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CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT

Information on training programmes and quality and environmental management standards

This paper has been submitted by the Rapporteur on Conformity Assessment. It contains information on training programmes on quality and environmental management standards.

This document is presented for information and discussion. It is reproduced in the form in which it was received by the secretariat.

Background

It is recalled that that the tenth session of the Working Party (November 2000) while discussing issues relating to the recognition of the equivalence of conformity assessment activities and to competence and confidence building, some delegations spoke about the potential value of designing common training programmes for experts involved in conformity assessment as a means of facilitating the international recognition of their work.

This paper contains information on a number of training programmes on quality and environmental management standards with a view to showing existing approaches in this area and to providing information for further discussions at the eleventh session.

1. International activities

1.1 Selection and training of auditors, changes to the auditing ISO standard

The principles of auditing, the management of audit programmes, the conduct of quality and/or environmental management systems audits as well as the competence of quality and/or environmental management systems auditors will be defined by the future ISO 19011 Guidelines on quality and/or environmental management systems auditing. On its publication, foreseen in the second quarter 2001, ISO 19011 will replace ISO 10011-1, ISO 10011-2, ISO 10011-3, ISO 14010, ISO 14011, ISO 14012.

Clause 7 will provide guidance on auditor competence. It outlines the knowledge and skills needed to be a competent auditor. It provides guidance on the personal attributes, education, work experience, auditor training and audit experience that are the building blocks for the required knowledge and skills. Finally, clause 7 outlines the process for the initial and ongoing evaluation of auditors.

1.2 The International Auditor Training and Certification Association (IATCA)

IATCA was developed by a number of auditors certification bodies and a training course approval body as a response to criticisms by quality system certification bodies, that the variation in auditor certification criteria and consequent auditors standards, between countries meant that auditors employed by certification bodies may require multiple certifications, even one for each country they operate in.

The original principle of IATCA was, and remains, that auditors need only to be certified with one auditor certification body, and that single registration will be recognized for accredited certification purposed by accreditation bodies anywhere.

IATCA brings together its member bodies and stakeholders in a system of committees and working groups to develop IATCA requirements for the certification of auditors and the approval of auditor training courses.

By signing the IATCA Memorandum of understanding, each member organization expresses its intention to comply with the IATCA criteria. Following completion of a peer evaluation process, during which the applicant's body management system, governance arrangements and practices are assessed, each successful organization joins the IATCA Multilateral agreement (MLA), implemented for the first time in 1998.

IATCA has prepared criteria documents for its member bodies to use when certifying auditors as either an IATCA graded QMS Auditor or IATCA graded QMS Senior Auditor. The two relevant documents are the auditor certification criteria for :

- EMS auditors : Issue 1, (2000.09.23) and QMS auditors : issue2 (2000.09.23)
- QMS auditor training course: issue 2 (2000.09.22).

The IATCA criteria are a *minimum*, in that they are regularly improved and additional criteria may be developed by other bodies for their own programs, and they are *uniform*, in that they are consistent irrespective of the body that applies them. Accordingly, the related certification or training courses approvals are said to be *equivalent*.

IATCA programs in development:

- Restructuring IATCA Requirements documents :
The documents quoted here above are currently under review, and their next issue may be published following the annual meeting of IATCA due to be held in Rome 12-16 November 2001. Existing requirements documents cover all aspects of a program. For instance, the QMS auditor certification requirements document includes requirements that auditors are required to meet, as well as requirements for conducting an auditor certification program, including both the management and procedural requirements. These documents are difficult to understand and need to be simplified. Each of the requirements documents will be revised to break them up into separate documents, each dealing with only a single set of requirements. This will provide applicant auditors with a clearer understanding of the requirements that they will have to satisfy, and a clearer set of requirements for industry and stakeholders to understand. The Members have approved this work and a target of 2001 for completion has been set.
- Environmental Management System (EMS)
IATCA is currently completing the development of requirements for approving EMS Auditor Training Courses. These requirements will be available for distribution later this year (2001). For information on the progress of this work please contact the Secretariat.

