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1 Purpose and Scope

This procedure describes the provisions of SOAC relating to the competence of its personnel. It includes permanent personnel, assessors/experts and committee members. Its purpose is to ensure that the personnel has appropriate knowledge and skills relevant to the accreditation schemes and geographic areas covered by SOAC.

2 References

- ISO/IEC 17011, Conformity assessment — Requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies
- ISO 19011, Guidelines for auditing management systems
- C01- Accreditation Rules
- C09-Rules of Procedure for Accreditation Committees
- SOAC rules of procedure

3 Distribution list

All relevant services

4 Effective date and review

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

5 Summary of changes

Version 00: creation.

Version 01: Redesign of the initial procedure to make it a procedure for competence management.

Version 02: revision to some sections and update of the table of modifications.

Version 03: revision and update of certain sections of the chapter on assessors.

Version 04: a review of typos; clarification of sections on the selection and qualification of candidate experts and assessors.

Version 05: review and update of the sections relating to the management of competencies and personnel.

6 Terms and definitions

AFRAC: African Accreditation Cooperation

ILAC: International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation

IAF: International Accreditation Forum

Job description: operation allowing to have, in writing, the tasks and responsibilities specific to the position in addition to the working conditions, skills, etc.

Training requirements: Description of the theory and practical elements that a person must undertake to be considered qualified to act competently in a position.

Team Leader: senior quality assessor or technical assessor who is given the overall responsibility for the management of an assessment.

Assessor: a person appointed by SOAC. He/She is in charge of conducting the assessment of the technical competence of the conformity assessment body (CAB) for a specific area(s) of the desired scope of accreditation.

Quality Assessor: A quality assessor who has the qualification and the mandate to carry out quality assessments. He/she may supervise a trainee quality assessor.

Technical Assessor: A person with experience and competence qualified and mandated by SOAC to carry out assessment missions in one or more technical fields.

Trainee Assessor: Candidate who has the qualification and entrustment to participate in assessments under the responsibility of a team leader.

Technical Expert: A person assigned by SOAC to provide specific knowledge or expertise concerning the scope of accreditation to be assessed. He or she is a team member who provides technical advice. However, he/she is not considered as an assessor unless he has the relevant assessor qualifications and training.

Note: The Technical Expert is **not authorized to assess alone nor to sign the deviation sheets**. He assesses under the supervision of the Team Leader who appraises his competence in the assessment situation using the form "F08P09 - Assessor or expert supervision form (F08P09)".

Observer: The person authorizes to observe the implementation of an assessment. Under no circumstances shall the observer be involved in the assessment.

7 Process description

7.1 Policies

7.1.1 Competence

SOAC is an employer that guarantees equal opportunities and applies the competence criteria in a non-discriminatory manner.

SOAC policy is to have a sufficient number of competent personnel (internal personnel including personnel involved in the management and performance of SOAC assessments, assessors and contract experts, as well as committee members) to carry out its accreditation activities. Before any engagement, SOAC also ensures that all its personnel have the qualifications, appropriate knowledge and skills and training required for accreditation activities so that they can perform their duties effectively.

SOAC training requirements are designed to ensure that the personnel involved in accreditation activities, the accreditation committee, assessors and, where applicable, experts are familiar with accreditation procedures, accreditation criteria and any other requirements, such as regulatory requirements, where applicable. Assessors and experts should have an understanding of assessment methods, including those described in ISO 19011. They shall also have the necessary oral and written communication, such as the ability to take notes, as well as the necessary personal attributes described in ISO 19011.

7.1.2 Requirements

Competence and its proper application are at the heart of accreditation. The development of competence criteria for each position in the process is essential to ensure compliance with service delivery. The competence criteria, once developed, are provided by job descriptions and include knowledge and skills specific to the accreditation schemes. The job descriptions and criteria contained therein are as follows:

- The personnel responsible for human resources develops a job description using the form "**F01P09-Job description**" to list the general knowledge, skills, and abilities required for the job.
- To this list are added the technical skills and knowledge about a scheme and familiarity with the appropriate and specified standards of all personnel including personnel involved in accreditation activities, the accreditation committee as well as the contract assessors and experts.
- Job Description drafts are presented and discussed with the top management and approved by the Director-General.

