INTERNATIONAL CERTIFICATION SERVICES

CERTIFICATION MANUAL Doc No: CM 5_Annex.H

ICT PROCEDURE

1. INTRODUCTION -

As Information and Communication Technology (ICT) hereafter being referred as ICT, becomes more sophisticated, it is important to be able to use ICT to optimize audit/assessment effectiveness and efficiency, and to support and maintain the integrity of the audit/assessment process.
ICT is the use of technology for gathering, storing, retrieving, processing, analysing and transmitting information. It includes software and hardware such as smartphones, handheld devices, laptop computers, desktop computers, drones, video cameras, wearable technology, artificial intelligence, and others. The use of ICT may be appropriate for auditing/assessment both locally and remotely

Examples of the use of ICT during audits/assessments may include but are not limited to:

- Meetings; by means of teleconference facilities, including audio, video and data sharing
- Audit/assessment of documents and records by means of remote access, either synchronously (in real time) or asynchronously (when Client's Organization)
- Recording of information and evidence by means of still video, video or audio recordings where possible
- Providing visual/audio access to remote or potentially hazardous locations where possible
- The traditional methodology used for assessment of Conformity Assessment Bodies (Client's Organizations), based on ISO/IEC 17011 has involved physical office assessments of the Client's Organization.
- There have been growing reasons, needs and capabilities in recent years that challenge the effectiveness of this traditional methodology. As a result of Client's Organizations carrying out work on a global scale, at a multitude of locations and with the advent of significant technological advances, these Client's Organizations are more ubiquitous but remain operating on fairly centralized networks, quality management systems, and conformity assessment operations that are replicated from one place to the next.
- Client's Organizations today are able to create virtual sites that allow persons from different physical locations to execute processes. It is an on-line environment in which processes are executed, where demonstration of evidence, conformity or traceability can be confirmed via electronic means.
- Consistent with the philosophy of IAF MD 4, remote assessments provide ICSPL a vehicle to facilitate the same amount of assessment of Client's Organizations or even more. Further, the remote assessment vehicle permits ICSPL to witness and assess more locations and capability with the approximately same amount of resources it utilizes for on-site assessments. ICS shall nominate any person to carry out witness audit during the ICT audit. The nominated person can be any Team leader / Accreditation auditor but shall not be member of the audit team
- This IAF principles document provides suggestions about how to plan, manage, and facilitate remote assessments used by ICSPL in order to complement traditional oversight techniques. In the context of certification, “ICSPL will establish procedures and plans for carrying out [whole or portions thereof (e.g. auditor interviews, etc.)] periodic surveillance onsite assessments, other surveillance activities and reassessments at sufficiently close intervals to monitor the continued fulfilment by the accredited Client's Organization of the requirements for certification”. It is recognized that some ICS already conduct such visits to Client's Organizations, and whilst the objective of the current

document is not to make such visits mandatory, it is hoped that it will provide a common platform and methodology for such visits if and when they are deemed to be appropriate.

- It is important to emphasize that the adoption of the methodology described in this principles document should not necessarily increase the cost of the certification process. On the contrary – the objective is to make the certification process more effective and efficient.
- Although the methodology described in this document is for information only, it is hoped that some Client's Organizations might see the advantages of adopting such remote assessments on a pilot (voluntary) basis, to complement traditional assessment techniques. In these cases, it is recommended that the experiences obtained from such initiatives (including a cost/benefit analysis) be reported to the certification cell at the head office for subsequent improvement of this principles document.

2. SCOPE

This principles document is Client's Organization to remote assessments used by ICSPL in order to complement traditional oversight techniques.

3. DEFINITIONS

3.1 Remote Assessment

The facilitation of assessment of a Client's Organization from a location other than that being physically present.

3.2 Virtual Site

An online environment allowing persons from different physical locations to execute processes.

Virtual Site - Virtual location where a client organization performs work or provides a service using an on-line environment allowing persons irrespective of physical locations to execute processes.

Note 1: A virtual site cannot be considered where the processes must be executed in a physical environment, e.g., warehousing, manufacturing, physical testing laboratories, installation or repairs to physical products.

