/IEC 17021:2011 are not normally required. The implementation should be verified during normal scheduled surveillance activities. However, additional assessments may be necessary for a Certification Body requesting accreditation within an accelerated time frame.

5. Nonconformities

Accreditation Bodies should make it clear to Certification Bodies that where an assessment is conducted against ISO/IEC 17021:2011, any nonconformities identified should be dealt with

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according to the Accreditation Body's normal processes and must be cleared before the end of transition before accreditation to ISO/IEC 17021:2011 can be granted.

Where full implementation of specific clauses identified by the CAB and agreed in advance with the AB have not been completed by the end of transition, such changes should be raised as observations and should not adversely affect accreditation and should not preclude the issue of an accreditation certificate to ISO/IEC 17021:2011 provided that an implementation plan has been agreed and is on schedule.

An example might include the completion of training and evaluation of all salespersons to meet new requirements in the normative Annex A in ISO/IEC 17021:2011.

6. End of transition and Accreditation Certificate Issue

On 1 February 2013, two years after publication of the new standard, all accredited Certification Bodies are expected to be in full compliance with ISO/IEC 17021:2011 and have had new accreditation certificates issued.

7. New Schemes

It is expected ISO/IEC 17021:2011 will be applied immediately to applications by Certification Bodies and by Accreditation Bodies for accreditation to management system certification programmes. The standard to be used for any other new schemes should be made clear to Certification Bodies by Accreditation Bodies.

End of IAF Informative Document for the Transition of Management System Accreditation to ISO/IEC 17021:2011 from ISO/IEC 17021:2006.

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Further Information

For further Information on this document or other IAF documents, contact any member of IAF or the IAF Secretariat.

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