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MAURITAS assessments – A guide for Certification Bodies

Mauritius Accreditation Service

CONTENTS

Foreword

The MAURITIUS ACCREDITATION SERVICE (MAURITAS) is a governmental body established in 1998 to provide a national, unified service for the accreditation of Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) such as calibration/testing laboratories, certification bodies and inspection bodies. Organizations that comply with the MAURITAS requirements are granted accreditation by MAURITAS.

About MAURITAS publications

MAURITAS publications are categorized as follows:

- R series — Publications containing general policy and requirements related to MAURITAS accreditation.
- G series — Publications providing guidance on MAURITAS requirements.
- A series — Publications related to assessment procedures.
- P series — MAURITAS quality system procedures
- F series — MAURITAS Forms
- Directories — Classified listing of accredited organizations.

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MAURITAS assessments – A guide for certification bodies

1. Purpose

This guidance document should ensure a uniform and correct execution of the processes associated with the assessment and accreditation of certification bodies.

2 Scope and Responsibilities

2.1 This guidance document provides an indication on how assessments of certification bodies are to be carried out by MAURITAS against the requirements that are applicable for each accreditation scheme.

Certification Bodies are encouraged to follow this guidance document.

3. References

The following documents contain provisions which, through reference in this text, constitute provisions of the MAURITAS accreditation system. For dated references, subsequent amendments to, or revisions of, any of these publications do not apply. For undated MAURITAS references, the latest edition of the document referred to, applies. MAURITAS maintains a register, of the current valid MAURITAS accreditation documents.

3.1 ISO/IEC 17021-1 : Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems- Part 1: Requirements

3.2 ISO/IEC 17021-2 : Conformity assessment -- Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems -- Part 2: Competence requirements for auditing and certification of environmental management systems.

3.3 ISO/IEC 17021-3 : Conformity assessment -- Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems -- Part 3: Competence requirements for auditing and certification of quality management systems.

3.4 ISO/TS 22003 : Food safety management systems -- Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of food safety management systems.

3.5 ISO/IEC 27006 : Information technology -- Security techniques -- Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of information security management systems.

3.6 MAURITAS A Series documents

3.7 MAURITAS G Series documents

3.8 MAURITAS R Series documents

3.9 ISO/IEC 17011 : General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies.

3.10 IAF MD 1 : IAF Mandatory Document for the Audit and Certification of a Management System Operated by a Multi-Site Organization

3.11 IAF MD 2 : IAF Mandatory Document for the Transfer of Accredited Certification of Management Systems

3.12 IAF MD 4 : IAF Mandatory Document for the Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for Auditing/Assessment Purposes

3.13 IAF MD 5 : Determination of Audit Time of Quality, Environmental Management Systems and Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems

3.14 IAF MD 7 : Harmonisation of Sanctions

3.15 IAF MD 11 : IAF Mandatory Document for Application of ISO/IEC 17021 for Audits of Integrated Management Systems (IMS)

3.16 IAF MD 12 : Accreditation Assessment of Conformity Assessment Bodies with Activities in Multiple Countries

3.17 IAF MD 13 : Knowledge Requirements for Accreditation Body Personnel for Information Security Management Systems (ISO/IEC 27001)

3.18 IAF MD 15 : IAF Mandatory Document for the Collection of Data to Provide Indicators of Management System Certification Bodies' Performance

3.19 IAF MD 16 : Application of ISO/IEC 17011 for the Accreditation of Food Safety Management Systems (FSMS) Certification Bodies

3.20 IAF MD 17 : Witnessing Activities for the Accreditation of Management Systems Certification Bodies

3.21 IAF MD 20 : Generic Competence for AB Assessors: Application to ISO/IEC 17011

3.22 IAF ML 1 : Guidance for the Exchange of Documentation among MLA Signatories for the Assessment of Conformity Assessment Bodies

3.23 IAF COVID FAQs 5-8, 10, 13, 17, 18, 26, 27, 31 and 34

3.24 ILAC/IAF JWG A-Series FAQ1

4 Definitions

4.1 Accreditation
A third-party attestation related to a Certification Body conveying formal demonstration of its competence to carry out specific audit and certification activities.

