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1 Purpose and scope

The purpose of this procedure is to define the requirements for conducting remote assessments and applies to all SOAC accreditation schemes.

Unforeseen circumstances may make it difficult or impossible to conduct on-site assessments. In such circumstances, assessments can be conducted remotely without compromising the integrity of the SOAC accreditation.

A remote assessment applies in particular in the case where:
- extraordinary events or circumstances occur;
- travel to a CAB or a specific location is not permitted or possible (i.e. travel restrictions, safety reasons, etc.).

It covers the scopes:
- Consecutive assessment or reassessment;
- Extensions in an existing scope;
- Extensions not requiring a separate set of competencies;
- Extensions to non-critical scope;
- Follow-up assessments where only the management system needs to be verified;
- Extraordinary assessment not requiring verification of new technical competence.

In other cases, the choice is made according to the particular situation of the CAB and may involve specific arrangements such as:
- Remote assessment coupled with on-site assessment;
- On-site visit by experts with supervision by a team leader / remote assessor;
- The remote assessment followed by a consecutive assessment (less than 12 months);
- Etc.

2 References

- ISO/IEC 17011, Conformity assessment — Requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies
- IAF ID 12: Principles on Remote Assessment
- IAF ID 3: Management of extraordinary events or circumstances affecting ABs, CABs
- IAF MD 4: IAF Mandatory Document for the Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for Auditing/Assessment Purposes
- C01-Accreditation rules
- C04-Confidentiality-Impartiality
- C07-Recusals, complaints and appeals
- P06-Accreditation process management
- P07-Assessment process procedure
- G01P07- Guide for conducting Assessments

3 Distribution list
All services concerned.

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: Technical revision and update of some sections.

6   Terms and definitions

- **SOAC-WAAS:** West African Accreditation System
- **CAB:** Conformity assessment body accredited or applicant for accreditation
- **Assessment technique**: According to ISO/IEC 17011, method used by an accreditation body to perform an assessment.
- **Remote assessment:** According to ISO/IEC 17011, assessment of the physical location or virtual site of a conformity assessment body, using electronic means.
- **A virtual site**: According to ISO/IEC 17011, a virtual site is an online environment allowing persons to execute processes, e.g. in a cloud environment.
- **Extraordinary event or circumstance:** According to IAF ID 3, a circumstance beyond the control of the organization, commonly referred to as "Force Majeure" or "act of God". Examples are war, strike, riot, political instability, geopolitical tension, terrorism, crime, pandemic, flooding, earthquake, malicious computer hacking, other natural or man-made disasters.

7   Process description

7.1   Objective and Scope

The assessment process is essential to ensure the integrity of the accreditation, which is usually achieved through an on-site assessment activity of the accredited CAB. However, ISO/IEC 17011:2017 (§7.9.3) recommends that accreditation bodies replace the on-site assessment with a remote assessment when the on-site assessment is not applicable due to special circumstances that the accreditation body deems relevant.

SOAC has the technical competences and capabilities to perform a remote assessment following general accreditation requirements.

7.2   Preparing for the evaluation

Refer to Procedure P06 and Guide G01P07

7.3   Review of documented information

Refer to Procedure P06 and Guide G01P07

7.4   Remote assessment

7.4.1   Criteria for accepting a remote assessment
The use of remote assessments may be initiated upon the decision of SOAC.

They are carried out under a mutual agreement (SOAC, CAB).

A remote assessment can also be carried out upon request by the CAB.

Requests for remote assessments will be considered on a case-by-case basis by SOAC.

7.4.2 Prerequisites for performing a remote assessment

As with on-site assessments, acceptance by the CAB of the confidentiality policy applied by SOAC is a prerequisite. It ensures the confidentiality of data and information exchanged during assessments (on-site and remotely).

The following requirements must be met, as applicable, before performing the remote assessments:

- Preferably an appropriate private meeting room where the assessment team can be present;
- When the assessors can't meet in one location, they must be able to stay in regular contact with the Team Leader and an internal person designated by SOAC;
- Internet access through a fast, secure and reliable connection by all team members;
- Appropriate video conferencing, teleconferencing or communication software (E.g. Zoom, WhatsApp group calls, webcams, email, etc.);
- Where necessary, a separate computer to manage the communication channel, especially when assessors use their laptops to access records and fill in SOAC assessment forms;
- Assessment team members must have access to CAB resource personnel at all times and the rest of the personnel to be available, whenever possible, for interviews.

