



## UNITED STATES ACCREDITATION BOARD

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### COMPETENCY, EXPERIENCE AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS FOR APPLICANT CERTIFICATION BODIES

The general requirement for accreditation is that an applicant certification body shall meet the requirements of ISO 17021. This is a simply stated goal but experience has shown that notwithstanding the technical requirements of the standard being met, there is often a perceived shortfall in the manner of implementation of a certification body's management system. In addition to the perceived need for increased auditing controls is the need to ensure that certification bodies demonstrate appropriate skills and competence within the certification profession. It is a fact that many consultancies have seen the commercial opportunities of offering certification services.

Whilst the mixing of consultancy and certification is proscribed by ISO 17021, the standard is unable to address the personal ambitions of individuals who wish to migrate from one side of the profession to the other. It is felt by United States Accreditation Board (USAB) that many skills and competences are common to both consultancy and certification but that not all aspects from consultancy are appropriate to certification, and vice versa. Moreover, cultural practices and attitudes acquired during consultancy, do not necessarily lend themselves to certification. In addition, the skills and knowledge sets are different, notwithstanding some similarity on occasion.

It is therefore necessary for USAB to lay down some ground rules for applicant certification bodies. These are as follows: -

- Applicants must demonstrate personal experience, qualification, competence and skill. This will be objectively assessed via the completion of an Auditor Application Form, in an Excel Workbook format and any other feedback available to USAB.
- At date of application, certification bodies must demonstrate a collective **120 months** professional experience within the certification profession at a senior level. **Auditor, Lead Auditor and technical expert experience are not considered sufficient.** Only persons previously discharging the following duties will be eligible for contributing to the 120-month criteria: Directors of previous Certification Bodies, Scheme Managers, Certification Managers or similar roles. Records will be required to demonstrate achievement. This will be assessed from information provided in the relevant application form.
- No one person may contribute more than **45%** of the experience requirement.
- Documentation must be at a professional level of quality and be the applicant certification body's own work. The following are document considerations deemed important to USAB:
  - Too many elementary spelling mistakes.
  - Consistency with page lay-out and pagination.
  - Plagiarism must be avoided.
  - Documents containing the names of other organizations.
  - Document control: Electronic files should reflect document name and number as well as document status or version.



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- Normally, an application for accreditation requires a once only application fee. This arrangement remains but is permitted for a finite period only. If provisional accreditation is not achieved within a period of four months (**120 days**) from date of application, then either the application is refused or a further fee is required in order to proceed.
- Applicant details are notified in the USAB web site together with the names of those persons whose experience meet the 120 month criteria and those who are advised as key members of staff by the applicant. Any comment from the general public, even if anonymously made, will be treated as a stakeholder interest and may be taken into account when assessing the application.
- Applicants should keep in mind that only three things are required.
  - Documentation demonstrating management system structure in compliance with ISO 17021.
  - Records demonstrating implementation of the management system.
  - Competence of personnel. In this respect the following are important
    - Qualities of individuals with regard to ISO 17021 and Table 1 of this document.
    - Accuracy of CVs and completed application forms.
- Completeness of CVs and application forms. Too many queries and iterations during the application and accreditation process are indicative of an inability to fully understand accreditation requirements and will significantly reduce the probability of achieving an accredited status.



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Table 1

Attributes knowledge and skills for personnel involved with specific certification activities

Certification functions	Personnel conducting the application review to determine audit team competence required, to select the audit team members, and to determine the audit duration.	Personnel reviewing audit reports and making certification decisions.	Members of the committee for safeguarding impartiality.	Auditors	Audit team leaders
<b>Attributes, knowledge and skills</b>					
<b>Personal Attributes</b>					
Ethical	X	X	x	X	X
Open minded	X	X		X	X
Diplomatic	X	X		X	X
Observant				X	X
Perceptive		X		X	X
Versatile				X	X
Tenacious				X	X
Decisive	X	X	X	X	X
Self-reliant	X	X		X	X
Morally courageous		X	X	X	X
Professional	X			X	X
Organized				X	X
<b>Knowledge</b>					
Generic management system practices.		Analyze		Analyze	Analyze
Competence of individual auditors and technical experts.	Analyze	Analyze			
Competence of Audit Team members				Understand	Analyze
Specific Management System standards/ normative documents	Analyze	Judge		Judge	Judge
CB's Processes	Apply	Apply	Understand	Apply	Synthesize
General office practices systems and technologies	Understand	Apply		Apply	Apply
Client business technology	Understand			Apply	Apply



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Information on client products processes and organization to determine competence needed by the audit team and for the certification decision	<b>Analyze</b>				
Clients products, processes and organization				<b>Apply</b>	<b>Apply</b>
Cultural norms	<b>Understand</b>			<b>Apply</b>	<b>Apply</b>
ISO 17021 parts 1 & 2			<b>Understand</b>		
Management Systems Certification			<b>Understand</b>		
Stakeholder expectations			<b>Analyze</b>		
Business financial & legal risks			<b>Analyze</b>		
Outcomes of prior audits				<b>Analyze</b>	<b>Analyze</b>
Language appropriate to all levels				<b>Apply</b>	<b>Apply</b>
<b>Skills</b>					
Reading	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
Writing	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3 &amp; 7</b>
Listening	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>
Numeric	<b>1</b>			<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
Orally presenting			<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5 &amp; 8</b>
Interviewing				<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>
Facilitating meetings					<b>9</b>



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**NOTE: Explanation of the level of proficiency to demonstrated for skills:**

- 1 Skills to be commensurate with the requirements of the relevant processes.
- 2 Reading with speed, accuracy and comprehension to be able to analyze and judge in audit situations.
- 3 Writing accurately and succinctly to record, take notes, and communicate audit findings and conclusions.
- 4 Listening with accuracy and comprehension to be able to analyze and judge in audit situations.
- 5 Orally presenting audit findings and conclusions to be easily understood.
- 6 Interviewing to be able to obtain relevant information by asking open-ended, well formulated questions and listening to understand and judge the answers.
- 7 Writing of the audit report and appropriately communicating overall conclusions and recommendations.
- 8 Orally presenting, in a public forum (e.g., closing meeting), audit findings, conclusions, and recommendations appropriate to the audience.
- 9 Facilitating meetings with the audit team and the client for the effective exchange of information.

**END**