4.2 Major non-conformities
Non-Conformities that affect the capability of the management system to achieve the intended results.

4.3 Minor non-conformities
Non-Conformities that do not affect the capability of the management system to achieve the intended results.

4.4 Assessment
Set of activities, including a visit, to ensure that an applicant or accredited certification body operates in compliance with the accreditation requirements set by MAURITAS.

4.5 Assessor
A person assigned by an accreditation body to perform, alone or as part of an assessment team, an assessment of a conformity assessment body.

4.6 Technical Expert

Person assigned by an accreditation body, working under the responsibility of an assessor, who provides specific knowledge or expertise with respect to the scope of accreditation to be assessed and does not assess independently. However, a technical expert can work in an area alone if an Assessor/Team Leader is available and periodically checking and communicating with the technical expert (this includes also keeping in touch via email or telephone or a mobile application).

4.7 The International Accreditation Forum (IAF)

The world association of Conformity Assessment Accreditation Bodies and other bodies interested in conformity assessment in the fields of management systems, products, services, personnel and other similar programmes of conformity assessment. Its primary function is to develop a single worldwide program of conformity assessment which reduces risk for business and its customers by assuring them that accredited certificates may be relied upon. Accreditation assures users of the competence and impartiality of the body accredited. IAF website can be accessed on iaf.nu.

5 General

5.1 MAURITAS is the sole national accreditation body for certification bodies. The compliance requirements for organisations applying for accreditation are given in the following international standards:

Certification bodies for management systems, Part 1;
Requirement: ISO/IEC 17021-1

Certification bodies for management systems, Part 2;
Requirement: ISO/IEC 17021-2

Certification bodies for management systems, Part 3;
Requirement: ISO/IEC 17021-3

Certification bodies for product certification;
Requirement: ISO/IEC 17065

Certification bodies for personnel certification;
Requirement: ISO/IEC 17024

5.2 Certification bodies offering management system certification have to comply with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17021-1 for quality management systems (ISO/IEC 17021-3) or for environmental management systems (ISO/IEC 17021-2). In addition to ISO/IEC 17021-1, the applicant should also refer to Information Security Management System (ISMS) specific requirements (ISO/IEC 27006) when implementing management system for certification of ISMS scheme. Moreover, the applicant should also refer to Food Safety Management System (FSMS) specific requirements (ISO/TS 22003) when implementing management system for certification of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) and FSMS schemes.

5.3 Accreditation is based upon a number of international, general standards as mentioned above. In addition, MAURITAS employs documents that provide guidance on how the general standard should be understood, if necessary. MAURITAS also assesses accredited certification bodies against relevant MAURITAS Regulations.

5.4 Accredited certification of products, management systems and personnel is always based upon more detailed standards which describe characteristics of a given product, a given management system or competence of a person who is certified for a given task. In the case of non-availability of detailed national or international standards or other normative documents that described the characteristics of the products, characteristics of the system or competence requirements, it may not be possible to accredit a certification body for such certification.

5.5 Standards or normative documents, which are vaguely developed may not be used for accredited certification until there are interpretation documents.

6. Preparation of Applicant's Documentation / Management System

6.1 Before applying for accreditation, it is recommended to read the requirement and interpretation documents in details. The documents, guidance and regulations, prepared by MAURITAS are available to all applicants and accredited bodies and are also accessible on the website of MAURITAS (www.mauritas.org).

6.2 The applicant should also refer to IAF mandatory documents (IAF MD) and other IAF documents when implementing its management system. This document gives further detail on the use of IAF documents.

6.3 The applicant must establish a management system, which gives documentary evidence that the requirements have been satisfied and understood that there will be subsequent assessment and renewal of the accreditation. For many organisations, it may mean that they have to change their current mode for working. A detailed review of requirements will be the basis for a greater reward and more affective process in relation to preparation of an application for accreditation.

MAURITAS recommends a quality manager, however named, to be designated to look after the maintenance and implementation of the management system and to report to the top management.

