



WEST AFRICAN ACCREDITATION SYSTEM (SOAC)

RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR ACCREDITATION COMMITTEES (C09.01)

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1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This document is intended to set the functions and responsibilities of accreditation committees and the terms of their operation. It also discusses the rules applicable to the review of assessment reports.

2 REFERENCES

ISO/IEC 17011, Conformity assessment - Requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies.

3 EFFECTIVE DATE AND REVIEW

This document is applicable from the date specified on the cover page. It will be updated as necessary.

4 SUMMARY OF CHANGES

Version 00: creation.

Version 01: revision and update for the whole document.

5 TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Opinions: In this context, “opinions” includes observations and recommendations.

CAB: Conformity Assessment Body

DG: Director-General

6 REFERENCES

Accreditation Committees operate in compliance with:

- international standards for accreditation bodies;
- applicable regulations;
- the provisions defined by SOAC;
- Guidelines issued by regional and international organizations for accreditation to which SOAC becomes a member.

7 ASSIGNMENT

The Accreditation Committees in their field of competence, are responsible for:

- The review of evaluation reports submitted to them in order to offer an opinion on the granting, maintenance, extension, reduction, suspension or withdrawal of accreditation;
- The proposal for additional requests (completion of additional assessments, documents to be provided, provisions to be implemented, terms of the next on-site assessment, etc.) and verification of information provided by the organizations at the request of SOAC;
- The appraisal of assessment reports prepared by the assessors and experts;
- Providing advice on the additional training needs of the assessment teams;

- The proposal to the Director-General of SOAC, as required, of all provisions to ensure or improve the quality of accreditation services;
- The proposal to the Director-General of SOAC, as required, of all provisions to promote accreditation and SOAC's reputation;
- The realization of any particular task entrusted by SOAC for a fixed term.

8 OPERATION OF COMMITTEES FOR ACCREDITATION

Accreditation Committees convened by the Director-General of SOAC or an authorized representative.

The accreditation committees meet when convened by the Director-General of SOAC or a representative he/she has authorized. The deadlines for holding meetings and notifying the accreditation decision to the CAB are specified in Accreditation Rules C01.

8.1 Appointment of members

The SOAC accreditation committees consist of at least two members, one of whom is the Director-General of SOAC.

If the DG finds herself/ himself in a situation of conflict of interest for a particular CAB, she/he does not participate in the Accreditation Committee in charge of giving an opinion for the accreditation of the latter.

If necessary, SOAC may use specialized experts to sit on an Accreditation Committee.

The other members of the accreditation committees are appointed by the Board of Directors on a proposal from the latter.

The composition of the members of an accreditation committee must ensure that it meets all the following requirements:

- Knowledge of the accreditation process;
- Knowledge of accreditation requirements, including the assessment reference system;
- General knowledge of the specific field of assessment.

Where applicable, the committee shall have knowledge of the relevant regulatory requirements.

Committees are set up if necessary.

8.2 Chair of Accreditation Committees

Accreditation committees are chaired by the Director-General of SOAC in the following cases: initial assessments, reassessments, scope changes, scope reduction, suspension of accreditation (except when initiated by the conformity assessment body (CAB)), withdrawal of accreditation (except when initiated by the CAB).

In other cases, in particular, the consecutive assessments, accreditation may be pronounced by a committee composed of permanent competent staff (s) of SOAC appointed by the Director-General.

In addition, when the Director-General is in a situation of impediment, in particular, a conflict of interest for a given CAB, he does not participate in the accreditation committee in charge of giving an opinion on the accreditation of the CAB.

The role of the Accreditation Committee Chair is to lead the Committee's work, to ensure the synthesis of the different opinions expressed by members or invited experts and to ensure the objectivity and impartiality of the proposals made.

Each Accreditation Committee is chaired by the Director-General of SOAC when he/she is a member of the latter. Otherwise, a chair is designed consensually among the members.

The role of the Chair of the Accreditation Committee is to lead the Committee's work, to ensure the synthesis of the different opinions expressed by the members or invited experts and to ensure the objectivity and impartiality of the proposals made.

8.3 Secretariat of the Accreditation Committees

The secretariat of the accreditation committees is provided by a member of the SOAC permanent staff. As such, a member of the permanent staff may present the summary of the accreditation file to the members of the committee before their deliberation.

8.4 Attendance at Accreditation Committee meetings

May attend meetings of the accreditation committees:

- Members of these committees;
- Members of the SOAC permanent staff;
- Technical experts invited for the agenda.

Only members of the accreditation committees have the right to vote during the various works.

It is the same for consultations on which the accreditation committee is called to express an opinion or observations.

8.5 Training of members of Accreditation Committees

Each new member is informed of:

- the purposes of accreditation;
- the organization and missions of SOAC;
- the role and mode of operation of the Committee;
- SOAC rules and process and the reference system of the accreditation in the field of intervention of the committee.

Committee members are informed of the relevant documents and any revisions by SOAC, which ensures that they can access it.

8.6 Impartiality & quorum

Committee members are required to report the links and interests that could affect their impartiality on issues likely to be discussed in committees.

When one of the members has a link (e.g. same organization, trade agreement, consultant, member of the assessment team) with the organization of which the assessment report is examined, it can assist neither to the debate nor to the formulation of the accreditation decision.

At their meetings, the Accreditation Committee may only legitimately deliberate if the majority of members are present.

8.7 Confidentiality - Compliance with procedures

Committee members are required to respect the confidentiality of information which they have access to.

