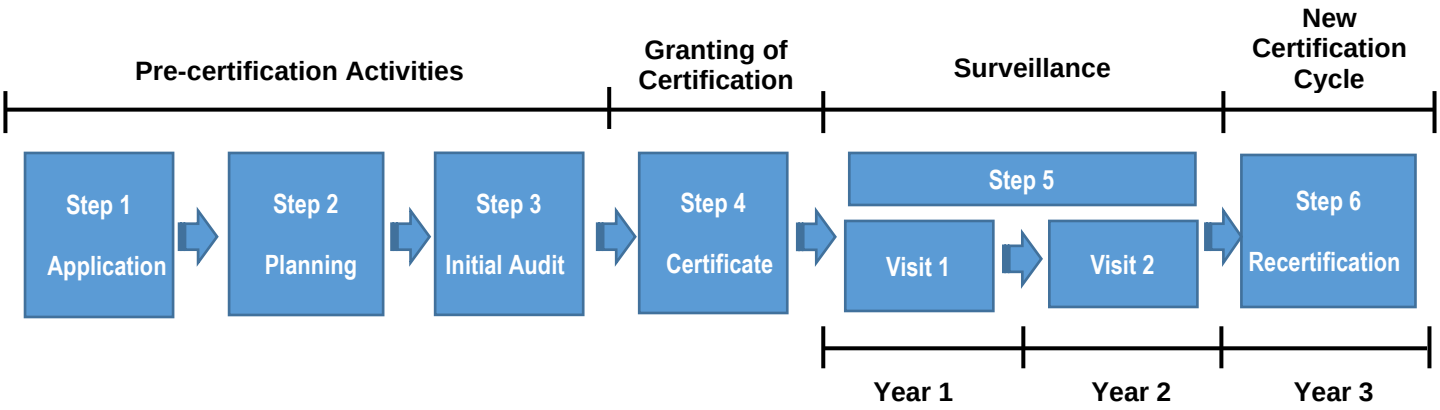
General Description of the Process for Certification of Management Systems

Certification of a management system based on the ISO 9001, ISO 14001, ISO22000 or ISO 45001 standard means that an organization has been audited and has met the requirements of the relevant standard. This guidance document explains the key stages of the Zambia Bureau of Standards (ZABS) process for audit and certification to ISO 9001, ISO 14001, ISO22000 or ISO 45001.



STEP 1 APPLICATION AND AGREEING THE CONTRACT

Preliminary Enquiry. When an enquiry is received from a prospective client, our sales staff provides an outline of certification process and discusses your certification requirements. We are happy to arrange a visit discuss your requirements. The client is provided with a Request for Quotation (RFQ) form is provided to the client.

Request for Quotation. The RFQ form is designed to obtain complete information on the client's certification requirements, and is the basis for the certification proposal. The RFQ should be submitted to the relevant certification office.

Certification Proposal and Contract. Upon receipt of the RFQ, we prepare a no obligation detailed quotation or certification proposal covering the client's requirements. The client makes an 'Application' by signing the quotation/proposal and returning it to the relevant ZABS certification office.

Once the client's signed certification quotation/proposal is also signed by a ZABS representative, this constitutes the entire 'contract' for certification services. The contract must be signed before any work can commence. The proposal is valid for 90 days. Once the 90 days end, we will review the contract again and issue a new proposal if necessary.

STEP 2 PLANNING THE AUDIT

Agreeing the Audit Dates. Following the signing of the contract and payment of the initial audit fees, the ZABS and the client mutually agree the audit dates. The initial audit is a two stage audit (see Stage 3 below); the Stage 1 audit date is set, while the stage 2 audit date is set tentatively, depending on the outcome of the Stage 1 audit.

Audit Team Selection. The audit team is selected taking into account the nature of the client's business. The roles of the audit personnel involved is as follows:

The Team Leader is responsible for the whole audit process and the production of the audit plan. They are responsible for managing the members of the team, including allocating activities to the team members to ensure that the audit plan can be completed, the compilation of the audit report and audit findings and making the recommendations in relation to your certification. The Team Leader will ask that you appoint personnel from your organization who will act as guides for the audit team during each of the visits and who will assist the audit team.