Note 2: A virtual site (e.g. company intranet) is considered a single site for the calculation of audit/assessment time.

4. OBJECTIVES

The objective of a remote assessment is to establish the level of confidence in the Client's Organization certification process by direct observations carried out through an electronic medium. Remote assessments provide the opportunity for increased efficiency, increased safety, better timing, inclusion of Client's Organization personnel that may not be easily accessible, and avoidance of travel delays and restrictions.

The objectives for the effective application of ICT for audit/assessment purposes are:

a) To provide a methodology for the use of ICT that is sufficiently flexible and non-prescriptive in nature to optimize the conventional audit/assessment process
b) To ensure that adequate controls are in place to avoid abuses that could compromise the integrity of the audit/assessment process
c) To support the principles of safety and sustainability Measures will also be taken to ensure that security and confidentiality is maintained throughout audit/assessment activities

5. REFERENCES

- IAF MD 5 - Determination of Audit Time of Quality and Environmental Management Systems
- IAF MD 4 : 2018 - The use of information and communication Technology ICT for auditing / assessment purposes.
- ISO/IEC 17011 - Conformity assessment – Requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies
- ISO/IEC 17021-1 - Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems — Part 1: Requirements
- ISO/IEC 17065 - Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services
- ISO/IEC 17024 - Conformity assessment – General requirements for bodies operating certification of persons
- ISO 14065 - Greenhouse gases – Requirements for greenhouse gas validation and verification bodies for use in accreditation or other forms of recognition
- ISO/IEC 17020 - Conformity assessment – Requirements for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspection
- ISO/IEC 17025 - General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories
- IAF ID 12 - Principles on Remote Assessment
- ISO 19011 - Guidelines for auditing management systems

6. REQUIREMENTS -

6.1 Security and Confidentiality

6.1.1 The security and confidentiality of electronic or electronically-transmitted information is particularly important when using ICT for audit/assessment purposes, this will be ensured by having the NDA (FA/99) signed and agreed before such an arrangement is exercised.

6.1.2 The use of ICT for audit/assessment purposes will be mutually agreed upon by ICS being audited/assessed and the ICS performing the audit/assessment in accordance with information security and data protection measures and regulations before ICT is used for audit/assessment purposes all this will be covered in the form (FC/71) which will be signed and agreed.

6.1.3 In the case of non-fulfilment of these measures or non-agreement of information security and data protection measures, ICS performing the audit/assessment activities will use other / conventional methods to conduct the audit/assessment.

6.1.4 When no agreement is reached for the use of ICT for audit/assessment, other methods will be used to fulfil audit/assessment objectives.

6.2 Process Requirements

6.2.1 ICS will identify and document the risks and opportunities that may impact audit/assessment effectiveness for each use of ICT under the same conditions, including the selection of the technologies, and how they are managed a document on risk and opportunities are addressed in FC_63.

6.2.2 When ICT is proposed for the audit/assessment activities, the ICT form (FC/71) will be filled out which include a check that the client and ICS have the necessary infrastructure to support the use of the ICT proposed, such provisions are already added in the ICT form so all clients not meeting the ICT form requirement will not take part in the ICT.

6.2.3 Considering the risks and opportunities identified in 6.2.1, the audit/assessment plan will identify how ICT will be utilized and the extent to which ICT will be used for audit/assessment purposes to optimize audit/assessment effectiveness and efficiency while maintaining the integrity of the audit/assessment process.

6.2.4 When using ICT, auditors/assessors and other involved persons (e.g. drone pilots, technical experts) will have the competency and ability to understand and utilize the information and communication technologies employed to achieve the desired results of audit(s)/assessment(s). The auditor/assessor will also be aware of the risks and opportunities of the information and communication technologies used and the impacts that they may have on the validity and objectivity of the information gathered.

6.2.5 If ICT is used for audit/assessment purposes, it contributes to the total audit/assessment time as additional planning may be necessary which may impact audit/assessment duration, ICS will increase the planning time by 10% of mandays applicable.