When a new accreditation scheme is opened, SOAC develops new competence criteria specific for the scheme and ensures of its application.

7.1.2.1 General competency criteria for personnel responsible for the management and performance of SOAC assessments and accreditation schemes

Under the responsibility and coordination of the SOAC Technical Officer, the personnel responsible for the management and performance of SOAC assessments and accreditation schemes ensures that the assessments are conducted following the assessment plans, relevant standards and SOAC requirements. It also ensures the implementation of all the accreditation activities. Once qualified and authorized, the personnel responsible for the management and performance of SOAC assessments and accreditation schemes undertakes some accreditation process activities, including:

- Review of accreditation applications (verification of completeness) ;
- Selection of assessment team members ;
- Review of the quality manual and relevant documents and records ;
- Conducting assessments (if any);
- Review of assessment reports.

The personnel responsible for the management and performance of SOAC assessments and accreditation schemes must demonstrate the following knowledge and skills:

- Understanding of SOAC requirements and procedures based on ISO/IEC 17011;
- Knowledge of assessment principles, practices and techniques;
- Knowledge of general management system principles and tools.
- Knowledge of SOAC rules and processes;
- Knowledge of the scheme requirements, procedures and methods used by the conformity assessment body;
- Knowledge of the requirements of the conformity assessment programs, procedures and methods used by the conformity assessment body;
- Knowledge of risk-based assessment principles;
- Knowledge of general regulatory requirements related to conformity assessment activities; and
- Note-taking and report-writing skills.

7.1.2.2 General competency criteria for accreditation committee members

The members of the accreditation committees are responsible for reviewing assessment reports and making decisions on the granting, maintenance, extension, reduction, suspension or withdrawal of accreditation.

The appointment of SOAC accreditation committee members is specified in regulation C09-Rules of procedure for accreditation committees.

7.2 Hiring procedure to meet the skills needs

7.2.1 Personnel

Step	Task
1.	Prepare the justification for the new position (internal position)
2.	Prepare job descriptions (General Management)
3.	Approval of job descriptions (Board of Directors)
4.	Publication of notices
5.	Applications should be addressed to info@soacwaas.org
6.	SOAC reviews the applications to identify the successful candidates
7.	Interviews of shortlisted candidates, if necessary
8.	Recommendations are provided to the Board for decision
9.	Proceed with the preparation of contracts
10.	Service Contract signed

7.2.2 Technical assessors and experts

7.2.2.1 Selection and training of assessors and experts

7.2.2.1.1 Selection of assessors and experts

The selection of assessors and experts is undertaken by SOAC's Technical Expert and validated by the Director-General. The Director-General may add and enforce in this process any additional competence criteria that he deems necessary for a specific accreditation scheme or a field under consideration.

7.2.2.1.2 The selection process of assessors and experts

Candidates assessors and experts are selected based on a file review, especially after spontaneous application, appointment or call for applications.

All successful applications must be accompanied by the candidate's curriculum vitae. Applications once received are recorded and analyzed by SOAC. It may be necessary when processing the application to seek additional information from the applicant.

After acceptance of their application, SOAC's technical expert contacts the candidates selected for the rest of the qualification procedure.

If necessary, SOAC may request to hear the applicant individually.

7.2.2.1.3 Registration of the candidate in the SOAC assessor/expert database

SOAC technical expert contacts the candidate selected for additional files and if necessary conducts investigations indicated with companies or resource persons indicated in his CV.

The exploitation of additional information received allows SOAC to confirm the applicant's relevant qualifications and experience for registration in one of the following categories:

- Team leader;
- Quality assessor;
- Technical assessor;
- Technical expert;
- The quality or technical trainees.

As required, training and refresher sessions can be organized for SOAC assessors/experts and trainees.

7.2.2.1.4 Information and training of assessors and experts

SOAC informs new assessors and experts about its accreditation system and procedures.

As appropriate, SOAC may train or have the selected candidate trained.

The content of this training course can be adapted according to the candidate's profile.