The Team Members undertake the audit process under the direction of the Team Leader. They undertake the detailed audit work in accordance with the audit plan, producing a report of the work they have undertaken, including any findings, for inclusion within the overall audit report.

A Technical Expert will be used on an audit where specialist knowledge is required to supplement that of the audit team. Whilst they will act as advisors to the assessment team they will not undertake any audit work.

An Auditor in Training may be included within the audit team, and performs the duties of either a team member or team leader under the direction of an experienced auditor.

An Observer may, from time to time, accompany the audit Team. An observer is not a part of the audit team and will not influence or interfere with the conduct of the audit. An observer can be from ZABS, an accreditation body or regulator, or from another interested party who wishes to witness the audit.

Our planning office will inform you of the makeup of any audit team in advance of the visit, including where applicable any technical experts, and if the team will be accompanied by any observers.

Audit Plan. Prior to the initial audit, an audit plan will be prepared. However, the Stage 1 audit does not require a formal audit plan but the Team Leader may indicate areas to be covered. In contrast to the Stage 1 audit, for the Stage 2 audit the client will provided with a detailed audit plan at least two weeks in advance of the audit.

The Team Leader prepares for the audit plan based on the information provided by the client in the application stage, and discusses and agrees the further procedures, such as logistics, safety requirements etc., with the organization to be audited.

The audit plan will at least include or refer to the following:

- the audit objectives;
- the audit criteria;
- the audit scope, including identification of the organizational and functional units or processes to be audited;
- the dates and sites where the on-site audit activities will be conducted, including visits to temporary sites and remote auditing activities, where appropriate;
- the expected duration of on-site audit activities;
- the roles and responsibilities of the audit team members and accompanying persons, such as observers or interpreters.

STEP 3 INITIAL AUDIT

Visit Structure

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

A Stage 1 audit is conducted to evaluate the state of preparedness of the client for certification, as well as a confirmation of the contractual arrangements, including definition of certification scope, and identifying the planning, logistics, sampling etc. that will be used during the Stage 2 visit.

A Stage 2 visit consists of an assessment of the implementation of the management system to confirm conformity with certification requirements such as the audit standard(s) and certification scope

Interval between Stage1 and Stage 2 audits

We recommend that the interval between Stage 1 and Stage 2 visits is a minimum of 4 weeks and but shall not exceed 6 months.

General Description of the Process for Certification of Management Systems

In planning the Stage 2 audit, we will consider your needs to resolve, before the Stage 2 visit, any areas of concern that may be identified during the Stage 1 audit. An interval less than 4 weeks may not provide you with adequate time to address any concerns from the Stage 1 audit.

Should this interval be longer than 6 months, then the Stage 1 audit will be repeated or at a minimum we may need to revisit some of the areas audited at the Stage 1 visit.

Stage 1 Audit – The Readiness Review

The Stage 1 audit will include:

- review the client's management system documented information;
- evaluate the client's site-specific conditions and to undertake discussions with the client's personnel to determine the preparedness for stage 2;
- 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;
- obtain necessary information regarding the scope of the management system, including:
    - the client's site(s);
    - processes and equipment used;
    - levels of controls established (particularly in case of multisite clients);
    - applicable statutory and regulatory requirements;
- review the allocation of resources for stage 2 and agree the details of stage 2 with the client;
- provide a focus for planning stage 2 by gaining a sufficient understanding of the client's
- management system and site operations in the context of the management system standard or other normative document;
- evaluate if the internal audits and management reviews are being planned and performed, and that the level of implementation of the management system substantiates that the client is ready for stage 2.

You will receive a stage 1 audit report outlining any shortfalls to enable immediate action prior to moving forward through the process. An itinerary for the stage 2 audit will also be forwarded to you at this stage.

Stage 2 Audit – The Certification Audit

This stage is usually conducted several weeks after the stage 1 audit to ensure that you have time to implement any of our findings.

