

**International Accreditation Forum, Inc.**

**IAF Information Document (draft)**

**Information on the Transition of  
Management System  
Accreditation to ISO/IEC 17021:2010  
from ISO/IEC 17021:2006**

**Issue 1  
(IAF ID ? :2010)**

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

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 certification bodies, ISO/IEC 17024 for personnel certification bodies and ISO/IEC Guide 65 for product certification bodies, 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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Prepared by: IAF Technical Committee

Approved by: IAF Members ??

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Name for Enquiries: John Owen, IAF Corporate Secretary

Contact: Phone: +612 9481 7343;

Email: [secretary1@iaf.nu](mailto:secretary1@iaf.nu)

## **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.

## **Information on the Transition of Management System Accreditation to ISO/IEC 17021:2010 from ISO/IEC 17021:2006**

### **1. Publication**

ISO/IEC 17021 was revised on dd mm 2010. 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-XX was passed by the IAF General Assembly in Shanghai dd October 2010 endorsing a 2 year transition period to ISO/IEC 17021:2010.

### **2. Accreditation Bodies**

Accreditation Bodies will need time to prepare for the transition to ISO/IEC 17021:2010. In particular, accreditation bodies should ensure they have defined, and that their assessors have achieved, the necessary competence before undertaking assessments to ISO/IEC 17021:2010.

### **3. Certification Bodies**

Accreditation Bodies should make it clear to Certification Bodies that apply for accreditation following the publication of ISO/IEC 17021:2010 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 17021:2010 application. They should advise a date beyond which they cannot issue accreditation to ISO/IEC 17021:2006.

#### **3.1. Certification Bodies with current accreditation**

Certification Bodies accredited at the time of publication should be in conformance with ISO/IEC 17021:2006. Transition to ISO/IEC 17021:2010 may require translations, changes to procedures, training and other arrangements which will take time. In particular, time will be needed for Certification Bodies to establish processes and systems to enable them to be able to demonstrate the competence of all of its certification personnel.

#### **3.2 Preparation time**

Certification Bodies should analyse and understand the requirements of ISO/IEC 17021:2010 and identify the new requirements in the standard which they have not already addressed

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 the new requirements of ISO/IEC 17021:2010 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 documents. 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 dd mm 2012 (2 years from publication).

Certain changes resulting from ISO/IEC 17021:2010 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.

Certification Bodies should therefore be able to identify and document any such changes, and the date by which they will have been completed should be agreed with the relevant Accreditation Body, thus avoiding any adverse effect on the transfer of accreditation to ISO/IEC 17021:2010.

An example might include the completion of training and evaluation of all salespersons to meet new requirements in normative Annex A.

## **4. Visits by Accreditation Bodies**

Additional visits by Accreditation Bodies to assess solely against ISO/IEC 17021:2010 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 17021:2010, any nonconformities identified should be dealt with according to the accreditation body's normal processes and must be cleared before the end of transition before accreditation to ISO/IEC 17021:2010 can be granted.

Where full implementation of specific requirements identified by the Certification Body and agreed in advance with the Accreditation Body 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 17021:2010 provided that an implementation plan has been agreed and is on schedule.

## **6. End of transition and Accreditation Certificate Issue**

On dd mm 2012, twenty four months after publication of the new standard, all accredited Certification Bodies are expected to be in full compliance with ISO/IEC 17021:2010 and have had new accreditation certificates issued.

## **7. New Schemes**

It is expected ISO/IEC 17021:2010 will be applied immediately to applications by Certification Bodies to 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 Information Document on the transition to ISO/IEC 17021:2010