This training may cover in particular the following topics:

- knowledge of the accreditation reference system;
- the methodology (assessment principles, practices, and techniques) for the assessment of a conformity assessment body;
- conformity assessment scheme requirements, other procedures, and methods used by the conformity assessment body.
- SOAC's accreditation system (including rules, processes and guidance and application documents)

7.3 Commitments

7.3.1 Personnel

Job Descriptions are an appendix to employment contracts. At the time of signing these contracts, the description is reviewed to ensure that the individual clearly understands the scope and limits of his or her responsibilities and authorities.

The personnel signs the document "F10P06-Engagement of stakeholders in SOAC activities" when it took office.

7.3.2 Assessors

Every assessor or expert signs a commitment for compliance with accreditation requirements, especially regarding the impartiality, independence, confidentiality, and objectivity. It is the same for any observer at the SOAC accreditation assessment.

Therefore the following documents are signed:

F10P06- Engagement of stakeholders in SOAC activities

F02P09 -Assessor & experts code of ethics

A contract is signed between SOAC and the assessor/expert or between SOAC and his employer accordingly. The assessor/expert may be a self-employed worker, a sole proprietorship, an employee of the private or public service, etc.

This contract sets out the conditions for the intervention of the assessor/expert and those of compensation assessment services.

7.3.2.1 Specific provisions for quality assessors

7.3.2.1.1 General Criteria

SOAC's quality assessor generally responds preferably to the following criteria:

- Education
 - A-levels +4 or equivalent in management (MSc level) or relevant discipline;
- Training:
 - in audit particularly on ISO 19011 standard;
 - in the latest relevant accreditation reference system ;
 - In risk-based assessment principles.

Knowledge of practices and processes of the conformity assessment body business environment as well as knowledge in metrology and calculation of uncertainties are an asset.

- Professional experience :
 - 4 years, at least two years in the quality-related activities in the 4 years preceding the filing of the application;
 - a master of management systems and their implementation in the conformity assessment body concerned (laboratory, inspection body, certification body, etc.);
 - have experience in auditing the reference system in question.
- Fluency in English or Portuguese is an asset.

For candidate-assessors qualified by an accreditation body signatory to the Mutual Recognition Arrangements (AFRAC, ILAC, and IAF as appropriate) for being accepted as SOAC assessor is to provide proof that their qualification with this body is valid. If the organization is not a signatory to these Arrangements, qualified candidates must provide evidence of having led (Team leader) / or participated (assessor) in at least three accreditation assessments.

7.3.2.1.2 Personal skills for quality assessors

The assessor must demonstrate personal qualities (see ISO 19011), in particular:

- Discernment, openness, maturity, analytical skills, and tenacity;
- Observation, insight, precision, and firmness in his conclusions.

Also, the following are taken into account:

- the ability to synthesize, whether written or oral,
- Accuracy and thoroughness,
- the ability to implement the management techniques required to carry out an assessment, especially when appointed as team leader,
- the ability to question, analyse and be able to write a detailed report.

7.3.2.1.3 Classification of Quality assessors

Based on their qualifications, skills, and experience in assessment, SOAC classifies quality assessors into three categories:

- The quality assessor team leaders or team leader, who are competent for the management of an assessment team ;
- Quality assessors competent for conducting an assessment ;
- Quality assessor trainees working under the responsibility of a team leader.

7.3.2.1.4 The tenure period of a quality assessor candidate

To be qualified, the quality assessor candidate shall :

- participate in **at least 2 accreditation assessments** of SOAC or a signatory organization to the AFRAC, IAF, and ILAC Mutual Recognition Agreements **in a period of 18 months**.
- And have obtained **at least two satisfactory appraisals** from the team leaders during these participations.

The qualification of the quality assessor is pronounced by the Director-General of SOAC, for **two years renewable**, especially after reviewing the records of appraisal forms for the assessments carried out. This qualification authorizes participation as a quality assessor in assessments or to lead a consecutive assessment.

7.3.2.1.5 Advancement to team leader category

The advancement to team leader category is obtained based on the following elements:

- Assessment activities of the quality assessor, including having participated **in at least 1 additional assessment accreditation** of SOAC or a signatory organization to the AFRAC, IAF, and ILAC Mutual Recognition Agreements **in 18 months following his qualification as quality assessor**;
- satisfactory appraisal by the Team Leader for at least one additional assessment to which the candidate has participated;
- participation in quality management training, including refresher training, in the relevant field of accreditation, when relevant.

