PCN24/CP14

Conformity assessment of Approved Training Organisations, Authorised Qualifying Bodies and quality management systems

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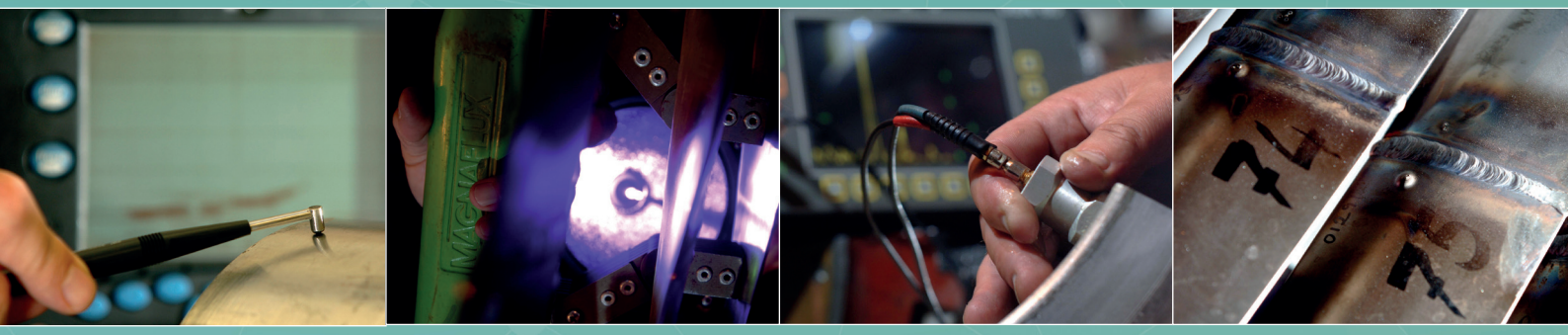
A division of BINDT THE BRITISH INSTITUTE OF NON-DESTRUCTIVE TESTING



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The British Institute of Non-Destructive Testing is an accredited Certification Body offering personnel and quality management systems assessment and certification against criteria set out in international and European standards through the PCN Certification Scheme.

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1. Scope

1.1 This document embodies and implements the requirements detailed in ISO/IEC 17021[2] and ISO/IEC 17021-3[3], as applied by BINDT in its assessment and certification of clients seeking ISO 9001[1] management system certification, subcontractors seeking BINDT authorisation to deliver qualification examinations in accordance with ISO 9712[5] and ISO/IEC 17024[4] and training organisations seeking BINDT supplier approval in accordance with BINDT accreditation of training establishment criteria.

2. Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

2.1 Audit

Assessment carried out by an auditing organisation independent of the client, the supplier or subcontractor, for the purpose of verifying the client's management system.

NOTE 1: *In the definitions that follow, the term 'audit' has been used for simplicity to refer to third-party audit and to supplier or subcontractor audits and is interchangeable with the term 'assessment'.*

NOTE 2: *Audits include initial, follow-up, surveillance, recertification and special audits.*

NOTE 3: *A combined audit is when a client, supplier or subcontractor is being audited against two or more normative documents together, for example ISO 9001 and PCN24/CP09.*

2.2 Auditor

An individual, appointed by BINDT on the basis of possessing the requisite competence demonstrated during a formal programme of supervision and authorisation, who carries out audits of management systems leading to certification, authorisation or approval by BINDT.

NOTE 1: *The terms 'Auditor' and 'assessor' are, for the purpose of this document, considered to be interchangeable.*

NOTE 2: *Possession of the requisite competence can be assumed if the individual has conducted or led audits under observation by an authorised evaluator and the training is recorded as detailed in QP11, including:*

(a) Completed one or more appropriate courses of formal training, which include examinations to verify the assimilation of the required knowledge;

(b) Demonstrated possession of the required knowledge and skills detailed in Annex A and evaluated in accordance with Annex B;

(c) Possesses the desired personal behaviours detailed in Annex D; and

(d) During audits conducted or led by the individual under observation by an authorised evaluator, training is recorded as detailed in QP11.

NOTE 3: *An Auditor may be authorised by BINDT to carry out or to lead assessments after demonstrating the requisite competence during not less than two satisfactory audits carried out or led by the individual under the supervision of an authorised evaluator.*

NOTE 4: *Auditor competence is addressed in BINDT procedure QP06.*

2.3 Client

The organisation owning the management system that is being audited for certification purposes.

NOTE: *Reference within the text of this document to 'certified client' can also be understood to mean any auditee, including suppliers and subcontractors to BINDT.*

2.4 Competence

The ability to apply knowledge and skills to achieve the intended results.

2.5 Evaluator

An individual appointed by BINDT on the basis of qualifications and experience to evaluate and report on the competence of Auditors.

2.6 Guide

A person appointed by the client, supplier or subcontractor to assist the Audit Team.

2.7 Impartiality

The actual and perceived presence of objectivity.

NOTE 1: *Objectivity means that conflicts of interest do not exist or are resolved so as not to adversely influence subsequent activities of BINDT.*

NOTE 2: *Other terms that are useful in conveying the element of impartiality are: objectivity, independence, freedom from conflict of interests, freedom from bias, lack of prejudice, neutrality, fairness, open-mindedness, even-handedness, detachment and balance.*

2.8 Observer

A person who witnesses the Audit Team and the conduct of the audit but does not participate in the audit process.

2.9 Remote assessment

An assessment conducted where the Auditor (or Audit Team) are remote from the client and/or the facility under audit.

2.10 Subcontractor

An organisation to which BINDT sub-contracts the assessment or examination of candidates seeking certification of competence under one or more of the PCN Schemes.

NOTE: *Subcontractors are referred to within the PCN Schemes as Authorised Qualifying Bodies (AQBs).*

2.11 Supplier

An organisation that supplies training services to clients or their employees seeking qualification and certification under one or more of the PCN Schemes.

NOTE: *Suppliers are referred to within the PCN Schemes as Approved Training Organisations (ATOs).*

2.12 Verification (of management system compliance)

Process of conformity assessment leading to BINDT approval as a supplier or subcontractor.

3. Competence of management and personnel

3.1 Determination of competence criteria

[Carry out a job/task analysis, identifying key responsibilities and leading to the development of a job description detailing required competences and how they are developed (in terms of training, qualifications and experience) for each individual assigned the role.]

BINDT has a documented process, elaborated in QP11, for determining the competence criteria for personnel involved in the management and performance of audits and certification.

Competence criteria is determined with regard to the requirements for each technical area, for example condition monitoring (CM) and non-destructive testing (NDT) and for each function in the certification process.

The output of the process is the documented criteria of required knowledge and skills necessary to effectively perform audit and certification tasks to be fulfilled to achieve the intended results.

Annex A specifies the knowledge and skills for specific functions and processes.

Auditor competence is addressed in detail in BINDT internal procedure QP11: Assessor competencies.

3.2 Evaluation processes

BINDT has documented processes for the initial competence evaluation and ongoing monitoring of competence and performance of all personnel involved in the management and performance of audits and certification, applying the determined competence criteria (QP11).

The output from these processes shall be to identify personnel who have demonstrated the level of competence required for the different functions of the audit and certification process.

The evaluation methods used to evaluate knowledge and skills are described in Annex B.

BINDT ensures that its evaluation methods are effective through the submission to management review of evaluator reports and subsequent improvement actions.

3.3 Personnel involved in the certification activities

BINDT employs, or has access to, a sufficient number of Auditors, including Audit Team Leaders and technical experts, to cover all of its activities and to handle the volume of audit work performed. BINDT's capability is continually monitored by Certification Services management, which reports to and takes direction from the Certification Management Committee (CMC).

BINDT communicates to each person concerned their duties, responsibilities and authority through the issue of job descriptions and/or terms of reference, and has processes for selecting, training, evaluating and formally authorising Auditors and for selecting technical experts used in the certification and verification activity. Documented procedures provide audit instructions and all relevant information on the certification activities.

The initial competence evaluation of an Auditor includes the ability to apply required knowledge and skills during audits, as determined by a competent evaluator observing the Auditor conducting an audit.

NOTE: *During the selection and training process described above, desired personal behaviours are considered. These are characteristics that affect an individual's ability to perform specific functions. Therefore, knowledge about the behaviours of individuals enables BINDT to take advantage of their strengths and to minimise the impact of their weaknesses. Desired personal behaviours that are important for personnel involved in certification activities are described in Annex D.*

BINDT uses an initial induction training process (see QP/15), followed by an Auditor-in-training period, to achieve and demonstrate effective auditing, including the use of Auditors and Audit Team Leaders possessing generic auditing skills and knowledge, as well as skills and knowledge appropriate for auditing in specific technical areas. BINDT allows only those Auditors and technical experts that have demonstrated competence to carry out audits unsupervised.