IATCA Website

www.iatca.com

E-mail

iatca@iatca.com

2 Regional activities

2.1 European Organization for Quality (EOQ)

The EOQ Harmonized Scheme for the registration and certification of quality personnel

The Scheme was introduced in 1994 and uses the training and qualification schemes that already exist in some of the EOQ's member organizations. The EOQ strengthens them by harmonizing the relevant procedures. The EOQ scheme does not, however, prescribe how the training of quality personnel should be conducted. The goal is to achieve mutual recognition of qualifications within the scheme and, hence, the registration and certification of quality personnel.

In some of the EOQ's Full Member Organizations (FMOs) this scheme is already operational. The majority of the other FMOs are preparing for its introduction. The scheme so far covers the following groups of quality personnel :

- EOQ Quality auditors
- EOQ Quality professionals
- EOQ Quality system managers
- EOQ Environmental System Managers
- EOQ Health and Safety Managers
- EOQ Environmental auditors
- EOQ TQM (Total Quality Management) Leaders
- EOQ TQM (Total Quality Management) assessors
- EOQ Health and Safety Auditors

How the scheme is organized

To set up its harmonized scheme, the EOQ first agreed with its participating FMOs on the requirements needed to achieve international conformity. Harmonized EOQ rules and procedures were then established for both the qualification and the registration of quality personnel. These rules and procedures are based on EN 45013 General Criteria for Bodies Operating Certification of Personnel and the ISO 10011 series standards. The FMOs are the EOQ national agents for the scheme. For an FMO to be recognized as an agent, it must either prove that it is accredited certification body by its national accreditation authority or undergo a peer evaluation by auditors appointed by the EOQ for that purpose. All recognized FMOs are also audited periodically by the EOQ. Participating FMOs are also obliged to recognize the training and certification provided by other bodies in their countries so long as they meet the EOQ scheme's rules and requirements. Each FMO offers up successful candidates (trained by themselves or by other qualifying and registered national bodies) in the categories mentioned above to the EOQ General Secretariat, which is the central point for registration and the issuing of certificates. Each registration and certificates carries an exclusive identification number, which ensures that each record is dedicated and can easily be traced and updated as necessary.

The candidates for the EOQ quality auditor category must have met the qualification requirements of EOQ quality professionals or EOQ quality systems managers. In addition they must have a minimum of four years' appropriate, full-time, practical workplace experience, at least two years of which should have been in quality assurance/management activities. Prior to qualification, the candidates must undergo training in the conduct and management of audits. They should also have practical experience of at least five external audits, comprising not less than 20 audit days. EOQ quality auditors should be open-minded, mature, possess demonstrably sound judgement, analytical skills, tenacity, the ability to perceive situations in a realistic way and the ability to understand complex operations from a broad perspective. They should also understand the role of individual units within the overall organization.

After the relevant training courses, EOQ quality auditors must be competent in all the quality assurance techniques required for EOQ quality professionals and for EOQ quality systems managers. Before recognizing an individual as an EOQ quality auditor, the EOQ must be convinced that the individual concerned is able to carry out a first-class audit. This involves the ability to: obtain and assess factual evidence fairly; remain true to the purpose of the audit without fear of favour; perform the audit process without deviating due to distractions; and commit full attention and support to the audit process. The EOQ auditor must have interpersonal skills, as demonstrated through the ability to : constantly evaluate the effects of audit observations and personal interactions during an audit ; treat the personnel concerned in a way that will best achieve the audit purpose ; and react with sensitivity to the national conventions of the country in which the audit is performed. Practical illustrations of the EOQ quality auditor's person attributes may be demonstrated by the individual's ability to : react effectively in stressful situations ; arrive at generally acceptable conclusions based on audit observations ; and remain true to a conclusion under pressure to change that is not based on evidence. EOQ quality auditors must have a sound and current knowledge of auditing practice and the capability to apply the necessary management skills required in the execution of an audit, as called for in ISO 10011, part 1 and part 2. They must be able to perform certification audits proving conformance with the : relevant standards of ISO 9000 series and directives, taking sector orientation into account, where necessary.