6.4 At the time of submission, the application should include necessary documentation, as required by MAURITAS, in order to describe the applicant's activities together with the scope of application covering certification. The applicant should carry out a self –assessment to demonstrate where in the management system; the different requirements in the standard are documented.

6.5 Prior to accreditation, the management system should be satisfactorily implemented and MAURITAS should have evaluated the competence of the applicant by performing assessment of the applicant. The assessment is conducted through the various phases of the accreditation process.

6.6 It is possible for the Certification body to gain experiences and explain how management system can be established in order to show compliance with the requirements. It can be done for the different organisations, by the provision of information material. There is a need for general competence about quality assurance. MAURITAS will disseminate information related to requirements that are valid for accreditation and can provide general recommendations. However, MAURITAS cannot be involved directly in the tasks, which are to be carried out by the applicant prior to submission of an application.

7. IAF Documents

Certification bodies offering management systems certification should refer to the relevant IAF documents as specified below:

7.1 IAF MD 1: IAF Mandatory Document for the Audit and Certification of a Management System Operated by a Multi-Site Organization

This document is for the audit and, if appropriate, the certification of management systems of organizations with a number of sites with a single management system.

7.2 IAF MD 2: IAF Mandatory Document for the Transfer of Accredited Certification of management systems

This document provides normative criteria on the transfer of accredited management system certification between certification bodies. The criteria may also be applicable in the case of acquisitions of certification bodies accredited by an IAF or Regional MLA signatory.

7.3 IAF MD 4: IAF Mandatory Document for the Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for Auditing/Assessment Purposes

This document is for the auditing/assessment of management systems, persons and product and is applicable to conformity assessment bodies and accreditation bodies. The use of ICT is not mandatory and may be used for other types of conformity assessment activities, but if used as part of the audit/assessment methodology, it is mandatory to conform to this document.

7.3 IAF MD 5: Determination of Audit Time of Quality, Environmental and Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems

This document is mandatory for the consistent application of the relevant clauses of ISO/IEC 17021-1 for audits of quality, environmental, and occupational health and safety management systems. All clauses of ISO/IEC 17021-1 continue to apply and this document does not supersede any of the requirements in that standard.

7.4 IAF MD 7: Harmonisation of Sanctions

This mandatory document clarifies situations where sanctions are to be applied to applicant or accredited Conformity Assessment Bodies.

7.6 IAF MD 11, IAF Mandatory Document for Application of ISO/IEC 17021-1 for Audits of Integrated Management Systems

This document provides requirements for the application of ISO/IEC 17021 for the planning and delivery of audits of IMS and, if appropriate, the certification of an organization’s management system(s) against two or more sets of audit criteria/standards.

7.5 IAF MD 12: Accreditation Assessment of Conformity Assessment Bodies with Activities in Multiple Countries

This document provides requirements for the consistent application of Clause 7 of ISO/IEC 17011 regarding an Accreditation Body (AB)'s Assessment of Conformity Assessment Bodies (CAB)'s that provide certification in countries outside the country in which their head office is located.

7.8 IAF MD 13: Knowledge Requirements for Accreditation Body Personnel for InformationSecurity Management Systems (ISO/IEC 27001)

This document provides specific knowledge requirements for Accreditation Body personnel to harmonize their application of the related clause on resources in ISO/IEC 17011 for the accreditation of bodies providing audit and certification of information security management systems (ISMS) to ISO/IEC 27001.

7.9 IAF MD 15, IAF Mandatory Document for the Collection of Data to Provide Indicators of Management System Certification Bodies' Performance

This document provides the "indicators" which Accreditation Bodies shall require accredited Management System Certification Bodies to report to them on a periodic basis.

7.10 IAF MD 16, Application of ISO/IEC 17011 for the Accreditation of Food Safety Management Systems (FSMS) Certification Bodies

This document specifies normative criteria for Accreditation Bodies assessing and accrediting CABs which provide audit and certification of FSMS, in addition to the requirements contained with ISO/IEC 17011. It is also appropriate as a requirements document for the peer evaluation process for the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) among Accreditation Bodies.