BINDT ensures that Auditors (and, where needed, technical experts) are knowledgeable of its audit processes, certification requirements and other relevant requirements through the conduct of a periodic Auditor workshop intended to provide continuation training and ensure consistency between Auditors. The annual workshop identifies training needs and provides specific training to ensure its Auditors, technical experts and other personnel involved in certification activities maintain competency for the functions they perform.

Those personnel that take the decision on granting, maintaining, renewing, extending, reducing, suspending or withdrawing certification shall demonstrate an understanding of the applicable standard and certification requirements and shall have demonstrated competence to evaluate the audit processes and related recommendations of the Audit Team.

BINDT ensures the satisfactory performance of all personnel involved in the audit and certification activities through monitoring and measurement of the performance of all persons involved, based on the frequency of their usage and the level of risk linked to their activities. In particular, BINDT reviews the competence of its personnel in light of their performance in order to identify training needs.

The documented monitoring procedures for Auditors includes a combination of periodic on-site observation, review of audit reports and feedback from clients. The frequency of on-site observations is based on need determined from all monitoring information available.

3.4 Outsourcing

External sub-contract Auditors are engaged under a legally enforceable agreement covering the arrangements, including confidentiality and conflicts of interest, with each individual or body that provides outsourced services.

BINDT requires external Auditors and external technical experts to have a written agreement by which they commit themselves to comply with applicable policies and procedures as defined by BINDT. The agreement addresses aspects relating to confidentiality and to independence from commercial and other interests and requires the external Auditors and external technical experts to notify BINDT of any existing or prior association with any organisation they may be assigned to audit. *The use of individual Auditors and technical experts under such agreements does not constitute outsourcing.*

Decisions for granting, maintaining, renewing, extending, reducing, suspending or withdrawing certification are never outsourced.

BINDT:

- Takes responsibility for all activities outsourced to another body;
- Ensures that the body that provides outsourced services, and the individuals that it uses, conform to the requirements of BINDT and also to the applicable provisions of ISO IEC 17021, including competence, impartiality and confidentiality; and
- Ensures that the body that provides outsourced services, and the individuals that it uses, are not involved, either directly or through any other employer, with an organisation to be audited in such a way that impartiality could be compromised.

BINDT has documented procedures for the qualification and monitoring of all bodies or individuals that provide outsourced services used for certification activities and ensures that records of the competence of Auditors and technical experts are maintained (QP11).

3.5 Personnel records

BINDT shall maintain up-to-date personnel records, including relevant qualifications, training, experience, affiliations, professional status, competence and any relevant consultancy services that may have been provided. This includes management and administrative personnel, in addition to those performing certification activities.

3.6 Confidentiality

BINDT has, through legally enforceable agreements, a policy and arrangements to safeguard the confidentiality of the information obtained or created during the performance of certification activities at all levels of its structure, including committees and external bodies or individuals acting on its behalf.

BINDT informs the client, in published documents, of the information it intends to place in the public domain. All other information, except for information that is made publicly accessible by the client, is considered confidential.

Except as required in ISO IEC 17021[2], information about a particular client or individual shall not be disclosed to a third party without the written consent of the client or individual concerned. Where BINDT is required by law to release confidential information to a third party, the client or individual concerned shall, unless regulated by law, be notified in advance of the information provided.

Information about the client from sources other than the client (for example complainant, regulators) shall be treated as confidential, consistent with BINDT's policy.

Personnel, including any committee members, contractors, personnel of external bodies or individuals acting on BINDT's behalf, shall keep confidential all information obtained or created during the performance of BINDT's activities.

BINDT uses equipment and facilities that ensure the secure handling of confidential information (for example documents, records).

When confidential information is made available to other bodies (for example an accreditation body), BINDT informs its client of this action.

4. Processes

4.1 Application

4.1.1 Submission

BINDT requires an authorised representative of the applicant organisation to provide the necessary information to enable BINDT Certification Services Department (CSD) management to establish the following:

- The desired scope of the certification;
- The general features of the applicant organisation, including its name and the address(es) of its physical location(s), significant aspects of its process and operations and any relevant legal obligations;
- General information, relevant for the field of certification applied for, concerning the applicant organisation, such as its activities, human and technical resources, functions and relationship in a larger corporation, if any; and
- Information concerning all outsourced processes used by the organisation that will affect conformity to requirements.

The standards or other requirements for which the applicant organisation is seeking:

- Certification; and
- Information concerning the use of consultancy relating to the management system.

4.1.2 Review

Before proceeding with the audit, BINDT shall conduct a review of the application and supplementary information for certification. The initial review shall be conducted by a member of the administration team within the BINDT Certification Services Department. The members of the administration team shall be trained in the completion of this process and the creation of the documentary trail related to the audit process. Competence requirements for staff are detailed in Annex A.

The initial review is to ensure that:

- The information about the applicant organisation and its management system is sufficient for the conduct of the audit;
- The requirements for certification are clearly defined and documented and have been provided to the applicant organisation;
- Any known difference in understanding between BINDT and the applicant organisation is resolved;
- BINDT has the competence and ability to perform the certification activity;
- The scope of certification sought, the location(s) of the applicant organisation's operations, the time required to complete audits and any other points influencing the certification activity are taken into account (language, safety conditions, threats to impartiality, etc);
- Records of the justification for the decision to undertake the audit are maintained; and
- Review of new applications shall be recorded on form PCN24/CP14A.

4.1.3 Acceptance (or rejection)

Following the review of the initial application, BINDT either accepts or declines an application for certification. When BINDT declines an application for certification as a result of the review of application, the reasons for declining an application are documented and made clear to the client.

Where the administration team are unable to come to a decision during the review process, the matter shall be referred to the Certification Manager for resolution.

4.1.4 Determine competences

Based on this review, BINDT determines the competences it needs to include in its Audit Team and for the certification decision.

The Audit Team comprises Auditors (and technical experts, as necessary) who, between them, have the totality of the competences identified by BINDT as set out above for the certification of the applicant organisation. The selection of the team is performed with reference to the designations of competence of Auditors and technical experts (ISO/IEC 17021-3[3]) and may include the use of both internal and external human resources.

The individual(s) who will be conducting the certification decision shall be competent for the task.

4.1.5 Information exchange between BINDT and its clients

BINDT provides and updates clients on the following:

- A detailed description of the initial and continuing certification activity, including the application, initial audits, surveillance audits and the process for granting, maintaining, reducing, extending, suspending and withdrawing certification and recertification.
- The normative requirements for certification.
- Information about the fees for application, initial certification and continuing certification.
- BINDT's requirements for prospective clients to:
  - Comply with certification requirements;
  - Make all necessary arrangements for the conduct of the audits, including provision for examining documentation and the access to all processes and areas, records and personnel for the purposes of initial certification, surveillance, recertification and resolution of complaints; and
  - Make provisions, where applicable, to accommodate the presence of observers (for example accreditation Auditors or trainee Auditors).
- Documents describing the rights and duties of certified clients, including requirements, when making reference to its certification in communication of any kind in line with the requirements in 8.4.
- Information on procedures for handling complaints and appeals.

4.1.6 Audit programme

An audit programme for the full certification cycle is developed to clearly identify the audit activity required to demonstrate that the client's management system fulfils the requirements for certification or verification to the selected standard(s) or other normative document(s).

The audit programme includes a two-stage initial audit, surveillance audits in the first and second years and a recertification audit in the third year prior to expiration of certification. The three-year certification cycle starts on the date of the certification or recertification decision.

At the discretion of BINDT and dependent upon favourable audit outcomes during the three-year certification cycle process, organisations may be awarded a two-year (biennial) approval and certificate. In such instances, full reassessment audits will be conducted on a biennial basis, which shall negate the need for interim surveillance assessments. BINDT reserves the right to return organisations to the full three-year certification cycle should circumstance change.

The determination of the audit programme and any subsequent adjustments shall consider the size of the client organisation, the scope and complexity of its management system, products and processes, as well as the demonstrated level of management system effectiveness and the results of any previous audits.

Annex E refers to cross-functional flowcharts of BINDT's audit and certification process.

Annex F lists additional items that can be considered when developing or revising an audit programme.

Annex G provides a sequential representation of the assessment process and includes a form (checklist) for recording the completion of each item.

Where BINDT takes account of certification or other audits already granted to the client, for example verification audits of subcontractor or suppliers, it shall collect sufficient, verifiable information to justify and record any adjustments to the audit programme.

4.1.7 Notice of changes by BINDT

BINDT provides its certified clients due notice of any changes to its requirements for certification and verifies that each certified client complies with the new requirements within a specified period.