The qualification of the quality assessor team leader is pronounced by the Director-General of SOAC, for a maximum period of two years renewable, especially after reviewing the records of appraisal forms for the assessments in which he/she took part. This qualification authorizes the leading of all SOAC assessments, particularly initial assessments and reassessments.

7.3.2.2 Specific provisions for technical assessors

7.3.2.2.1 General Criteria

SOAC's technical assessor generally responds preferably to the following criteria:

- Education

- A-levels + 2 minimum or equivalent in a scientific or technical discipline in connection with the accreditation field;
- Training:
 - in audit particularly on ISO 19011 standard;
 - in the latest relevant accreditation reference system ;
 - In risk-based assessment principles.
- Professional experience :
 - 4 years at least in the technical field and the 4 years preceding the filing of the application; However, equivalence may be granted depending on the nature of the work experience, present, and past occupations and training;
 - have appropriate knowledge of international standards and any other requirements in the technical field and be able and be able to exercise consistent judgment;
 - have experience in auditing the relevant standard;
 - a master of management systems and their implementation in the conformity assessment body concerned (laboratory, inspection body, certification body, etc.);
 - have knowledge of metrology and calculation of uncertainties.
 - Knowledge of practices and processes of the conformity assessment body business environment.
- Fluency in English or Portuguese is an asset.

For candidates, technical assessors qualified by an accreditation body signatory to the Mutual Recognition Agreements (AFRAC, ILAC, and IAF as applicable) the procedure to be accepted as SOAC assessor is to provide proof that their qualification with this organization is valid. If the accreditation body is not a signatory to these arrangements, qualified applicants must provide proof of having participated in at least three accreditation assessments.

7.3.2.2.2 Personal skills for technical assessors

The assessor must demonstrate personal qualities (see ISO 19011), in particular:

- Discernment, openness, maturity, analytical skills, and tenacity;
- Observation, insight, precision, and firmness in his conclusions.

Besides, the following are also taken into account:

- the ability to synthesize, whether written or oral;
- Accuracy and thoroughness;
- the ability to implement management techniques required to carry out an assessment, especially when appointed as team leader;
- abilities to question, analyze and be able to write a detailed report.

7.3.2.2.3 Classification of the technical assessors

Based on their qualifications, skills, and experience in the assessment, SOAC classifies quality assessors into three categories:

- the technical assessor & team leader, who is competent for the management of an assessment team ;

- technical assessors competent for conducting an assessment
- trainees technical assessors working under the responsibility of a team leader.

7.3.2.2.4 The tenure period of a technical assessor candidate

To be qualified, the technical assessor candidate shall:

- participate in **at least 3 accreditation assessments** of SOAC or a signatory organization to the AFRAC, IAF, and ILAC Mutual Recognition Agreements **in a period of 18 months**;
- - And have obtained at least three satisfactory appraisals from the team leaders during this participation.

The qualification of the technical assessor is pronounced by the Director-General of SOAC, for **two years renewable**, especially after reviewing the records of appraisal forms for the assessments in which he/she took part.

7.3.2.2.5 Technical assessor team leader

Technical assessor applying for the position of Team Leader shall :

- have participated in **at least 3 additional accreditation assessments** of SOAC or a signatory organization to the AFRAC, IAF, and ILAC Mutual Recognition Agreements **in three years** following its qualification as a technical assessor.
- have participated in refresher training in quality management, especially in the relevant field of accreditation.

The qualification of the technical assessor as Team Leader is pronounced by the Director-General of SOAC, for two years renewable, especially after reviewing appraisals sheets of assessments in which he participated.

7.3.2.3 Specific provisions for technical experts

A technical expert is a person whose expertise is recognized, designated by SOAC, to provide knowledge or specific expertise within the scope of accreditation to assess. It provides technical expertise during assessments.

7.3.2.3.1 General Criteria

The technical expert of SOAC generally responds preferably to the following criteria:

- Education
 - A-levels + 2 minimum or equivalent in a scientific or technical discipline in connection with the accreditation field;
- Training:
 - in auditing particularly on ISO 19011;
 - the latest regarded accreditation reference system ;
 - In risk-based assessment principle is an asset.

Knowledge of practices and processes of the conformity assessment body business environment as well as knowledge in metrology and calculation of uncertainties are an asset.