Each new member undertakes in writing to comply with the rules and provisions formalized in the documents of SOAC brought to its attention and which are applicable within the framework of its mandate on behalf of SOAC.

In particular, each committee member signs the form F10P06 " Engagement of SOAC personnel".

8.8 Organization of the work of the accreditation committees

It is important to note that the Accreditation Committee does not have to perform the accreditation assessment again, which has been conducted by a competent team.

The role of the committee is to verify that the information provided to it is sufficient to decide that the accreditation requirements are met. The information that must be provided by its review is as follows:

- unambiguous identification of the conformity assessment body;
- date (s) and type (s) of assessment (eg initial, reassessment);
- the name of the assessor (s) and, if applicable, the technical expert (s) involved in the assessment;
- unambiguous identification of all assessed sites;
- the scope of accreditation assessed;
- the assessment report (s);
- a statement on the adequacy of the organization and procedures adopted by the conformity assessment body to give confidence in its competence, determined by its satisfaction with the accreditation requirements;
- sufficient information to demonstrate a satisfactory response to all nonconformities;

- where appropriate, any other information that may facilitate the determination of the competence of the conformity assessment body as determined by compliance with the requirements;
- if applicable, a recommendation regarding the accreditation decision for the proposed scope.

The committee will focus in particular on the following elements:

- check whether the information provided makes it possible to close the corrective actions;
- check whether the assessment findings are clearly worded and unambiguous;
- where applicable, evidence that validation of the method, verification of results and proficiency testing have been assessed;
- the competence of the experts or assessors engaged in the work assessed, as applicable.

The positions taken by the committees on various topics are the subject of a summary by the designated representative of SOAC, including the following:

- summary of the results of consultations made by correspondence, if any;
- opinions made in plenary relating to the accreditation of the conformity assessment body;
- opinions concerning the technical matters referred to the Committee; where applicable;
- Observations relating to the competence of technical experts or assessors involved in the work assessed if any;
- recommendations for improvement, if any.

8.9 Consultation Method

SOAC has opted for two distinct modes of consultation:

- Plenary consultation;
- And consultation by correspondence.

In the case of consultation by correspondence :

- Each member forwards its opinion to SOAC by filling in the form F01P08 "Opinions". The representative of SOAC collects all notices and fills in the form F02P08 "Summary of opinions" including the opinion of the accreditation committee if the opinions are converging.
- Otherwise, an additional plenary session (physical or on an electronic platform) is organized. The deliberation is recorded on the form F02P08 "Summary of opinions" that includes the opinion of the accreditation committee.

The Committee may be consulted by correspondence on other issues (experts/assessors applications, adequacy of corrective actions, and other technical issues). In all cases, the permanent structure ensures the impartiality of any position resulting from a consultation by correspondence.

8.10 Role of the SOAC permanent staff

The role of the SOAC permanent staff includes the following:

- establish the agenda in consultation with the Director-General and send the convocation to members when necessary;
- ensure that the requirements of this document are implemented and in particular that there is no conflict of interest when examining a file between the accredited body or applicant for accreditation and the members of the committee consulted;
- check the completeness of the files to be submitted to the accreditation committee members for their analysis;
- ensure compliance with the rules and procedures of SOAC;
- consult the committee members by correspondence, if any, and gather the opinions expressed;
- fill in the summary sheets relating to the files reviewed and have them validated by the Director-General ;
- write the meeting minutes if there is a different one from the form F02P08 "Summary of opinions";
- ensure the harmonization of practices between Accreditation Committees;
- present the conclusions and proposals of the Accreditation Committees for approval to the Director-General of SOAC;
- Inform members of the Accreditation Committees of the work and guidance of regional and international accreditation organizations.

8.11 Opinions and observations

The members freely express their opinions and observations on each case submitted to them.

The opinions and observations of Accreditation Committees are made by consensus, failing that, by a two-thirds majority of the members present or who expressed an opinion or observation in case of remote consultation.

8.12 Monitoring the performance of members of the accreditation Committee

The Director-General in collaboration with the SOAC permanent staff monitors the practices of the Accreditation Committees and, if necessary, initiates actions to upgrade or raise awareness of the defaulting member.

This monitoring covers among others the following points:

- the competence of the members;
- compliance with the response times;
- Attendance at meetings;
- respect for the principle of impartiality;
- Respect for confidentiality.

8.13 Capacity development of accreditation committee members:

It is based on the following elements:

- Appropriation of SOAC documents on the accreditation process, in particular:
 - C09 on rules of procedure for accreditation committees;
 - the procedure P08 Decision-making and accreditation granting.
- After attending the first session of an accreditation committee, the new member is subject to a performance assessment in order to be confirmed. The record is kept.

The performance of the members is monitored every three years on the basis of a programme established by top management. The follow-up is based on the assessment of the same accreditation file by the member to be assessed and one of his peers.

9 TABLE OF MODIFICATIONS

No.	Source	Modification in brief (Relevant changes)
C09.00- 22 January 2019		
Creation		
C09.01- 03 September 2019		
1	Cover sheet	The title of this document has been revised
2	§ 2	References have been revised in line with the wording of the standards
3	§ 3	The title of this section has been revised
4	§ 8	Clarification of the maximum time limits for deliberation on a complete file of a CAB submitted to the Accreditation Committee
5	§ 8.1	This chapter has been revised
6	§ 8.2	This chapter has been revised
7	§ 8.3	Clarification that the secretariat presents the summary of the committee file prior to deliberation
8	§ 8.8	Clarification on the committee's duties during the deliberations
9	§ 8.9	This chapter has been revised
10	§ 8.13	Additional chapter on committee capacity development