4.1.8 Notice of changes by a client

BINDT has legally enforceable arrangements to ensure that the certified client informs BINDT, without delay, of matters that may affect the capability of the management system to continue to fulfil the requirements of the standard used for certification. These include, for example, changes relating to:

- The legal, commercial, organisational status or ownership;
- Organisation and management (for example, key managerial, decision-making or technical staff);
- Contact address and sites;
- Scope of operations under the certified management system; and
- Major changes to the management system and processes.

4.2 Audit Team selection and assignments

BINDT implements a process for selecting and appointing the Audit Team, including the Audit Team leader, taking into account the competence needed to achieve the objectives of the audit. If there is only one Auditor, the Auditor shall have the competence to perform the duties of an Audit Team leader applicable for that audit.

In deciding the size and composition of the Audit Team, consideration is given to the following:

- Audit objectives, scope, criteria and estimated time of the audit;
- The overall competence of the Audit Team needed to achieve the objectives of the audit;
- Certification requirements (including any applicable statutory, regulatory or contractual requirements);
- Language and culture; and
- Whether the members of the Audit Team have previously audited the client's management system.

The necessary knowledge and skills of the Audit Team leader and Auditors may be supplemented by technical experts, translators and interpreters who operate under the direction of an Auditor. Where translators or interpreters are used, they are selected such that they do not unduly influence the audit.

Auditors-in-training may be included in the Audit Team as participants, provided an Auditor is appointed as an evaluator. The evaluator shall be competent to take over the duties and have final responsibility for the activities and findings of the Auditor-in-training.

The Audit Team leader, in consultation with the Audit Team, shall assign to each team member responsibility for auditing specific processes, functions, sites, areas or activities. Such assignments shall take into account the need for competence and the effective and efficient use of the Audit Team, as well as different roles and responsibilities of Auditors, Auditors-in-training and technical experts. Changes to the work assignments may be made as the audit progresses to ensure achievement of the audit objectives.

The BINDT CSD shall furnish the Lead Auditor (once selected) with the pre-audit review documents detailed below, as applicable:

- PCN24/CP14A: Application review (new applicants); and
- PCN24/CP14B: Application review (existing approval holders).

4.3 Audit time

4.3.1 Determine audit time

BINDT has documented procedures for determining audit time (PSL21) and, for each client, BINDT shall determine the time needed to plan and accomplish a complete and effective audit of the client's management system. The audit time determined by BINDT, and the justification for the determination, shall be recorded. In determining the audit time, BINDT CSD management considers, among other things, the following aspects:

- The requirements of the relevant management system standard;
- Size and complexity;
- Technological and regulatory context;
- Any outsourcing of any activities included in the scope of the management system;
- The results of any prior audits;
- The number of sites and multi-site considerations;
- The risks associated with the products, processes or activities of the organisation; and
- When audits are combined or integrated, *ie* supplier (ATO) and/or subcontractor (AQB).

The time spent by any team member that is not assigned as an Auditor (*ie* technical experts, translators, interpreters, observers and Auditors-in-training) shall not count in the above established audit time. The use of translators, interpreters or the inclusion/presence of Auditors-in-training can necessitate additional audit time.

4.3.2 Multi-site sampling

Where multi-site sampling is utilised for the audit of a client's management system covering the same activity in various locations, BINDT Lead Auditors shall develop a sampling programme to ensure proper auditing of the management system. The rationale for the sampling plan shall be documented for each client.

4.4 Audit plan

An audit plan is established for each audit identified in the audit programme to provide the basis for agreement regarding the conduct and scheduling of the audit activities. This audit plan is based on the documented requirements of BINDT. The Lead Auditor is responsible for the development and communication of the audit plan.

4.4.1 Determining audit objectives, scope and criteria

Audit objectives are determined by BINDT. The audit scope and criteria, including any changes, are established by BINDT after discussion with the client.

The audit objectives describe what is to be accomplished by the audit and include:

- Determination of the conformity of the client's management system, or parts of it, with audit criteria;
- Evaluation of the ability of the management system to ensure the client organisation meets applicable statutory, regulatory and contractual requirements;
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of the management system to ensure the client organisation is continually meeting its specified objectives; and
- Identification of areas for potential improvement of the management system.

The audit scope describes the extent and boundaries of the audit, such as physical locations, organisational units, activities and processes to be audited. Where the initial or re-certification process consists of more than one audit (for example covering different locations), the scope of an individual audit may not cover the full certification scope; however, the totality of audits shall be consistent with the scope outlined in the certification document.

Annex F lists additional items that can be considered when preparing or revising the audit scope.

The audit criteria are used as a reference against which conformity is determined and shall include:

- The requirements of a defined normative document on management systems; and
- The defined processes and documentation of the management system developed by the client.

4.4.2 Preparing the audit plan

The audit plan shall be appropriate to the objectives and the scope of the audit and shall include or refer to at least:

- Audit objectives;
- Audit criteria;
- Audit scope, including identification of the organisational and functional units or processes to be audited;
- Dates and sites where the on-site audit activities are to be conducted, including visits to temporary sites, as appropriate;
- Expected time and duration of on-site audit activities; and
- Roles and responsibilities of the Audit Team members and accompanying persons.

The audit plan information can be contained in more than one document.

Annex F lists additional items that can be considered when preparing or revising the audit plan.

4.5 Communication

4.5.1 Communication of Audit Team tasks

The tasks given to the Audit Team shall be defined, shall be made known to the client organisation and shall require the Audit Team to:

- Examine and verify the structure, policies, processes, procedures, records and related documents of the client organisation relevant to the management system;
- Determine that these meet all the requirements relevant to the intended scope of certification;
- Determine that the processes and procedures are established, implemented and maintained effectively to provide a basis for confidence in the client's management system; and
- Communicate to the client, for its action, any inconsistencies between the client's policy, objectives and targets (consistent with the expectations in the relevant management system standard or other normative document) and the results.

4.5.2 Communication concerning Audit Team members

BINDT shall provide the name of and, when requested, make available background information on each member of the Audit Team, with sufficient time for the client organisation to object to the appointment of any particular Auditor or technical expert and for BINDT to reconstitute the team in response to any valid objection.

NOTE: *Subcontractors and suppliers shall not be given an opportunity to object to the appointment of an Auditor. If necessary, certification and subcontractor or supplier audits shall be separated if objections to the appointment of a particular Auditor arise.*

4.5.3 Communication of audit plan

The audit plan shall be communicated and the dates of the audit shall be agreed upon, in advance, with the client organisation.

4.5.4 Communication during the audit

During the audit, the Audit Team shall periodically assess audit progress and exchange information. The Audit Team leader shall reassign work as needed between the Audit Team members and periodically communicate the progress of the audit and any concerns to the client.

Where the available audit evidence indicates that the audit objectives are unattainable or suggests the presence of an immediate and significant risk (for example safety), the Audit Team leader shall report this to the client and, if possible, to BINDT to determine appropriate action. Such action may include reconfirmation or modification of the audit plan, changes to the audit objectives or audit scope or termination of the audit. The Audit Team leader shall report the outcome of the action taken to BINDT.

The Audit Team leader shall review with the client any need for changes to the audit scope that becomes apparent as on-site auditing activities progress and report this to BINDT.

4.6 Conduct of on-site audits

BINDT implements a process for conducting on-site audits that includes an opening meeting at the start of the audit and a closing meeting at the conclusion of the audit. On-site audits shall normally include the use of approved BINDT checklists that are prepared to address the requirements of the applicable governing documents.

NOTE: *In addition to visiting physical location(s) (for example, a factory) 'on-site' can include remote access to electronic site(s) that contain(s) information that is relevant to the audit of the management system.*

4.6.1 Initial certification audit

The initial certification audit of a management system shall be conducted in two stages: stage 1 and stage 2.

4.6.1.1 Initial stage 1 audit

The stage 1 audit shall be performed to:

- Audit the client's management system documentation;
- Evaluate the client's location and site-specific conditions and to undertake discussions with the client's personnel to determine the preparedness for the stage 2 audit;
- Review the client's status and understanding regarding requirements of the standard, in particular with respect to the identification of key performance or significant aspects, processes, objectives and operation of the management system;
- Collect necessary information regarding the scope of the management system, processes and location(s) of the client and related statutory and regulatory aspects and compliance (for example quality, environmental, legal aspects of the client's operation, associated risks, etc);
- Review the allocation of resources for stage 2 audit and agree with the client on the details of the stage 2 audit;
- Provide a focus for planning the stage 2 audit by gaining a sufficient understanding of the client's management system and site operations in the context of possible significant aspects; and
- Evaluate if the internal audits and management review are being planned and performed and that the level of implementation of the management system substantiates that the client is ready for the stage 2 audit.