7.4.3 Document review

The document review is done according to the procedure P06-Accreditation process management and the guide G01P07-Guide for conducting assessments. It requires the availability by the CAB of documents necessary to support or substantiate certain arguments. These include (but are not limited to) the following documents:

- The internal audit schedule;
- The latest Internal Audit Report/s;
- The names of all internal auditors, along with their competency records;
- A copy of the Management Review minutes or records;
- A list of all records of appeals and complaints received and how these have been addressed since the CAB's last assessment.
- A list of non-conformities and corrective actions are taken;
- Identification of all equipment used to monitor the environment during the activity, along with the relevant calibration certificate and records, as appropriate;
- For **all Testing, Calibration and Medical Laboratories**, the CAB should provide:
    - A copy of the Programme of participation in ILCs (F11P07);
    - A copy of the PT, ILC or other approved equivalent reports since the last Assessment;
    - Evidence of corrective action taken for PT/ILC deviations or unsatisfactory results;
    - A copy of the list of management of measurement standards and reference

materials (F12P07);

- o Evidence of estimated measurement uncertainty of the different test results;
- o Samples or a list, as applicable to request forms, test reports and or certificates issued by the CAB since the last assessment.

The assessor(s) would then select, from the samples or list submitted, some application forms, test reports and/or certificates issued by the CAB from which to conduct vertical assessments.

The CAB would be notified of the selected certificates and/or reports and records (and client files where applicable) that they are required to submit, for the purposes conducting of the vertical assessment:

- Copies of the reports or certificates, in the same format as that sent to their client, that is, so that a full evaluation of all certificate/report including the use of the SOAC accreditation symbol can be evaluated;
- Copy of the raw data generated to perform the activity;
- Copy of the procedure, method, work instruction used to perform the activity;
- Copies of personnel records of all staff involved in the preparation of the certificate/report, these records must include:

  a) a CV, if applicable;
  b) a copy of their Job description;
  c) a copy of the competence evaluation records;
  d) a copy of the authorization record for the individual; and
  e) a copy of training certificates/diplomas.

- Traceability: copies of the calibration certificates/records for all equipment used to perform the test/calibration/ inspection, etc.

- Identification of all equipment used to monitor the environment during the activity, along with the relevant calibration certificate/records (where applicable).

The assessment team may request that activity, or part of it, be recorded on video and that the clip is shared with the team.

7.4.4 Description of the remote assessment technique

a) Planning the remote assessment
The preparatory phase of the remote assessment is marked by interactions between the team leader or SOAC and the CAB to ensure that the optimal conditions for an optimal and successful assessment are met.

This phase involves defining the practical arrangement for conducting the assessment (verification of the technology, determination of favourable periods, selection of key persons, etc.). It makes it possible to readjust the assessment plan according to the

constraints and circumstances of the CAB.

b) Opening meeting

The opening meeting is facilitated by an appropriate electronic communication channel (e.g. Zoom, GoToMeeting, etc.).

The assessment team must fill in SOAC form F09P07-Attendance sheet along with the CAB and submit it to the assessment team electronically. Signatures on the attendance sheet are replaced by initials.

The opening meeting is conducted following G01P07.

c) Assessment

The assessment team members will review the records submitted and fill in the applicable SOAC assessment forms.

The assessment team shall interview the CAB personnel as required to search for additional evidence, clarifications and/or confirmations, using the established communication channel or any other channel.

Where non-conformities are identified, they must be discussed and verified with the CAB to ensure the accuracy of the information.

All findings must be submitted to the Team Leader for review, who will then ask team members to provide clarification.

d) Closing meeting

The closing meeting will take place at the end of the remote assessment and will be chaired by SOAC Team Leader.

The Team Leader will communicate to the CAB, the assessment team's findings. The recommendation may indicate whether or not an on-site visit will be needed. The CAB will have the opportunity to request clarification on any findings raised.

The assessment team records non-conformities on deviation sheets which are confirmed during the meeting by the CAB.

The CAB's return for the proposal of corrective actions must be made within 7 days.

e) Assessment reports

The assessment reports are published according to the provisions defined in documents P06-Accreditation process management and G01P07-Guide for conducting assessments.

The team leader must indicate in the form "F16P07-Assessment feedback" to what extent

the technology was used to carry out the assessment activity and its effectiveness in achieving the objectives of the assessment.

8   Related documents

Refer to F02P01-Current QMS Control list

9   Table of modifications

No.	Source	Modification in brief (Relevant changes)
P18.00- 24 March 2020		
Creation		
P18.01- 18 June 2020		
1	§ 1	This section has been revised with the inclusion of new cases where remote assessment applies
2	§ 2	Incorporation of new references relating to IAF documents
3	§ 6	Technical revision with the addition of new definitions and their sources in the section to deal with "extraordinary events or circumstances"
4	§ 7.1	Revision and update of the provisions
5	§ 7.4.1	Update of provisions
6	§ 7.4.2	Grammatical update
7	§ 7.4.3	Update of provisions
8	§ 7.4.4	Technical revision and update of provisions