HKQAA
HONG KONG QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY
香港品質保證局

HKQAA Certification Guide

Introduction

Thank you for choosing HKQAA as your certification partner.

In order to help your organization to go through the certification process as smoothly as possible, and to help HKQAA to deliver a value-added service, please spend a few moments to read through this Guide. The information provided can help to avoid pitfalls, and speed up the overall certification progress.

System Development

In addition to the specific certification standard concerned, we highly recommend our clients to take reference to the other accompanying standards in the respective management system series, which can provide helpful information in the implementation of an effective and efficient management system. As an agent of Standard Press of China and authorized distributor of ISO (International Organization for Standardization) standards and publications sales, most Chinese and English versions of various standards, technical specifications and reference publications are available from HKQAA.

For further information, please visit our website (www.hkqaa.org) or contact our Business Division at Tel: (852) 2202-9111.

Training and Staff Development

In order to assist industries in the understanding of the intent and application of the requirements of various standards as well as developing the needed skills in conducting an internal audit, HKQAA offers a variety of generic training courses with various management system focuses. The HKQAA training course schedule is regularly updated on our website (www.hkqaa.org).

Please note that attending training is not a prerequisite for certification. For further enquiry on course outlines and schedule, please contact our Training Service Unit at Tel: (852) 2202-9111.

HKQAA Regulations

HKQAA Regulations is the official contract between HKQAA and applicants / certified clients. You are encouraged to read through the Regulations and contact HKQAA for any further clarification.

Certification Progress Planning

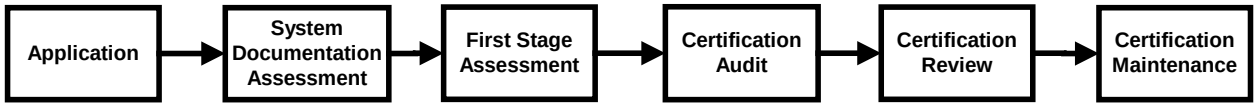
HKQAA is committed to working closely together with client to achieve a certain certification date. However, owing to limited auditor resources, sometimes it might be difficult to arrange audit team at short notice, or during peak seasons such as year-end.

Therefore, it is advisable to reserve in advance certain dates for First Stage Assessment (FSA) and Certification Audit (CA) described in latter sections. The pre-booking is a free service offered by HKQAA and it could be made during Application. HKQAA will contact your organization a few weeks before to confirm the reserved date or do our best to facilitate an alternative arrangement that can best suit your organization's need. For audit scheduling related assistance, please communicate with our customer service team via HKQAA Customer Service Hotline at Tel: (852) 2202-9000.

Please be aware that should a cancellation or change of date for confirmed FSA or CA be requested less than four (4) weeks prior to the actual audit date, a surcharge of 25% of the total chargeable mandays will be applied. Should the request be less than two (2) weeks, the charge will be 50%.

Stages of certification

Certification starts from application to certification maintenance. After application, it involves assessment and certification review. Assessment starts with system documentation assessment and followed by a two stage on-site assessment, namely First Stage Assessment (FSA) and Certification Audit (CA). Afterwards, recommendation made by audit team will be reviewed by Certification Review Board to ratify the certification. In order to maintain certification, regular Surveillance Visits (SV) and Renewal Audit (REA) will be arranged to oversee the continual effectiveness of the system.



System Documentation Assessment

The purpose of the System Documentation Assessment is to determine if the system documentation has been developed in line with the relevant requirements of the respective management system standard. Key elements to be looked at will include the following.

For ISO 9001 and other ISO 9001 based sector schemes (e.g. TL 9000, QSPSC):

1. Scope of Quality Management System (QMS) including general descriptions of business nature, product(s) and organization structure
2. QMS documentation structure and (if applicable) reference to documented procedures
3. Justification for the exclusions of QMS requirement that cannot be applied
4. Quality Policy and Objectives
5. Interactions between the processes of QMS
6. Applicable statutory and regulatory requirements (a list of the requirements will be acceptable)

Relevant documents to the above elements are required whereas documented procedures and other supporting system documentation will not normally required at this stage.