For most management systems, it is recommended that at least part of the stage 1 audits for assessments (other than ISO 9001 quality management system (QMS) audits) be carried out at the client's premises in order to achieve the objectives stated above, especially in reference to facilities and equipment requirements. Further guidance on stage 1 assessments for ISO 9001 QMS assessments is given in BINDT document QS2. Initial stage 1 assessments for IS0 9001 approval assessments shall normally be a desktop review and gap analysis of the applicant's QMS and supporting documentation to ascertain their preparedness for the on-site initial stage 2 assessment.

Stage 1 audit findings shall be documented and communicated to the client, including identification of any areas of concern that could be classified as non-conformity during the stage 2 audit.

In determining the interval between stage 1 and stage 2 audits, consideration shall be given to the needs of the client to resolve areas of concern identified during the stage 1 audit. BINDT may also need to revise its arrangements for stage 2 audit, dependent upon the recommendations from the stage 1 report.

4.6.1.2 Initial stage 2 audit

The purpose of the stage 2 audit is to evaluate the implementation, including the effectiveness, of the client's management system. The stage 2 audit shall take place at the site(s) of the client. It shall include at least the following:

- Information and evidence about conformity to all requirements of the applicable management system standard or other normative document;
- Performance monitoring, measuring, reporting and reviewing against key performance objectives and targets (consistent with the expectations in the applicable management system standard or other normative document);
- The client's management system and performance as regards legal compliance;
- Operational control of the client's processes;
- Internal auditing and management review;
- Management responsibility for the client's policies; and
- Links between the normative requirements, policy, performance objectives and targets (consistent with the expectations in the applicable management system standard or other normative document), any applicable legal requirements, responsibilities, competence of personnel, operations, procedures, performance data and internal audit findings and conclusions.

4.6.2 Conducting the opening meeting

A formal opening meeting, where attendance shall be recorded, shall be held with the client's management and, where appropriate, those responsible for the functions or processes to be audited. The purpose of the opening meeting, which shall usually be conducted by the Audit Team leader, is to provide a short explanation of how the audit activities will be undertaken and shall include the following elements:

- Introduction of the participants, including an outline of their roles;
- Confirmation of the scope of certification;
- Confirmation of the audit plan (including type and scope of audit, objectives and criteria), any changes and other relevant arrangements with the client, such as the date and time for the closing meeting, interim meetings between the Audit Team and the client's management;
- Confirmation of formal communication channels between the Audit Team and the client;
- Confirmation that the resources and facilities needed by the Audit Team are available;
- Confirmation of matters relating to confidentiality;
- Confirmation of relevant work safety, emergency and security procedures for the Audit Team;
- Confirmation of the availability, roles and identities of any guides and observers;
- The method of reporting, including any grading of audit findings;
- Information about the conditions under which the audit may be prematurely terminated;
- Confirmation that the Audit Team leader and Audit Team representing BINDT is responsible for the audit and shall be in control of executing the audit plan, including audit activities and audit trails;
- Confirmation of the status of findings of the previous review or audit, if applicable;
- Methods and procedures to be used to conduct the audit based on sampling;
- Confirmation of the language to be used during the audit;
- Confirmation that, during the audit, the client will be kept informed of audit progress and any concerns; and
- The opportunity for the client to ask questions.

The degree of detail shall be consistent with the familiarity of the client with the audit process.

4.6.3 Assignment of observers and guides

4.6.3.1 Observers

The presence and justification of observers during an audit activity shall be agreed to by BINDT and the client prior to the conduct of the audit. The Audit Team shall ensure that observers do not influence or interfere in the audit process or the outcome of the audit.

NOTE: *Observers can be members of the client's organisation, consultants, witnessing accreditation body personnel, regulators or other justified persons.*

4.6.3.2 Guides

Each Auditor shall be accompanied by a guide, unless otherwise agreed to by the Audit Team leader and the client. Guide(s) are assigned to the Audit Team to facilitate the audit. The Audit Team shall ensure that guides do not influence or interfere in the audit process or the outcome of the audit.

NOTE: *The responsibilities of a guide can include:*

- *Establishing contacts and timing for interviews;*
- *Arranging visits to specific parts of the site or organisation;*
- *Ensuring that rules concerning site safety and security procedures are known and respected by the Audit Team members;*
- *Witnessing the audit on behalf of the client; and*
- *Providing clarification or information as requested by an Auditor.*

4.6.4 Collecting and verifying information

During the audit, information relevant to the audit objectives, scope and criteria (including information relating to interfaces between functions, activities and processes) shall be collected by appropriate sampling and verified to become audit evidence.

Methods to collect information shall include, but are not limited to:

- Interviews;
- Observation of processes and activities; and
- Review of documentation and records.

4.6.5 Identifying and recording audit findings

Audit findings summarising conformity and detailing non-conformity and its supporting audit evidence shall be recorded and reported (on reports forms designed for the purpose – PCN24/CP14D) to enable an informed certification decision to be made or the certification to be maintained.

Opportunities for improvement may be identified and recorded as observations. Audit findings that are non-conformities shall not be recorded as opportunities for improvement (observations).

A finding of non-conformity shall be recorded against a specific requirement of the audit criteria, contain a clear statement of the non-conformity and identify in detail the objective evidence on which the non-conformity is based. Non-conformities shall be discussed with the client to ensure that the evidence is accurate and that the non-conformities are understood. The Auditor shall refrain from suggesting the cause of non-conformities or their solution.

4.6.6 Initial audit conclusions

The Audit Team shall analyse all information and audit evidence gathered during the stage 1 and stage 2 audits to review the audit findings and agree on the audit conclusions.

Information for granting initial certification

The information provided by the Audit Team to BINDT for the certification decision shall include, as a minimum:

- The audit reports;
- Comments on the non-conformities and, where applicable, the correction and corrective actions taken by the client;

- Confirmation of the information provided to BINDT used in the application review (see 9.2.2); and
- A recommendation whether or not to grant certification, together with any conditions or observations.

BINDT shall make the certification decision on the basis of an evaluation of the audit findings and conclusions and any other relevant information (for example public information and comments on the audit report from the client).

4.6.7 Preparing audit conclusions

Prior to the closing meeting, the Audit Team shall:

- Review the audit findings, as well as any other appropriate information collected during the audit, against the audit objectives;
- Agree upon the audit conclusions, taking into account the uncertainty inherent in the audit process;
- Identify any necessary follow-up actions; and
- Confirm the appropriateness of the audit programme or identify any modification required (for example scope, audit time or dates, surveillance frequency, competence).

4.6.8 Conducting the closing meeting

A formal closing meeting, where attendance shall be recorded, shall be held with the client's management and, where appropriate, those responsible for the functions or processes audited. The purpose of the closing meeting, which shall normally be conducted by the Audit Team leader, is to present the audit conclusions, including the recommendation regarding certification. Any non-conformities shall be presented in such a manner that they are understood and the timeframe for responding shall be agreed. If it is not possible to agree all the findings raised by the Lead Assessor, the finding shall remain valid pending an appeal by the auditee. The details of such instances shall be detailed in the audit report. See Section 4.15.2 for further details.

The closing meeting shall also include the following elements:

- Advising the client that the audit evidence collected was based on a sample of the information, thereby introducing an element of uncertainty;
- The method and timeframe of reporting, including any grading of audit findings;
- BINDT's process for handling non-conformities, including any consequences relating to the status of the client's certification;
- The time frame for the client to present a plan for correction and corrective action for any non-conformities identified during the audit;
- BINDT's post-audit activities; and
- Information about the complaint-handling and appeal processes.

The degree of detail shall be consistent with the familiarity of the client with the audit process.

The client shall be given the opportunity for questions.

Any diverging opinions regarding the audit findings or conclusions between the Audit Team and the client shall be discussed and resolved where possible. Any diverging opinions that are not resolved shall be recorded and referred to BINDT.

4.7 Remote assessments

BINDT reserves the right to conduct remote assessments. Remote assessments shall normally be conducted during periods of extenuating circumstances, where site visits are not possible. However, remote assessments may also be conducted for initial stage 1 assessments and/or extension-to-scope assessments, where records of implementation are not available due to the organisation having not been approved to generate such and where facilities have been previously assessed for other BINDT approvals. These assessments are a precursor to initial stage 2 assessments when the effective implementation of processes will be assessed.

The general principles of the BINDT assessment process detailed in Sections 4.5 and 4.6 previous shall apply equally to remote assessments.

BINDT accepts that the conduct of remote assessments may introduce a different or varying level of business risk when compared to site assessments. Consequently, generic risks deemed applicable to remote assessments are included in BINDT procedure QP06, together with the associated risk assessments and mitigation to reduce any identified risk.