- Professional experience :
 - 4 years at least in the technical field and the 4 years preceding the filing of the application; However, equivalence may be granted depending on the nature of the work experience, present, and past occupations and training;
 - Have appropriate knowledge of international standards and other requirements in the technical field and be able to exercise judgment result;
 - have experience in auditing the reference system considered is an asset;
 - a master of management systems and their implementation in the conformity assessment body concerned (laboratory, inspection body, certification body, etc.) is an asset.

- Fluency in English or Portuguese is an asset.

7.3.2.3.2 Personal skills for technical experts

The expert must demonstrate personal qualities, in particular:

- discernment, openness, maturity, capacity for analysis;
- observation, insight, precision, and firmness in its conclusions.

Also, the following are taken into account:

- the ability to synthesize, whether written or oral and the ability to write a detailed report;
- Accuracy and thoroughness,
- the ability to question, analyse and be able to write a detailed report.

In each mission, the technical expert is noted, including the team leader. The results of these ratings are taken into account for the maintenance of its acceptance.

The acceptance of the technical expert candidate is decided by the Director-General of SOAC, for two years renewable, especially after considering his application.

7.4 Obligations

7.4.1 Personnel

Full descriptions of the obligations of the personnel are in their individual employment contracts.

7.4.2 Assessor or expert

The assessor or expert is required to comply with SOAC's procedures and operating rules. Each assessment mission, he/she must comply with the provisions set out in the documents made available to him and his/her mission order. He/she must respect the deadlines for the transmission of information relating to the mission and submit his/her report to SOAC, in the prescribed form, and within the prescribed time limits.

During his missions, the assessor or expert must comply with current safety rules that are provided by the organizations assessed.

During his assignments, the assessor or expert must comply with the safety rules in force communicated to him by the bodies assessed.

In any case, shall the assessor or expert propose or agree to provide, the assessed entities with any consultancy or other services directly related to accreditation or conformity assessment.

Before accepting an assignment, the assessor or expert must declare to SOAC, any significant relationship (commercial, family or other) past, present or contemplated between him and his employer and the entity to assess.

The assessor or expert agrees to communicate without delay to SOAC any change in his employment status: address, employment status (self-employed, sole proprietor, an employee in the private or public service, etc.).

7.4.3 Committees members:

- Full descriptions of the obligations of members are in the document-C09 Operating rules of accreditation committees and the SOAC rules of procedure

Full descriptions of the obligations of members can be found in document C09-Rules for the operation of accreditation committees and SOAC rules of procedure.

7.5 Performance Monitoring

7.5.1 Personnel

The personnel is monitored through regular supervision and annual performance appraisals.

When necessary a training programme is established to strengthen the skills of the personnel involved in the accreditation process, whether permanent or not.

7.5.2 Assessor or Expert

The assessor qualification or acceptance as an expert is granted for a renewable period of **two years**.

For each assessment mission, the assessor or expert is subject to several appraisals:

- on the conduct of the assessment by the assessed organization;
- on the conduct of the assessment and partial reports by the team leader;
- on the report provided to SOAC.

These assessments may be made available to the assessor or expert, especially when they bring out dissatisfaction.

Monitoring levels may be modified for individuals based on the risk posed by the critical nature of their responsibilities or depending on the frequency of their involvement or other reasons that may result.

All SOAC assessors and technical experts shall be monitored on-site at least once every **03 years** demonstrating that they possess the appropriate knowledge and skills based on established competence criteria. This evaluation consists of one or more competent individual(s) mandated by SOAC observing the assessor or expert during an assessment and is taken into account, in addition to the assessments made by the assessed organization and the team leader during the conduct of the assessment, the feedback from that persons. If

however there is a poor performance during monitoring then additional monitoring shall be arranged.

7.5.2.1 Team leaders

In addition to appraisals and monitoring, team leaders shall have additional knowledge, skills and abilities to facilitate the efficient and effective conduct of the assessment including:

- Preparing the assessment plan;
- General management system principles and tools;
- Making effective use of resources during the assessment;
- Leading the assessment team;
- Providing direction and guidance to Technical Assessors/Technical Experts trainees;
- Preventing and resolving conflicts, making decisions related to the assessment;
- Ensuring that the assessment team reach conclusions;
- Opening and closing meeting skills;
- Ability to report accurately and concisely both verbally and in writing; and,
- Ability to provide empathic feedback where required.