For ISO 14001:

1. Scope of Environmental Management System including general descriptions of business nature, product(s), organization structure and documentation structure
2. Environmental Policy, Objectives, Targets and Programmes
3. Significant Aspects, Complaints, Incidents, Internal Audits and Management Review
4. Applicable Legislation (a list of the requirements will be acceptable), discharge permits, site plans

Relevant documents to the above elements are required and other documents that may be required are procedures (where available). Work instruction will not normally be required at this stage.

For OHSAS 18001:

1. Scope of Occupational Health & Safety Management System including general descriptions of business nature, product(s), organization structure and documentation structure
2. OH&S Policy and Objectives
3. OH&S hazards and risks
4. Applicable Legislation (a list of the requirements will be acceptable) and related safety permits

Relevant documents to the above elements are required whereas documented procedures and other supporting system documentation will not normally required at this stage.

For HACCP:

1. Scope of HACCP including general descriptions of business nature, product(s), organization structure and documentation structure
2. Food safety Policy and Objectives
3. Process flow diagram, Hazard analysis and critical control points, HACCP plan and SSOP
4. Applicable Legislation (a list of the requirements will be acceptable)

Relevant documents to the above elements are required whereas documented procedures and other supporting system documentation will not normally required at this stage.

All system documentations submitted for HKQAA assessment must be officially released with version/issue numbers and date of issue. A copy is considered acceptable. The system documentations will be kept at HKQAA throughout the FSA and CA period for cross reference and audit preparation purposes. It will be returned to your organization during the first Surveillance Visit (SV). HKQAA will need to be informed on any major changes made to the system documentations thereafter.

Starting from system documentation assessment, FSA and CA and throughout the whole certification maintenance process, areas for improvement and Non-conformities identified will be reported.

Areas for Improvement will be raised when the assessment personnel judges by experiences and in accordance with respective management standard requirement that these are potential problem areas that might deserve more attention and opportunities for improving the existing practice. They are not non-conformity and corrective action is not mandatory.

Non-conformity consists of two categories, namely ***Major Non-conformity*** and ***Minor Non-conformity***.

Minor Non-Conformity will be raised in there is a situation where there exists a failure to meet one or more requirements imposed by customers, applicable regulatory bodies and respective management standard. However, the failure will not affect the capability of the management system to achieve the intended result.

Major Non-Conformity will be raised if there is a situation where there exists a significant doubt that effective process control is in place, or that products or services will meet specified requirements. A number of minor nonconformities associated with the same requirement or issue could demonstrate a systemic failure and thus constitute a major nonconformity. And, the capability of the management system to achieve the intended results is being affected. In case Major Non-conformity is raised, certification can only proceed upon closure of the non-conformity.

For Product Certification (e.g. QSPSC), the definition of major non-conformity and minor non-conformity shall refer to the corresponding scheme handbooks.

Your organization is required to re-submit documentation for review in response to non-conformities raised during system documentations assessment.

First Stage Assessment (FSA)

The idea of the FSA is to identify any system planning fault through an evaluation of the establishment of management system by an experienced assessment personnel, Lead Auditor. It is also a chance of communication with your organization to clarify other key issues of certification, such as the scope coverage, and audit scheduling.

Normally, the Management Representative is the key person required to assist/work with the Lead Auditor during FSA. However, senior management staff members are welcome to attend if they wish.

In addition to the further review of low level system documentation like documented procedures and work instructions, internal audit and management review records will be audited and representative audit samples will be verified to determine the maturity of management system implementation.

For ISO 14001 certification, internal audit and management review must be undertaken by your organization before FSA. While, internal audit must be undertaken prior to FSA of OHSAS 18001 certification. For other types of certification, it is always beneficial for your organization to undertake internal audit and management review before FSA such that the Lead Auditor can evaluate them and make sure your organization is on the right track.