4.7.1 Process for remote assessments

1. Preparation

Following a request from the BINDT CSD to conduct a remote assessment, the appointed Lead Assessor shall initiate contact with the client to address the following (as a minimum):

- Discuss and agree availability;
- Explain the concept and reasons for remote assessments;
- Ensure the organisation's management are agreeable to be audited in this way;
- Discuss with senior management that only with their full co-operation, communication and commitment can the remote assessments work effectively;
- Advise the organisation whether any part of the assessment will be recorded;
- Agree dates and times (time zones should be considered);
- Agree live communication platform to suit all (for example Skype, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc);
- Request relevant details of participants (*ie* electronic contact addresses) and, if necessary, an additional address for live viewing of scanning of records/documents;
- Agree a method/platform for live scanning and transmission of evidential documents (DropBox, WeTransfer, etc); and
- Evidence may require live videos to demonstrate facilities, equipment and training/examination specimens. The client should be made aware of this and confirm that the necessary capability will be available.

2. Test run

Prior to the assessment and following completion/agreement of the factors detailed above, it is required that the Lead Assessor in conjunction with all relevant parties conducts a test run to ensure that the electronic communication and transmission platforms work effectively in order to minimise the potential for associated problems at the time of assessment.

The aims of the test run include, but may not be limited to, the following:

- Set up a contact group of all audit participants to facilitate a group call;
- Agree advanced dummy meeting to test connectivity/sound check;
- Ensure all intended participants are comfortable with electronic functions, such as screen share;
- Ensure all relevant staff can upload/transmit evidential documents and access permitted electronic folders;
- Confirm/demonstrate how audit documents will be requested and scanned live on camera during the audit; and
- Explain to the organisation how to name the submitted files, *ie* by clause # of the checklist or simply named 'tutor evaluations', etc. This is to ensure traceability of evidence to the applicable requirement(s).

NOTE: *Following completion of items 1 and 2 (preparation and test run) the Lead Assessor shall prepare and provide a standard audit plan, which shall be distributed to all relevant parties.*

3. Audit preparation – Stage 1 (by the Audit Team)

- The standard BINDT checklists used for site assessments shall be equally applicable for remote assessments;
- Remote assessments will require a more detailed preparation and document review and, therefore, Lead Assessors should allow more preparation time. Conversely, the more detailed preparation may lead to reduced time on the live, interactive part of the assessment. This is especially applicable when evidential records are requested and provided in advance of the live interaction. Consequently, any impact on overall audit fees will be minimal;
- Where Audit Teams are appointed, the Lead Assessor shall contact other team members and communicate which areas of the assessment each team member should prepare for; and

- The Lead Assessor shall request the required documents and/or information to facilitate audit preparation, as per site assessments. These shall include, but are not restricted to, the following considerations:
  - Complete set of QMS documents, including the quality manual, supporting procedures and work instructions;
  - Copy of the master list of controlled documents;
  - Copy of the latest BINDT/PCN ATO and AQB authorisation document;
  - Copy of the current ISO 9001:2015 certificate;
  - Copy of the latest internal audit report, including checklists and summary/status of any findings raised;
  - Copy of the most recent management review report;
  - Copy of the master list of training and examination specimens;
  - Copy of the master list of NDT equipment;
  - Staff list that includes positions/roles and responsibilities within the organisation;
  - Details of how many students/candidates have been processed by the organisation (per method) since the last BINDT audit; and
  - Details of any remote training/examinations that have been conducted away from the main site since the last audit, for example a list of locations, dates and methods.

4. Audit preparation – Stage 2

Following receipt of the requested documents/information, the Audit Team shall proceed with completing the relevant parts of the applicable checklist in terms of the documentary review against the given requirements.

During this process, the Lead Assessor (and Audit Team) may request further documentation, including standard evidence that does not require live transmission and assessment. This evidence may include, but is not restricted to, the following:

- Internal audit schedules;
- Internal audit reports;
- Document control records (including staff updates);
- Corrective action reports;
- Tutor competence evaluations;
- Staff training records;
- Documented roles and responsibilities and signed acknowledgements;
- Calibration records;
- Internal equipment verification records;
- Remote training and/or examination audit records; and
- Waste disposal records.

5. Audit Team communication (during preparation stages)

During the audit preparation stages, the Lead Assessor shall remain in regular contact with other Audit Team members (if any) in order to:

- Monitor audit preparation progress;
- Discuss any salient points as an Audit Team;
- Identify any concerns that the Lead Auditor may need discuss with the organisation;
- Allow the Lead Assessor to determine the effectiveness of the audit preparation; and
- Determine whether the live part of the assessment can continue as planned – or make rearrangements, if necessary.

6. Conduct of the audit

On the day of the live assessment, the following actions should be conducted:

- The Lead Auditor should initiate the group call ten minutes prior to opening the meeting;
- The Lead Auditor shall ensure that all participants are connected or are accessible;

- The Lead Auditor shall share the audit plan on screen and confirm as for site audit;
- The Lead Auditor shall conduct an opening meeting as for site audit;
- Discuss in more detail the point about 'formal decisions' and 'communication protocol';
- Agree back-up communications;
- Following the opening meeting, the Lead Auditor and Support Assessor (if applicable) shall initiate separate video calls with respective guides;
- Where an Audit Team is employed, the Lead Auditor shall make arrangements for frequent Audit Team communications to ascertain audit progress and time management and also to discuss any matters arising;
- The Lead Auditor shall confirm arrangements for scanning and transmission of live evidence as required. This should include agreement on standard arrangements for the scanning of training and/or examination records – standard order for the scanned documents within training/examination packs (consistent of packs scanned);
- Evidence may require live videos to demonstrate facilities, equipment and training/examination specimens – the client should be reminded of this;
- During the live aspect of the assessment, the Audit Team shall complete all required areas of the checklist not completed during the document review part of the assessment. The Audit Team should also address any areas of concern raised during the document review part of the assessment; and
- As with site assessments, the Audit Team shall keep the client informed of the audit progress and make them aware of any potential areas of concern at the time of detection.

7. Audit reporting and closure

For remote assessments, Section 4.6.5 to 4.6.8 (previous) and Section 4.8 (following) shall apply as with site assessments.

8. Other considerations for remote assessments

For remote assessments, the following points should also be considered by the Audit Team:

- The possible availability of a headset with a microphone to improve communications, if necessary;
- For facilities, the live filming and viewing or the request for specific videos;
- Use of extended visual display units (VDUs) or multiple/split screens to facilitate the live viewing of guides/contacts and documents;
- Use locations with strong internet connections and little background noise;
- Have IT support available, if possible; and
- Be prepared to work additional hours/agree a spill-over half day, if required, to complete all objectives.

4.8 Audit report

4.8.1 Report preparation

BINDT Assessors shall provide fully documented reports for each audit. Audit reports may be compiled electronically or by hand. The audit report shall normally be provided to the auditee at the closing meeting or as soon as possible afterwards (by agreement). The following audit forms shall be used:

- PCN24/CP14C: Audit report form; and
- PCN24/CP14D: Audit findings report and resolution record.

The Audit Team may identify opportunities for improvement but shall not recommend specific solutions. Ownership of the audit report shall be retained by BINDT.

The Audit Team Leader shall ensure that the audit report is prepared and shall be responsible for its content. The audit report shall provide an accurate, concise and clear record of the audit to enable an informed certification decision to be made and shall include or refer to the following:

- Identification of BINDT as the certifying or verifying authority;
- The name and address of the client and the client's management representative;
- The type of audit (for example initial, surveillance or recertification);

- The audit criteria;
- The audit objectives;
- The audit scope, particularly identification of the organisational or functional units or processes audited and the time of the audit;
- Identification of the Audit Team Leader, Audit Team members and any accompanying persons;
- The dates and places where the audit activities (on site or off site) were conducted;
- Audit findings, evidence and conclusions, consistent with the requirements of the type of audit; and
- Any unresolved issues, if identified.

4.8.2 Lead Auditor recommendations

At the conclusion of the assessment, during the closing meeting, the Lead Auditor, in conjunction with support assessors, if applicable, shall present the audit findings together with a final recommendation on the outcome of the assessment. The Lead Auditor only makes recommendations. The final decision on approval remains with BINDT certification panels, which may or may not agree with the Lead Auditor recommendation.

The Lead Auditor recommendation will normally be in the form of one of the four guidance clauses given below or a variation thereof. These conclusions are given for Lead Auditor guidance only. The Lead Auditor may record other approval recommendations at their discretion.

Guidance audit approval recommendations are given below:

(a) Unconditional approval.

(b) Conditionally approved, provided corrective actions to clear non-compliances are satisfactorily implemented within an agreed period. Evidence of implementation may be submitted to the Lead Auditor by email.

(c) Conditionally approved, provided corrective actions to clear non-compliances are satisfactorily implemented within an agreed period. Implementation will be confirmed during a follow-up audit at a date to be decided by BINDT.

(d) Approval withheld, suspended or withdrawn. The audited organisation will not be approved without a further full audit.