7.11 IAF MD 17, Witnessing Activities for the Accreditation of Management Systems Certification Bodies

This document is mandatory for the consistent application of the relevant clauses of ISO/IEC 17011. It applies to the accreditation of Management Systems Certification Bodies except for those provisions that conflict with what is established in applicable standards, other IAF documents, specifications and legislation.

7.12 IAF MD 20, Generic Competence for AB Assessors: Application to ISO/IEC 17011

This document ensures the consistent and harmonized application of ISO/IEC 17011 for defining the generic competence for assessors.

8. Accreditation Process

8.1 The progress plan during the handling of application is shown in the form of flow sheet in appendix 1.

8.2 The application is submitted to MAURITAS on a prescribed application form, **F4.01** and cross reference matrix, **F4.10** and **F4.11 or F4.13**. The Quality Documentation (described in the application form) should be attached to the application. MAURITAS will assess whether the received documentation is complete. If not, MAURITAS will contact the applicant in order to receive the necessary additional information. Information given in the application and information that appear in the application process are treated as confidential.

8.3 At any point in the application or initial assessment process, if there is evidence of fraudulent behaviour, if the Certification Body intentionally provides false information or if the Certification Body conceals information, MAURITAS will reject the application or terminate the assessment process.

8.4 MAURITAS will carry out a resource review to confirm whether MAURITAS has suitable assessors and technical experts to carry out the assessment in a timely manner.

8.5 MAURITAS makes decision, as to which assessors and /or technical experts are to be involved in order to assess the applicant's technical competence. MAURITAS considers availability, impartiality and absence of conflict of interest and confidentiality commitment when constituting the assessment team.

8.6 An assessment team is composed and presented to the applicant. In case of objection raised by the applicant and valid justification provided in writing one or more of the suggested assessors may be changed. MAURITAS will appoint new assessors and /or technical experts if they are not accepted by the applicant, and recommend actions based on the applicant's justified reason. However, if the reason given is not considered to be valid by MAURITAS, and local assessors and /or technical experts are not available, the Certification Body will have to bear the cost of using foreign assessors and /or technical experts.

8.7 The handling of the application is started by the first time evaluation of the Quality Documentation with regards to the requirements that are applicable within the actual area applied for. Based on the document review report, the applicant is informed of the following outcome:

a) the organisation is not in a position to proceed to preliminary visit; or

b) the organisation is ready for a preliminary visit; or

c) the organisation is ready for an initial assessment.

In case the recommendation of the assessment team differs from the request of the Certification Body with respect to preliminary visit, MAURITAS will then discuss with the Certification Body so as to reach a mutually agreed way forward.

8.8 The preliminary visit is conducted in such a way that the assessment team visits the applicant and takes a bird eye view picture of the applicant's management system. After such a visit, MAURITAS will inform the applicant about the appropriate course of action based on the assessment team's recommendation. The possible result of preliminary visit is:

- The applicant is ready for initial assessment;
- The applicant is ready for initial assessment after implementing corrective actions;
- Initial Assessment cannot be performed.

MAURITAS will not issue to the certification body any detailed checklist or documents that have been used during the course of the preliminary visit. Preliminary visit Form, **F1.20**, is filled in by the assessment team and a copy is handed over to the certification body during the closing meeting.

8.9 MAURITAS and the applicant agree on the date for the initial assessment. The certification body **should** submit its updated Quality Documentation as well as latest management review, complaints, internal audit reports, filled cross reference matrices to MAURITAS. The assessment is conducted at the site of applicant and the assessment team considers the risks associated with the activities, locations and personnel for the scope applied.

8.10 Any non-conformity found during the initial assessment is presented before the visit is concluded. **After** the visit, MAURITAS prepares a report, **F4.07**, and sends it to the applicant.

All actions to be taken by the certification body or by MAURITAS are as per the timelines available on the MAURITAS website.

8.11 The applicant takes the necessary corrective actions including root cause analysis so that the non-conformities can be closed. There may be a need for an on-site clearance in order to verify that the corrective actions have been implemented.