EOQ Website: www.eoq.org

2.2 European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM)

EFQM offers different training courses based around the use of the EFQM Excellence Model. As a result, they are designed for a relatively wide audience and not just for auditors assessing the conformity to ISO Standards.

Assessor Training Course : gives awareness and understanding of the EFQM Excellence Model strengths, areas for improvements and scoring.

Self-Assessment Training Course : covers how to introduce self-assessment into one's own organisation. Five different approaches to self-assessment are explored, and how to manage the outcomes.

Planning for Business Excellence : for those who have already completed one or two self-assessments and wish to link the process to the Business Planning process. Uses of the EFQM Excellence Model other than a diagnostic tool are discussed.

EFQM Website www.efqm.org

3. National activities

3.1 National implementation of IATCA or EOQ criteria in Europe

At a European regional level certification bodies may focus on IATCA requirements, as members of IATCA , or on the practices recommended by EOQ, or both: IATCA+EOQ.

Today, the membership of IATCA shows that the participation of European organizations is very weak (some are signatories of the M o U but not of the MLA)

The implementation of the EOQ harmonization scheme for quality auditors seems to be based more on exchange of experience than on formal procedures.

It can be underlined that the national accreditation requirements have not been harmonized at a level requiring recourse to auditors meeting the IATCA or EOQ criteria, but there is no doubt that the recourse by a certification body to a recognized training for selecting auditors improves the confidence in its activities.

However, it appears that certification bodies do not have the same policies on the need for certified auditors. The statistics would show, for many bodies, that only a small percentage of auditors have been certified. Experience is gained in the field, as a result the selection of auditors for a given audit is based on more specific criteria, forgetting the possible diploma.

3.2. Examples

- Established by the UK government in the early 1980s, the IQA International Register of Certificated Auditors (IRCA) appears as the most active. IRCA has two principal activities :
Auditor Certification : IRCA currently certify around 11 500 management system auditors from a 100 different countries world-wide.
Certification of Auditor Training : There are around 90 training organisations approved by IRCA to present certificated auditor training courses

- Many other national bodies are involved in the approval of training organizations and/or the certification of auditors, operating at national level and/or international level (e.g., within the French AFAQ Group, ICA for France and AFAQ-ACERT for its foreign markets)

4 Issues related to confidence

The difficulties faced by those expecting benefits from recognition agreements and the associated infrastructures of conformity assessment bodies are inherent in the principles of free competition : competition means that companies and conformity assessment bodies persistently strive for market differentiation.

The reality of "equivalent practices" is mainly about ensuring the fulfilment of *minimum requirements* which evolve permanently to be in line with market needs.

Differences in meaning between issued certificates or reports will still exist. The variation in the meaning of issued certificates *within* accredited organizations, can differ, as much as the variation of issued certificates *between* accredited organizations.

In practice, the level of confidence associated with certificates/reports is built up by elements such as :

- confidence in the certificate (i.e. the content covered by the certificate)
- confidence in the certifying body (i.e; the process of granting a certificate including the competence of the assessment personnel)
- confidence in accreditation (i.e. the content covered by accreditation)
- confidence in accreditation bodies (i.e. the process of granting accreditation including the competence of the assessment personnel)

The existing certification/accreditation/recognition principles and practices still leave uncertainties. However, they may be minimized by a better formulation of the requirements when they are considered to offer a too wide range of different possible implementations on important issues. The permanent need of improvement of the requirements defined by organizations such as IATCA, is related to the global need of harmonization between all bodies developing programs having an international character.

The publication of ISO 19011 Guidelines on quality and/or environmental management systems auditing., will certainly induce a new appraisal of the level required to offer competitive services, as it will provide a better guidance on auditing and, in particular, on the competence of quality and environmental management systems auditors..

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