4.8.3 Cause analysis of non-conformities

BINDT requires the client to analyse the cause and describe the specific correction and corrective actions taken or planned to be taken to eliminate detected non-conformities within a defined time.

4.8.4 Effectiveness of corrections and corrective actions

The BINDT Lead Assessor shall review the corrections, identified causes and corrective actions submitted by the client to determine if these are acceptable and shall verify the effectiveness of any correction and corrective actions taken. The evidence obtained to support the resolution of non-conformities shall be recorded. The client shall be informed of the result of the review and verification.

NOTE: *Verification of effectiveness of correction and corrective action can be carried out based on a review of documentation provided by the client or, where necessary, through verification on-site at the next assessment or specially arranged intermediate assessment.*

4.8.5 Additional audits

The client shall be informed if an additional full audit, an additional limited audit or documented evidence (to be confirmed during future surveillance audits) will be needed to verify effective correction and corrective actions.

4.9 Certification decision

The responsibility for reviewing completed audits and conferring an audit outcome decision remains with the BINDT Certification Management Committee. The CMC only meets on a quarterly basis and in order to facilitate the audit completion process the CMC may appoint authorised reviewers and decision-makers to act on its behalf. Any major areas of concern shall be referred back to the CMC for review and decision. BINDT shall ensure that the persons or committees that make the certification or recertification decisions are different from those who carried out the audits.

4.9.1 Actions prior to making a decision

BINDT shall confirm, prior to making a decision, that:

- The information provided by the Audit Team is sufficient with respect to the certification requirements and the scope for certification.
- It has reviewed, accepted and verified the effectiveness of correction and corrective actions, for all non-conformities that represent.
  - Failure to fulfil one or more requirements of the management system standard; or
  - A situation that raises significant doubt about the ability of the client's management system to achieve its intended outputs.
- It has reviewed and accepted the client's planned correction and corrective action for any other non-conformities.

4.10 Surveillance activities

4.10.1 General

BINDT shall develop its surveillance activities so that representative areas and functions covered by the scope of the management system are monitored on a regular basis and take into account changes to its certified client and its management system.

Surveillance activities shall include on-site audits assessing the auditee's certified or verified management system's fulfilment of specified requirements with respect to the standard to which the certification is granted.

Other surveillance activities may include:

- Enquiries from BINDT to the certified client on aspects of certification;
- Reviewing any client's statements with respect to its operations (for example promotional material, website);
- Requests to the client to provide documents and records (on paper or electronic media); and
- Other means of monitoring the certified client's performance.

4.10.2 Surveillance audit

Surveillance audits are on-site audits, but are not necessarily full system audits, and shall be planned together with the other surveillance activities so that BINDT can maintain confidence that the certified management system continues to fulfil requirements between recertification audits. The surveillance audit programme shall include, at least:

- Internal audits and management review;
- A review of actions taken on non-conformities identified during the previous audit;
- Treatment of complaints;
- Effectiveness of the management system with regard to achieving the certified client's objectives;
- Progress of planned activities aimed at continual improvement;
- Continuing operational control;
- Review of any changes; and
- Use of marks and/or any other reference to certification.

Surveillance audits shall be conducted at least once a year. The date of the first surveillance audit following initial certification shall not be more than 12 months from the last day of the stage 2 audit.

4.11 Maintaining certification

BINDT will maintain certification based on demonstration that the client continues to satisfy the requirements of the management system standard. It may maintain a client's certification based on a positive conclusion by the Audit Team Leader without further independent review, *provided*:

- For any non-conformity or other situation that may lead to suspension or withdrawal of certification, *BINDT has a system that requires the Audit Team Leader to report to BINDT* the need to initiate a review by appropriately competent personnel, different from those who carried out the audit, to determine whether certification can be maintained; and

- Competent personnel of BINDT monitor its surveillance activities, including *monitoring the reporting by its Auditors*, to confirm that the certification activity is operating effectively.

4.12 Recertification

4.12.1 Recertification audit planning

A recertification audit shall be planned and conducted to evaluate the continued fulfilment of all of the requirements of the relevant management system standard or other normative document. The purpose of the recertification audit is to confirm the continued conformity and effectiveness of the management system as a whole and its continued relevance and applicability for the scope of certification.

The recertification audit shall consider the performance of the management system over the period of certification and include the review of previous surveillance audit reports.

Recertification audit activities may need to have a stage 1 audit in situations where there have been significant changes to the management system, the client or the context in which the management system is operating (for example changes to legislation).

In the case of multiple sites or certification to multiple management system standards being provided by BINDT, the planning for the audit shall ensure adequate on-site audit coverage to provide confidence in the certification.

4.12.2 Recertification audit

The recertification audit shall include an on-site audit that addresses the following:

- The effectiveness of the management system in its entirety in light of internal and external changes and its continued relevance and applicability to the scope of certification;
- Demonstrated commitment to maintain the effectiveness and improvement of the management system in order to enhance overall performance; and
- Whether the operation of the certified management system contributes to the achievement of the organisation's policy and objectives.

When, during a recertification audit, instances of non-conformity or lack of evidence of conformity are identified, BINDT shall define the time limits for correction and corrective actions to be implemented prior to the expiration of certification.

4.12.3 Information for granting recertification

BINDT shall make decisions on renewing certification based on the results of the recertification audit, as well as the results of the review of the system over the period of certification and complaints received from users of certification.

4.13 Special audits

4.13.1 Extensions to scope

BINDT shall, in response to an application for extension to the scope of a certification already granted, undertake a review of the application and determine any audit activities necessary to decide whether or not the extension may be granted. This may be conducted in conjunction with a surveillance audit, via a special dedicated site assessment or via a client self-assessment (completion of a BINDT checklist, followed by a BINDT desktop review conducted by a BINDT Lead Assessor).

4.13.2 Short-notice audits

It may be necessary for BINDT to conduct audits of certified clients at short notice to investigate complaints, in response to changes or as follow up on suspended clients. In such cases:

- BINDT shall describe and make known in advance to the certified clients the conditions under which these short-notice visits are to be conducted; and
- BINDT shall exercise additional care in the assignment of the Audit Team due to the lack of opportunity for the client to object to Audit Team members.

4.14 Suspending, withdrawing or reducing the scope of certification

BINDT has a policy and documented procedure (QP/13) for suspension, withdrawal or reduction of the scope of certification and shall specify the subsequent actions by BINDT.

BINDT will suspend certification in cases when, for example:

- The client's certified management system has persistently or seriously failed to meet certification requirements, including requirements for the effectiveness of the management system;
- The certified client does not allow surveillance or recertification audits to be conducted at the required frequencies; or
- The certified client has voluntarily requested a suspension.

Under suspension, the client's management system certification is temporarily invalid. BINDT shall have enforceable arrangements with its clients to ensure that in case of suspension the client refrains from further promotion of its certification. BINDT shall make the suspended status of the certification publicly accessible and shall take any other measures it deems appropriate.

Failure to resolve the issues that have resulted in the suspension in a time established by BINDT shall result in withdrawal or reduction of the scope of certification.

NOTE: *In most cases, the suspension would not exceed six months.*

BINDT shall reduce the client's scope of certification to exclude the parts not meeting the requirements when the client has persistently or seriously failed to meet the certification requirements for those parts of the scope of certification. Any such reduction shall be in line with the requirements of the standard used for certification.

BINDT has enforceable arrangements with the certified client concerning conditions of withdrawal [see QP/13] *ensuring upon notice of withdrawal of certification that the client discontinues its use of all advertising matter that contains any reference to a certified status.*

Upon request by any party, BINDT shall correctly state the status of certification of a client's management system as being suspended, withdrawn or reduced.

4.15 Complaints and appeals

4.15.1 Complaints

A description of the complaints-handling process (QP/13) is publicly accessible (PCN24/CP21).

Upon receipt of a complaint, BINDT shall confirm whether the complaint relates to certification activities that it is responsible for and, if so, shall deal with it. If the complaint relates to a certified client, then examination of the complaint shall consider the effectiveness of the certified management system.

Any complaint about a certified client shall also be referred by BINDT to the certified client in question at an appropriate time.

BINDT shall have a documented process to receive, evaluate and make decisions on complaints. This process shall be subject to requirements for confidentiality, as it relates to the complainant and to the subject of the complaint.

The complaints-handling process includes the following elements and methods:

- An outline of the process for receiving, validating, investigating the complaint and for deciding what actions are to be taken in response to it;
- Tracking and recording complaints, including actions undertaken in response to them; and
- Ensuring that any appropriate correction and corrective action are taken.

The BINDT manager receiving the complaint shall be responsible for gathering and verifying all necessary information to validate the complaint.

Whenever possible, BINDT shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint and shall provide the complainant with progress reports and the outcome.

The decision to be communicated to the complainant shall be made by, or reviewed and approved by, individual(s) not previously involved in the subject of the complaint.