All these competencies shall be observed and evaluated on-site during the three (3) year monitoring period by SOAC to determine the performance of the Team Leaders, and whether or not their qualifications will be renewed.

7.5.2.2 Renewal of the qualification of assessor or expert

At the end of the two years, the qualification may be renewed for a further two-year period, based on assessments made by SOAC and the organizations assessed on his/her services, and in compliance with the commitments made to SOAC.

Any other written information (e.g. complaint) that the assessor or expert has received in the course of his/her assignments is also taken into account when considering the maintenance of his/her qualification (assessor) or acceptance (expert).

7.5.2.3 Suspension and withdrawal of qualification/acceptance

Any breach of the provisions governing SOAC (code of ethics, lack of skills, etc.) may result in a warning, suspension or withdrawal of all or part of an assessor's qualifications or an expert's acceptance.

The suspension of qualification (assessor) or acceptance (expert) may not exceed **01 year**; beyond that period if the lifting of the suspension of qualification or acceptance is not pronounced, qualification or acceptance is withdrawn.

The suspension or withdrawal may be initiated by the assessor or expert, in this case, it must be made in writing.

A voluntary suspension request by the assessor or the expert on all or part of his qualifications or areas of acceptance must not exceed **01 year** for failure to have these qualifications/acceptances withdrawn.

Before the expiry of the suspension, the assessor or expert may submit a request for lifting the suspension which will be examined by SOAC before a decision is taken.

Except in cases of force majeure, the assessor or expert undertakes to carry out all the assignments he has accepted before submitting the request for suspension or withdrawal of his qualification or acceptance.

7.5.3 Monitoring other people involved in the accreditation process

All personnel involved in the accreditation process shall be subject to skills monitoring. Assessors and the personnel are monitored by the above process. Monitoring the decision-making process involves:

- The DG and/or Technical expert involved in the decision-making process to ensure that the process has been followed, that issues have been addressed and that the resulting documentation contains a complete and objective justification for the decision.
- Internal audits also report on this aspect of the process.

7.6 Personnel records

Key personnel involved in accreditation activities have a file in SOAC database. The Technical and Quality Officer is responsible for maintaining updated records of competence for all personnel involved in the management and performance of accreditation activities.

8 Related Documents

Refer to F02P01-Current QMS Control list.

9 Table of modifications

No.	Source	Modification in brief (Relevant changes)
P09.00- 1st April 2019		
Creation		
P09.01- 22 July 2019		
Redesign of the initial procedure to make it a procedure for competence management		
P09.02- 16 October 2019		
1	§ 1	The last sentence of this section has been cancelled
2	§ 2	The references have been revised in line with the wording of the standards
3	§ 6	The word “abbreviation” (title) has been replaced by “Terms” (title)
4	§ 7	All the sections of this chapter have been technically revised and updated.
5	§ 8	This section has been revised: the words “related forms” (title) have been replaced by “related documents” (title)
P09.03- 22 January 2020		
1	§ 7.3.2 and § 7.5.2.1	Some sections of these chapters on assessors/experts have been technically revised and updated.
P09.04- 15 February 2020		
1	§ 6	Clarification on the role of a technical expert during the assessment
2	§ 7.2.2	Clarification of the selection process for assessors and experts
3	§ 7.3	Simplification of the basic conditions for the selection of candidate-assessors or experts.
P09.05- 28 April 2020		
1	§ 7.1.1	This section has been technically reviewed and updated of

		the section on competencies
2	§ 7.1.2.1	Creation of this section to clarify the competencies of personnel responsible for managing SOAC assessments and accreditation schemes.
3	§ 7.1.2.2	Creation of this section to make clear the competencies of accreditation committee members
4	§ 7.3.2	Revision and technical update of the provisions regarding the knowledge and skills of the assessment team
5	§ 7.5.2	Revision and technical update of the section for clarification of on-site assessments
6	§ 7.5.2.1	Creation of this section to highlight the provisions of the additional specific competences
7	§ 7.6	Creation of this section for taking into account the requirement for personnel records