



International Organization for Standardization



International Accreditation Forum

Date: 30 October 2016

Accreditation Auditing Practices Group **Guidance on:**

ASSESSING CERTIFICATION BODY (CB) MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS BASED ON ISO 9001 (Option B, clause 10 of ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015)

This paper provides guidance for Accreditation Bodies (ABs) on assessing the management systems of Certification Bodies (CBs) who choose option B of clause 10 of ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015, in order to help improve the effectiveness of such assessments.

1. Introduction

Clause 10.1 **Options** of ISO/IEC 17021 requires that in addition to meeting the requirements of [Clauses 5 to 9](#), the certification body shall implement a management system in accordance with either:

- a) general management system requirements (see [10.2](#)); or
- b) management system requirements in accordance with ISO 9001 (see [10.3](#)).

Note that it is a CB itself that decides which option to choose in implementing its management system. Also note that the standard does not state which option is recommended or given priority. The AB should not force the CB to adopt a specific option before or after receiving its application for accreditation.

The fact that a CB can choose between a type a) or type b) management system means that such a choice will have an impact on the assessment approach that the AB will need to take. The AB has to be prepared to assess whichever option is adopted by a CB.

Note: this paper is not intended to provide guidance on option A.

2. The assessment approach of the AB

As part of its accreditation criteria, the AB should require the CB to make clear which option it has chosen under clause 10.

Irrespective of the differences in applicable requirements due to the different options, the AB should be able to provide an assessment team that is competent to make an assessment against the applicable requirements. If the AB assessment team does not have sufficient knowledge of the relevant standards (including ISO 9001 in the case of option B), then it is unlikely that a competent assessment will be performed.

For a CB choosing option B, the requirements of 10.2 apply in addition to clauses 5 to 9 of ISO/IEC 17021.

Specifically: << The certification body shall establish and maintain a management system, in accordance with the requirements of ISO 9001, which is capable of supporting and demonstrating the consistent achievement of the requirements of this part of ISO/IEC 17021, amplified by [10.3.2](#) to [10.3.4](#). >>

This means that the AB's assessment team is expected to be familiar with, and competent to audit, the requirements of ISO 9001 as part of its accreditation criteria for a CB adopting option B.

While a CB may declare that it has chosen to go for option B, it should not expect to be fully audited against ISO 9001 for an AB assessment as this is not required. An AB's assessment of a CB adopting option B is never intended for the certification of the CB against ISO 9001 by the AB.

On the other hand, assessing against only clauses 5 to 9 will not mean that the requirements of ISO/IEC 17021-1;2015 are fully met. There are areas where partial assessment against ISO 9001 will also be necessary.

For example, in clauses 5 to 9, there are no requirements for a CB to perform internal audits or to implement corrective or preventive actions, but the CB is required to perform such activities, regardless of which of the two options it chooses.

In the case of option B, the AB will need to assess the related CB's compliance strictly against the requirements of ISO 9001.

Moreover, in assessing compliance with the management system requirements of ISO 9001, the AB must take into account the fact that some requirements of ISO 9001 are "amplified" in option B.

A CB adopting option B is required to be sufficiently knowledgeable of the "process approach" in establishing and implementing its management system, as this is fundamental to ISO 9001. The AB's assessors will also need to be familiar with the "process approach" in order to perform an option B assessment competently, and account should be taken of this in the approach that is adopted for the assessment.

For further information on the Accreditation Auditing Practices Group, please refer to the paper: *Introduction to the Accreditation Auditing Practices Group*

Feedback from users will be used by the *Accreditation Auditing Practices Group* to determine whether additional guidance documents should be developed, or if these current ones should be revised.

Comments on the papers or presentations can be sent to the following email address: charles.corrie@bsigroup.com.

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