Whenever possible, BINDT shall give formal notice of the end of the complaints-handling process to the complainant.

BINDT shall determine, together with the client and the complainant, whether and, if so to what extent, the subject of the complaint and its resolution shall be made public.

4.15.2 Appeals

BINDT has a documented process to receive, evaluate and make decisions on appeals. In respect of appeals against audit findings, which may arise from disagreement with, or disputing of, a finding, the appellant should complete a PCN24/CP14G form and forward the competed form to the Audit Team at BINDT. Form PCN24/CP14G is available from the BINDT Audit Team upon request. With regard to any other type of appeal, the appellant is referred to the appeals-handling process detailed in PCN24/CP21, which is publicly accessible on the BINDT website.

BINDT shall be responsible for all decisions at all levels of the appeals-handling process and shall ensure that the persons engaged in the appeals-handling process are different from those who carried out the audits or make the certification decisions.

Submission, investigation and decision on appeals shall not result in any discriminatory actions against the appellant.

The appeals-handling process shall include at least the following elements and methods:

- An outline of the process for receiving, validating and investigating the appeal and for deciding what actions are to be taken in response to it, taking into account the results of previous similar appeals;
- Tracking and recording appeals, including actions undertaken to resolve them; and
- Ensuring that any appropriate correction and corrective action are taken.

BINDT shall acknowledge receipt of the appeal and shall provide the appellant with progress reports and the outcome.

The decision to be communicated to the appellant shall be made by or reviewed and approved by individual(s) not previously involved in the subject of the appeal.

BINDT shall give formal notice to the appellant of the end of the appeals-handling process.

4.16 Records of applicants and clients

BINDT maintains records on the audit and other certification activities for all clients, including all organisations that submitted applications and all organisations audited, certified or with certification suspended or withdrawn.

Records on certified clients include the following:

(a) Application information and initial, surveillance and recertification audit reports;

(b) Certification agreement;

(c) Justification of the methodology used for sampling;

(d) Justification for audit time determination;

(e) Verification of correction and corrective actions;

(f) Records of complaints and appeals and any subsequent correction or corrective actions;

(g) Committee deliberations and decisions, if applicable;

(h) Documentation of the certification decisions;

(i) Certification documents, including the scope of certification with respect to product, process or service, as applicable; and

(j) Related records necessary to establish the credibility of the certification, such as evidence of the competence of Auditors and technical experts.

NOTE: *Methodology of sampling includes the sampling employed to assess the specific management system and/or to select sites in the context of multi-site assessment.*

BINDT maintains the records on applicants and clients securely to ensure that the information is kept confidential. Records are transported, transmitted or transferred in a way that ensures that confidentiality is maintained.

BINDT has a documented policy and documented procedures on the retention of records. Records are retained for at least the duration of the current cycle plus one full certification cycle.

ANNEX A – REQUIRED KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

The following table specifies the knowledge and skills for specific certification functions.

Table A. Required knowledge and skills (for various personnel)

Knowledge and skills	Certification functions		
	Conducting the application review to determine Audit Team competence required, select the Audit Team members and determine the audit time	Reviewing audit reports and making certification decisions	Auditing and leading the Audit Team
Quality management terminology, principles and techniques	N/A	X (A2.2.1)	X (A1.1)
Quality management system standards or normative documents	X (A2.1.1)	X (A2.2.1)	X (A1.2)
Business management practices	N/A	N/A	X (A1.3)
Client business sector	X (2.1.2)	X (A2.2.3)	X (A1.4)
Client products (services), processes and organisation	X (2.1.3)	N/A	X (A1.5)

A1 – COMPETENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR QMS AUDITORS

A1.1 Quality management terminology, principles, practices and techniques

Knowledge of:

(a) Terms and definitions related to quality management.

(b) Quality management principles and their application.

(c) The application of Plan, Do, Check, Act (PCDA) and the process approach.

(d) The hierarchy and interrelationship of QMS documentation structures.

(e) Scopes and the applicability of exclusions.

(f) Quality related tools, methods, techniques and their application, which can include:

(i) Principles for economics of quality;

(ii) Quality policy implementation methodology;

(iii) Process mapping techniques;

(iv) Methods for identifying and monitoring customer perception and satisfaction;

(v) Improvement tools (for example Lean, Six Sigma, Kaizen, etc);

(vi) Statistical techniques;

(vii) Risk management approach;

(viii) Problem-solving techniques;

(ix) Measuring of processes; and

(x) Root cause analysis.

A1.2 Quality management system standards and normative documents

Knowledge of:

(a) Relevant quality management system standards and other normative documents used in the certification process and their application; and

(b) The interaction between the elements of the quality management system standards and other documents.

A1.3 Business management practices

Knowledge of:

(a) General business management concepts, practices and the inter-relationship between policy and objectives;

(b) The impact of organisation types, size, governance, structure, functions and relationships on development and implementation of the quality management system and certification activities; and

(c) Management processes and related terminology.

NOTE: *These processes also include human resources management, internal and external communication and other relevant support processes.*

A1.4 Client business sector

Knowledge of:

(a) Generic terminology, processes and technologies related to the client business sector; and

(b) The relevant business sector practices.

NOTE: *A business sector is understood to be the economic activities covering a broad range of related technical areas.*

A1.5 Client products, processes and organisation

Knowledge of:

(a) Terminology, processes and technology specific to clients' technical area (see ISO/IEC 17021, clause 7.1.2);

(b) Statutory and regulatory requirements applicable to the product or service;

NOTE: *Statutory and regulatory requirements can be expressed as legal requirements.*

(c) Technical characteristics of processes, products and services;

(d) The infrastructure and work environment affecting product quality; and

(e) The concept of outsourcing.

Note: *Auditor competence is addressed in detail in BINDT internal procedure QP11: Assessor competencies.*

A2 – COMPETENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR OTHER PERSONNEL

A2.1 Competence of personnel conducting the application review to determine the Audit Team competence required, to select the Audit Team members and to determine the audit time

2.1.1 Quality management system standards and normative documents

Knowledge of relevant quality management system standards and other normative documents used in the certification process to verify the details of the application from the client to ensure that an Audit Team with the necessary competence and audit time is selected for the audit assignment. Specific training and knowledge of the requirements of this document, PCN24/CP14.

2.1.2 Client business sector

Knowledge of generic terminology and processes related the relevant business sector practices to verify the details of the application from the client to ensure that an Audit Team with the necessary competence and audit time is selected for the audit assignment.

2.1.3 Client products, processes and organisation

Knowledge of client products, processes and organisation to be aware of the requirements that apply to the client and the technological and organisational context of the client to verify the details of the application from the client to ensure that an Audit Team with the necessary competence and audit time is selected for the audit assignment.

A2.2 Competence of personnel reviewing audit reports and making certification decisions

2.2.1 Quality management terminology, principles, practices and techniques

Knowledge of:

(a) Terms and definitions related to quality management;

(b) Quality management principles and their application;

(c) The application of PDCA and the process approach;

(d) The hierarchy and interrelationship of QMS documentation structures;

(e) Scopes and the applicability of exclusions; and

(f) Quality related tools, methods, techniques and their application.

2.2.2 Quality management system standards and normative documents

Knowledge of relevant quality management system standards and other normative documents used in the certification process.

2.2.3 Client business sector

Knowledge of generic terminology and processes related to the relevant business sector practices to verify the audit reports compiled by the Audit Team leader and to ensure sector specific practices have been considered during the audit process.

ANNEX B – EVALUATION METHODS

B.1 – GENERAL

Methods for evaluating individuals' competence can be grouped into five major categories: review of records, feedback, interviews, observations and examinations. These can be further subdivided. The following is a brief description of each method and its usefulness and limitations for evaluating knowledge and skills. It is unlikely that any one method on its own will confirm competence.

The (following) methods in B.2 to B.6 can provide useful information of knowledge and skills; they are more effective when they are designed to be used with specified competence criteria resulting from the competence determination process specified in 7.1.2 and 7.1.3.

This is followed by an example of a process flow for determining and maintaining competence in Annex C.

B.2 – REVIEW OF RECORDS

Records alone are not likely to be sufficient evidence of competence, but some records are indicators of knowledge, such as a résumé or *curriculum vitae* showing work experience, audit experience, education and training.

Some records are indicators of skills, such as audit reports, records of work experience, audit experience, education and training.

Other records are direct evidence of demonstration of competence such as a report of a performance appraisal of an Auditor conducting an audit.

B.3 – FEEDBACK

Feedback alone is not satisfactory evidence of competence, but feedback by peers can be an indicator of knowledge and skills (bear in mind that such feedback can be influenced by the relationship between the peers and feedback from clients can also be an indicator of knowledge and skills. For an Auditor, the feedback can be influenced by the results of the audit.