Note: When determining audit/assessment time and duration, please refer to the Normative References for additional requirements which may impact the application of ICT. The impact upon audit/assessment duration using ICT is not limited by this document.

6.2.6 Audit/assessment reports and related records will indicate the extent to which ICT has been used in carrying out audit/assessment and the effectiveness of ICT in achieving the audit/assessment objectives.

6.2.7 If virtual sites are included within the scope, the certification documentation will note that virtual sites are included and the activities performed at the virtual sites will be identified.

7. CRITERIA FOR INITIATING A REMOTE ASSESSMENT

7.1 The use of remote assessments by ICSPL of Client's OrganisationS may be on a voluntary basis, by mutual agreement, or may be initiated by ICSPL for its assessment needs (initial, surveillance, investigations, verifications, etc.).

7.2 When possible, the scope, planning, assessment process and documentation of the assessment should follow ISO 19011.

7.3 Remote assessments may be considered for use when:

i. Travel to a Client's Organization or specific location is not reasonable (i.e., for safety reasons, travel restrictions, lockout's, force majeure circumstances etc.).
ii. There are unavoidable changes in scheduling for the Assessor or Client's Organization (i.e., personal issues, change in business priorities, missing or cancellations of flights etc.).
iii. The number of sites to be assessed is difficult for ICSPL to completely fulfill within its time frame.
iv. The Client's Organization has systematic implementation of its management system where records, data, etc. can be reviewed at any site, despite where the work is being performed.
v. The assessment is for a minor extension to scope of certification.
vi. The Client's Organization has a proven track record of conformance at the location of the remote assessment.
vii. The risk level of the assessment is of low concern to ICSPL.
viii. An activity or activities planned for the on-site assessment could not be completed and extending the on-site assessment is not the best resolution.
ix. The situation requires the assessment team to come back for a follow up assessment, but another visit is not easily achievable within a short time frame.
x. ICSPL has an assessor (or team of assessors) already familiar with the Management System and its practices and who have visited the Client's Organization headquarters.

7.4 Remote assessments may be less favorable in the following scenarios:

i. When the Client's Organization has a history of non-conformance at the location being assessed.
ii. During initial assessment activity of a new Client's Organization facility, scope, or significant change.
iii. When no on-site assessment has taken place for an extended period of time.

8. PLANNING AND SCHEDULING OF REMOTE ASSESSMENTS

8.1 It is beneficial for ICSPL to determine whether or not the Client's Organization is a viable candidate for remote assessment. ICSPL should define qualification criteria for determining when it is appropriate to perform an assessment remotely, such as:

i. The acceptable period to perform a remote assessment (initial (only in emergency

scenario), surveillance, extensions of certification, extraordinary assessment, follow-up, partial assessment which could not be completed on-site, investigations, etc.).

ii. The criteria for appropriate use of remote assessment.
iii. The eligibility of the ICSPLS for remote assessment (i.e., the facility may be contractually obligated or the scheme required to be assessed on-site).
iv. Whether there is a conflict of interest with the parties being assessed remotely.
v. Whether ICSPL permits and accommodates remote assessment activity (i.e., availability of records in electronic format or document reader).
vi. Whether ICS is able to provide a representative that is capable of communicating in the same language as the assessor.
vii. Whether ICSPL has the capability and aptitude to conduct the remote assessment in the chosen medium/forum of the remote assessment.
viii. Whether a list of activities, areas, information and personnel to be involved in the remote assessment is available.

8.2 Before initiating a remote assessment, it is important to define:

i. The agenda for the planned remote assessment with pre-defined records and documentation to be available during remote assessment.
ii. The desired scope of review.
iii. The list of activities, areas, information and personnel to be involved in the remote assessment.
iv. The list of items to be assessed.
v. The time frame for conducting the remote assessment (i.e. 4 hr/day for 3 days).
vi. Note: timing should adhere to the rules/guidance defined for duration. Permit time for breaks and individual review by the Assessor. Assessment days should be calculated using prescribed methods, Scheme rules, etc.
vii. A plan on how to review information that cannot be shared remotely (i.e. due to confidentiality or access issues). ICSPL should define or express how this will be dealt with (i.e., follow-up, issuance of a non conformance, etc.).
viii. Note: personnel facilitating remote assessment may not be permitted to share certain confidential information or there may be an existing corporate policy on how certain mediums can be used to provide such information.