8.12 When MAURITAS has received all the evidence for implemented corrective actions and same have been cleared by the assessment team, an accreditation report is prepared recommending that:

1. Accreditation in accordance with the application be granted, or
2. Parts of the application be accredited, or
3. Conditional accreditation be granted, or
4. Accreditation be deferred, or
5. Accreditation not be granted.

8.13 The Accreditation Committee makes the decision about accreditation. The decision is then communicated to the applicant. The accreditation certificate, accreditation schedule and contract agreement **F1.13** and **F1.25** (where relevant) will be forwarded to the applicant. Following signature of contract by both parties, MAURITAS will forward the accreditation symbol and combined mark (where relevant) to the Certification Body.

8.14 Any appeal about the accreditation decision should have to be communicated to MAURITAS. The appeal will be forwarded to an Appeal Panel appointed by the Minister for consideration.

9. Assessment Visit

9.1 The assessment visit is started with an opening meeting, **F1.01**, with the management of the organisation where the assessment team is introduced to the representatives of the organisation. The assessment plan for the conduct of the visit and the process of the assessment and accreditation are explained.

9.2 The practical implementation of the management system and documents related to it are reviewed. The assessment team considers the risks associated with the activities, locations and personnel for the scope applied. The main office, personnel and all geographical locations (if any) that are covered under the scope of application for accreditation **F4.10 and F4.11 or F4.13**

9.3 The assessment team or part of it will perform a witnessing of the applicant's audits at the site of the customer and prepare a witnessing report **F4.03** after the witnessing.

9.4 MAURITAS also assesses applicant certification bodies against relevant MAURITAS Regulations.

9.5 All non-conformities raised during the assessment are recorded. The assessment visit is concluded with a closing meeting, **F1.04**, with the management of the organisation and other relevant personnel for review of the results. The assessment team presents the Recommendation Report, **F4.06**, and the filled non-conformity forms, **F4.05**, prior to completion of the assessment and before handing over a copy to the applicant.

10. Change/Extension of the Accreditation Scope

10.1 An accredited certification body can apply for extension of the accreditation scope for more business areas or certification standards. As a matter of principle, such application should be submitted at least 3 months prior to the next visit. In case of request for accreditation against new certification standard; this is handled as a new application.

10.2 MAURITAS will make arrangements to carry out at a combination of the following activities depending upon the request for extension of scope of accreditation:

- Document review of performed audits in the scope of activities of relevant management systems;
- Interviewing of qualified technical auditor and review of their competence;
- Witnessing of an audit of the scope of activities;
- Office assessment in case of new certification standards.

10.3 A possible voluntary reduction in the accreditation scope is handled in case of a written request from the organisation.

11. Assessment and Renewal of Accreditation

11.1 For maintaining an accreditation, periodical assessment and re-assessment are necessary. The assessment is conducted at the site of the accredited body approximately once a year. The assessment activities will consist of an office assessment together with witnessing of certification bodies in their practical work.

11.2 The certification body should submit its updated Quality Documentation as well as latest management review, complaints, internal audit reports and filled cross reference matrices **F4.10** and **F4.11 or F4.13** to MAURITAS.

11.3 The accredited certification body should send a complete and updated schedule of confirmed and planned audits (dates, location, audit team composition, audit type and scope) on a yearly basis.

11.4 Assessment visits are conducted to cover key elements of the management system, including but not limited to complaints, management review and internal audit. During each assessment visit, selected clauses will be assessed so as to cover all clauses of the relevant accreditation standard(s) during one cycle. MAURITAS will assess a representative number of activities, locations and key personnel involved in certification activities during each visit and will also consider their associated risks.

11.5 MAURITAS will ensure that competence is assessed throughout the scope in the accreditation cycle for all IAF codes of each Management System scheme unless the CB has demonstrated sufficient experience and performance for an enhanced programme. When this happens, at least one witnessing activity in each technical cluster of each management system scheme will be performed, to be complemented with other assessment activities to guarantee that each technical cluster is assessed during two successive accreditation cycles.

11.6 MAURITAS has however, possibility of conducting extraordinary visits when it is considered necessary.

11.7 MAURITAS will assess every geographical/administrative unit at least once during the accreditation cycle. The accreditation cycle of MAURITAS is four years for all accreditation schemes.