B.4 – INTERVIEWS

Interviews may be used to assess language, communication and interpersonal skills.

Employment interviews can be useful for elaborating on information from résumés and past work experience and interviews as part of performance reviews can provide specific information on knowledge and skills.

An interview of an Audit Team for a post-audit review can provide useful information about an Auditor's knowledge and skills. It provides an opportunity to understand why an Auditor made specific decisions, selected specific audit trails, etc. This technique may be used after an observed audit and may also be used later when considering the written audit report. This technique may be particularly useful in determining competence relative to a specific technical area.

Direct evidence of demonstration of competence can be achieved by a structured interview with appropriate records against specified competence criteria.

B.5 – OBSERVATIONS

Observing a person periodically is useful to confirm continued competence and observing a person performing a specific task can provide direct evidence of the application of knowledge and skills to achieve a desired result. This method of evaluation is useful for all functions, administrative and management staff, as well as for Auditors and certification decision-makers.

ANNEX C – DETERMINING AND RECORDING AUDITOR COMPETENCE

Quality Systems Auditors (permanent staff and contract personnel) act in accordance with a prescribed brief contained within documented procedures. Auditors are appointed on behalf of the appropriate committee based on the recommendation of the Certification Manager/Scheme Manager, who assesses the adequacy of the resource needed to accomplish the assessment task in hand or proposed.

The appointment is made following due consideration of the relevance of the qualifications, background and experience of the individual concerned and after at least two satisfactory assessments (in the role of support or lead Auditor as appropriate) carried out under the supervision of an evaluator.

Prior to appointment, Auditors are provided with specific training specified by the Scheme Manager/Certification Manager (see below for subjects to be covered).

The function of the appointed Lead Auditor is to audit existing and applicant organisations as directed by the Scheme Manager/Certification Manager. Support Auditors, where appointed, work under the direction of a Lead Auditor.

The performance of Auditors is reviewed by the Scheme Manager or Certification Manager who will assign an impartial evaluator to observe the conduct of at least one assessment in each calendar year, except for overseas based Auditors, who will be re-evaluated on a three-year basis. Any observation of inappropriate behaviour or poor audit technique is to result in further training.

Auditors are required to:

- Notify the Scheme Manager/Certification Manager of any change in their Auditor status, training or experience;
- Initially provide and continually update a *curriculum vitae* in light of any training received or qualifications awarded; and
- Undergo periodic assessment, which is recorded on the form below.

Note: *Auditors must reject all offers of gifts and only accept hospitality that:*

(a) Would be charged to the customer in any case, such as a lunch, dinner, refreshments; and

(b) Would be considered reasonable. If an Auditor has any doubt as to whether a gift or hospitality given or received is in breach with the above, then they must seek the advice of the Certification Manager.

Note: *Auditor competence is addressed in detail in BINDT internal procedure QP11: Assessor competencies.*

ANNEX D – DESIRED PERSONAL BEHAVIOURS

Examples of personal behaviours that are important for personnel involved in certification activities for any type of management system are described as follows:

(a) Ethical, *ie* fair, truthful, sincere, honest and discreet.

(b) Open-minded, *ie* willing to consider alternative ideas or points of view.

(c) Diplomatic, *ie* tactful in dealing with people.

(d) Collaborative, *ie* effectively interacting with others.

(e) Observant, *ie* actively aware of physical surroundings and activities.

(f) Perceptive, *ie* instinctively aware of and able to understand situations.

(g) Versatile, *ie* adjusts readily to different situations.

(h) Tenacious, *ie* persistent and focused on achieving objectives.

(i) Decisive, *ie* reaches timely conclusions based on logical reasoning and analysis.

(j) Self-reliant, *ie* acts and functions independently.

(k) Professional, *ie* exhibiting a courteous, conscientious and generally business-like demeanour in the workplace.

(l) Morally courageous, *ie* willing to act responsibly and ethically even though these actions may not always be popular and may sometimes result in disagreement or confrontation.

(m) Organised, *ie* exhibiting effective time management, prioritisation, planning and efficiency.

Determination of behaviours is situational and weaknesses may only become apparent in a specific context. BINDT shall take appropriate action for any identified weakness that adversely affects the certification activity.

ANNEX E – AUDIT AND VERIFICATION AND CERTIFICATION PROCESSES

(See detailed cross-functional flowcharts).

ANNEX F – CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE AUDIT PROGRAMME, SCOPE OR PLAN

F.1 – General

This Annex includes a list of items that a Certification Body can consider when developing or revising an audit programme, scope or plan.

F.2 – List of items for consideration

The list includes the following:

(a) The scope and complexity of the client's management system.

(b) Products and processes (including services).

(c) Size of the client organisation.

(d) Sites to be audited.

(e) Language of the client organisation and languages spoken and written.

(f) The requirements of sector or regulatory schemes.

(g) The client and its customers' requirements and expectations.

(h) The number and timing of shifts.

(i) Audit time required for each audit activity.

(j) Competence of each member of the Audit Team.

(k) The need to audit temporary sites.

(l) Results of the stage 1 audit or of any other previous audits.

(m) Results of other surveillance activities.

(n) Demonstrated level of management system effectiveness.

(o) Eligibility for sampling.

(p) Customer complaints.

(q) Complaints received by BINDT about the client.

(r) Combined, integrated or joint audits.

(s) Changes to the client's organisation, products, processes or its management system.

(t) Changes to the certification requirements.

(u) Changes to legal requirements.

(v) Changes to accreditation requirements.

(w) Risk and complexity.

(x) Organisational performance data (for example defect levels, key performance indicators (KPI) data, etc).

(y) Interested parties' concerns.

(z) Information gained during previous audits.

ANNEX G – ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION PROCESSES

Assessment and certification process sequence

The following is a sequential list of the stages of assessment and certification (or verification) of management systems and applies equally to assessment of suppliers, subcontractors and clients' management systems.

- Contract review – Certification Body (CB).
- Development of an audit programme (CB).
- Assignment of Lead and Support Auditors (CB):
  - Audit stage 1:
    - Selection and appointment by CB of Lead Auditor (LA).
    - Off-site quality system compliance audit (LA).
    - On-site review of resources and infrastructure (LA).
    - Submit report and recommendations regarding stage 2 (LA).
  - Determination of charged time required for stage 2 (CB).
  - Audit stage 2:
    - Selection and appointment of Audit Team – Certification Body (CB).
    - Preparation and publication of audit plan – Lead Auditor (LA).
    - Travel to site – Audit Team (AT).
    - On-site audit and agreement of improvement actions/timescales (AT).
    - Post-audit reporting (LA).
    - Follow-on review and acceptance of improvement action evidence (LA).
- Certification[*1] (CB):
  - Review and acceptance of reports and recommendations (CB).
  - Submission to and review by an impartial panel.
- Surveillance (CB):
  - Repeat stage 2 (AT).
- Recertification (CB):
  - Repeat stage 1 if scope change is significant (LA).
  - Repeat stage 2 (AT).

*[*1]Not applicable in the case of supplier or subcontractor assessment and approval.*

Supporting documents

PCN24/CP09A: NDT AQB audit checklist.

PCN24/CP09B: NDT AEC oversight/audit checklist.

PCN24/CP08A: NDT ATO audit checklist.

PCN24/CP08E: ATO-RTC audit checklist.

PCN24/CP14A to PCN24/CP14G: Audit record forms.

PCN24/CP08-F01: Training and tutor assessment form.

PCN24/CP08-F02: Tutor assessment form.

PCN2/CP09C: Witnessing invigilation of PCN examinations assessment form.

QP11: Assessor competencies (BINDT internal procedure).

Bibliography

1. ISO 9001: Quality management systems – Requirements.
2. ISO/IEC 17021: Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems.
3. ISO/IEC 17021-3: Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems – Part 3: Competence requirements for auditing and certification of quality management systems.
4. ISO/IEC 17024: Conformity assessment – General requirements for bodies providing assessment and certification of persons.
5. ISO 9712: Non-destructive testing – Qualification and certification of NDT personnel.

5. Change control record

PCN24/CP14 – Document issue and review status		
Document issue for review	**Changes/amendments**	**Current document status**
Issue 01	Complete review, restructuring and rewrite following issue of BS EN ISO 9712:2022. PCN Scheme rebrand as PCN24. Replaces and supersedes CP14 Issue 09, which is withdrawn as of 1 January 2024.	1 July 2023. (For implementation 1 January 2024).
Issue 02	Amended to address finding in internal audit. Clauses 4.1.2, 4.1.3, & 4.9 amended. Annex A clause 2.1.1 amended. All references to Annex C Table 2 removed and replaced with reference to QP11.	1 September 2024.
Issue 03	Removal of Annex C Table C2 from clause 3.4	15 July 2025.

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