8.3 The Client's Organization should provide to ICSPL:

i. Designated individual(s) that will facilitate, manage and coordinate the arrangements of the assessment on behalf of the Client's Organisation. This should include translators, when necessary.
ii. Client's Organisation files, projects, reports, etc.
iii. Client's Organisation procedure(s) and documents for process(es) being assessed. Some information, such as project report files, may need to be sent to the Assessor for review prior to the remote assessment.
iv. Other evidence deemed essential and necessary.

8.4 Forum and technology planning should include:

i. Determining the platform (i.e., Zoom Meetings, Skype, Whatsapp, Go-To-Meeting, WebEx, Microsoft Teams, House Party, Google Duo, etc.) for hosting the assessment,

to be agreed upon between ICSPL and the Client's Organisation.

ii. Granting security and/or profile access to the Assessor.
iii. Testing platform compatibility between the Assessor and Client's Organisation prior to assessment.
iv. Encouraging and considering the use of web-cams, cameras, etc. when physical evaluation of an event is desired or necessary.

8.5 Scheduling requires the following to be carefully considered:

i. Time zone acknowledgement and management to coordinate reasonable and mutually agreeable convening times.
ii. A trial meeting using the same media platforms agreed upon should be conducted to ensure the scheduled assessment will perform as planned.
iii. Proper security measures should be taken, when Client's Organisation, to protect confidential information.

9. CONDUCTING REMOTE ASSESSMENTS

9.1 Should an item not be able to be reviewed or complete determination not be able to be made, a record should be made.

9.2 The assessment should be facilitated in quiet environments whenever possible to avoid interference and background noise (i.e., speakerphones).

9.3 Facilitation of the assessment should follow normal assessment plans and processes.

9.4 Both parties should make their best effort to confirm what was heard, stated and read throughout the assessment.

9.5 All remote assessments should be concluded with a summary, review of the day(s)'s events, issues of concern, clarification of issues, nonconformances and expectations.

9.6 There should be allowance for the Assessor to terminate the assessment prior to schedule due to an inability to maintain satisfactory connections or conditions during the scheduled time. This should be recorded in the assessment report.

9.7 Both parties need to take appropriate measures to safeguard confidentially of data in any format.

9.8 ICSPL will get the form of ICT filled by the Client's Organisation.

9.9 ICSPL will have the NDA accepted and signed by the Client's Organisation prior to the assessment.

ICSPL will follow the same process for its assessment, all formats will be the same except for the fact that the assessment will be using ICT methods, the plan will mention the personnel being assessed in advance with their ids and timings and methodology over ICT prior to the start of assessment.

10. POST ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

10.1 Findings (Nonconformances, corrective actions, Opportunities for Improvement, etc.) need to be drafted by the Remote Assessment team members and passed on to the Client's Organisation in a timely manner for each session for review and acknowledgement, prior to closure of nonconformances.

10.2 The findings must be posted in writing (as per ICSPL policies and procedures) and the Client's Organisation needs to be encouraged to provide additional information to be included in the text of its response.

10.3 The assessment report should include the details of the records reviewed and any findings. Both parties should make their best efforts to confirm what was heard, stated and read throughout the assessment.

10.4 Communication between the Assessor and Client's Organisation for sending documents or clarification on issues and corrective action management will be pre-defined and communicated.

10.5 The Assessor should confirm deletion of any confidential documents, images, recordings, etc..

10.6 The treatment of non-conformances, renewing/continuing approval of certificationn should follow the same processes that are utilized for on-site assessments.

Documents are part of ICS quality system. Copyholder will replace new issues and revisions by withdrawing / destroying proceeding issues & revisions.	
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