After review of system documentation and evaluation of representative audit samples, the readiness of management system for Certification Audit is established as a conclusion of the visit. Special arrangements where applicable, such as Entry Permit to Prohibited Areas, would need to be communicated and acted upon. ***Areas For Improvement*** and ***Non-conformities*** may be raised at this stage and if so your organization is expected to submit corrective action plans in response to non-conformities.

Certification Audit (CA)

The objective of CA is to determine the effectiveness of management system in meeting requirements of respective management standard through further evaluation of audit samples. Audit team will interview staff members, verify documents and records and observe daily operations in action as appropriate.

In line with international practice, it is a must to have the applicable management system running for at least three months, i.e. three months of system implementation records, prior to CA, and there is minimum one complete internal audit and management review undertaken. For QSPSC certification, production record and concrete cube test results must be available for evaluation.

Areas For Improvement and Non-conformities may be raised at this stage and if so your organization is expected to submit corrective action plans in response to non-conformities. If there is no major non-conformity identified during this stage, your organization will then be recommended to the HKQAA Certification Review Board for certification approval.

Generally, competence records will be assessed during the Audit. It will be advisable for organization to make prior internal arrangement so that such records are readily available.

Recommendation & Corrective Action Plan

Your organization will be required to submit Correction Action Plans (CAP) in response to the non-conformities raised within a specific time frame stated in the Audit Report.

Upon the acceptance of CAP and satisfactory follow up of non-conformities, the organization will then be recommended to the HKQAA Certification Review Board for certification approval.

If the implementation of corrections and corrective actions of the major nonconformity is not able to be verified by HKQAA within 6 months after the last day of certification audit, certification recommendation will be terminated or another certification audit shall be conducted prior to recommending certification.

Certification Approval

Award of certificate is subject to the approval of the Certification Review Board, with Board meetings generally scheduled around the end of each month. Organizations with CAP submitted on or before the 15th day of the month, and with eventual acceptance will be recommended for review. CAP received after the said date will be scheduled for review, generally in the Board Meeting of the following month.

Upon the Certification Review Board's approval, HKQAA will notify the organization in writing and inform of the certificate available date.

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Publicly Accessible Information

Enquiry to certification status of certified clients is allowable through written request. Information on certification details i.e. certification date, accreditation and certification scope will be provided on request. Change of certification status i.e. suspension or withdrawal will also be provided on request.

Use of Certification and Accreditation Marks

As an accredited certification body, HKQAA has the mandate of ensuring that the certification mark and accreditation marks are used in a manner that is not misleading, and in accordance with accreditation requirements. Generally, the client will be briefed during Certificate Audit closing meeting on the correct use of HKQAA mark. Upon successful certification approval, the client will receive, together with the ***Certification Notification Letter***, a set of guidance and relevant artwork on the ***Use of HKQAA Marks and Accreditation Marks*** applicable to the client's certification standards and accreditation.

There is no need for certified clients to submit names card or letterhead samples for HKQAA approval, if the examples given are being followed. Should there be doubt, you are encouraged to get in touch with the HKQAA Corporate Communications Unit at Tel: (852) 2202-9111.

Should there be a press release on the achievement of certification, we would recommend certified client's Public Relations personnel to get in touch with us. We could offer support in suggesting the appropriate wordings for correctly reflecting the certification status.

Customer Satisfaction

As a customer focused organization, we strive for customer satisfaction and continual improvement. All HKQAA certified clients or their stakeholders have the right to file complaint against HKQAA or its certified clients. Details of complaint shall be submitted in writing to the Corporate Compliance Branch by post, by Fax: 2202-9222, via e-mail hkqaa@hkqaa.org or through the return of the Post Audit Survey Questionnaire. All complaint cases will receive our full attention and follow up action.

Call us at our Customer Service Hotline: Tel: (852) 2202-9000…. We are here to help!