11.8 The Accreditation Committee has delegated the power to take decision on maintenance of accreditation to the Director only in cases where there is no modification to the scope of accreditation except in the following cases:

- the scope of accreditation contains more than two accreditation schemes for Certification Bodies;
- the number of non-conformities, in particular, major ones is consequent; and

- the risks associated with the CAB's activities, location and personnel are considerable.

12. Suspension / Withdrawal of Accreditation

12.1 An accreditation can be voluntarily withdrawn after written request from the accredited certification body.

12.2 An accreditation can be suspended or can be withdrawn if the accreditation requirements are no longer met. Both suspension and withdrawal may apply to the whole or parts of the accreditation scope.
Suspension may apply for a specified minimum period of **4 months** and a maximum period of **9 months.** MAURITAS will perform a new visit 3 months before the expiry of the suspension period. Accreditation will be re-instated in the event of a positive recommendation from the assessment team and a favourable decision by the Accreditation Committee.

12.3 A certification body, whose accreditation or part of it has been withdrawn, must re-apply if it wishes to be accredited again for that scope or part of that scope which was initially withdrawn.

13. Accreditation Fees

13.1 Applicant and accredited certification bodies are bound to pay fees in accordance with the MAURITAS (Certification Body Accreditation Fees) Regulations 2007 and Amendment Regulations 2013 for levying of fees and charges on certification body accreditation.

Note: If reasons provided to MAURITAS regarding refusal of proposed assessors/experts are not considered to be valid, and local assessors and /or technical experts are not available, the certification body will have to bear the cost of using foreign assessors and/or technical experts.

14. Important Points for Effective Conduct of Accreditation

14.1 The following issues are important for effective conduct of accreditation:

- Management of the certification body is motivated and must demonstrate that quality work has a priority;
- Certification body staff are informed and participate actively – not only quality manager;
- There is progress plan and a budget for the work;
- Management follow up the work in planned manner;
- The certification body knows the requirements and the accreditation process;
- It may be advantageous to start with a limited accreditation scope which can be extended later on;
- The applicant submits a complete quality documentation including latest internal audits and management review reports;
- There are clear cross references, which show where in the quality documentation that each requirement in the relevant standard has been satisfied;
- Traceable calibration of measuring equipment is established;
- Implementation of corrective actions is given high priority and is conducted rapidly.

15. Publication

15.1 MAURITAS publishes a list of all its accredited certification bodies on its website (www.mauritas.org).

16. Obligations of certification bodies

16.1 An accredited certification body should:

- Fulfil the requirements at all times (the international standard and other requirements published by MAURITAS);
- Pay the fees and costs decided by MAURITAS in accordance with the fees regulation;
- Comply with the MAURITAS Regulations;
- Immediately inform MAURITAS in writing about any change which has any importance for complying with the requirements;
- On request, provide information to MAURITAS about how accreditation requirements are fulfilled together with overview of activities within the accreditation area;
- Ensure that no reference to accreditation is made when the accreditation has been withdrawn.

17. Related Forms

- Resource Review Form, F1.09
- Contract Agreement between CAB and MAURITAS, F1.13
- Agenda Opening Meeting, F1.01
- Agenda Closing Meeting, F1.04
- Preliminary Visit Findings Form, F1.20
- Declaration of impartiality, F1.23
- Application for Accreditation of certification body for management systems certification, F4.01
- Report from Document Review, F4.02
- Non-Conformity report, F4.05
- Recommendation Report, F4.06
- Team Leader's Report from assessment of Certification Bodies for Management Systems, F4.07
- Witness Assessment Report of Management Systems, F4.03
- Cross Reference matrix-cum-checklist for ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015 Management Requirement, F4.10
- Cross Reference matrix-cum-checklist for ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015 Technical Requirement for QMS, F4.11
- Cross Reference matrix-cum-checklist for ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015 Technical Requirement for FSMS/HACCP, F4.13

Appendix A: Amendment Table

SN	Section	Amendment

Appendix 1: Flow sheet for accreditation process