The Stage 2 audit determines conformity to your documented system and the requirements of the audit standard(s). In order to fully audit the agreed scope, it is necessary that the products and/or services included within the certification scope are in manufacture/process at the time of the audit. Should any product and/or service not be available for review during the audit, then these items will not be included in the scope of the certificate.

All audit conclusions are based on sampling of audit evidence to demonstrate effective implementation regarding requirements of the standard(s), in particular with respect to the identification of key performance or significant aspects, processes, objectives and operation of the management system.

On conclusion of the audit the auditor will make a recommendation dependent on findings. This recommendation will reflect the level of findings identified during the audit.

Reporting

The Team Leader will issue an assessment report to the client within 10 working days from the last day of the certification assessment. If corrective action plan(s)/corrective action(s) from the stage 2 audit certification are not yet available, this will be a preliminary report based on the management system status at the end of audit.

The report is sufficiently detailed to clearly show the level of conformity of your management system with the scheme criteria. The report will contain a record of assessment findings, progress against the assessment plan, positive comments, and points of clarification or interpretation. We record non-conformities in a Nonconformity Report (NCR) form, and identify them as major nonconformity or minor nonconformity. These nonconformities are defined below.

Follow-up and Close Out of NCs

Major non-conformity is identified and is caused through a significant breakdown of system control, the certification decision will be deferred until corrective action has been taken. Major NC is also a circumstance in which direct impact on the product or service without appropriate action by the organization is observed during the assessment or when legality and/ or certification integrity is at stake.

A major nonconformity negatively affects the capability of the management system to achieve product or service conformity. In other words, the absence of, or the failure to implement and maintain, one or more management system elements, or a situation which would, on the basis of the available objective evidence, raise significant doubt of the management to achieve:

- the management system requirements
- compliance with the applicable regulatory and statutory requirements
- achieving the management system objectives and planned arrangements

A major nonconformity can also be raised (on management responsibility and resource allocation) in the event of non-completion of the approved action plan of a minor nonconformity at the next scheduled on-site assessment.

When a major nonconformity is issued during an assessment, the organization must provide ZABS with objective evidence of an investigation into causative factors, and the proposed corrective action plan (CAP). This shall be provided within 14 days after the assessment. The corrective action shall be implemented by the organization within 60 days after the assessment and evidence of this implementation shall be send to the assessor (team leader).

Our assessor will plan a follow-up assessment within 60 days after the assessment, to review the corrective action and related objective evidence of implementation, challenge it if necessary and determine its effectiveness and approve and corrective action (CA).

The objective of the follow up assessment is to review the effectiveness of the correction and corrective action taken after the raising of a Major Nonconformity.

This follow-up includes the review of the documented root cause analysis by the company, actions taken and documented evaluation by the company for the effective close out of the non-conformity.

In cases where documentary evidence is sufficient to close out the major nonconformity, the assessor may decide to perform a desk review.

The completion of corrective actions might take more time depending on the potential severity of the major nonconformity and the amount of work necessary to eliminate the causative factors. In such cases the CAP shall include any temporary measures or controls necessary to mitigate the risk until the permanent corrective action is implemented.

In such cases, the major nonconformity can be downgraded by the assessor to a minor nonconformity.

A follow-up assessment shall be conducted to verify the permanent corrective action and to close the nonconformity.

Downgrading of a major nonconformity is not possible if the major is defined based on the event of non-completion of the approved action plan of a minor nonconformity.

Recommendation for certification is not possible when major nonconformities are not closed or downgraded to minors.

Minor Nonconformity*:* nonconformity that does not affect the capability of the management system to achieve the system objectives and product/service conformity. In other words: a finding indicative of a weakness in the implemented and maintained system, which has not significantly impacted on the capability of the management system or put at risk the product/service, but needs to be addressed to assure the future capability of the system.

Minor non-conformity will not prevent recommendation for certification but may delay it, as planned action must be submitted to and reviewed by ZABS prior to the certification decision taking place. Follow up of minor non-conformities is usually by means of evaluation of documented evidence. Verification and closure of minor non-conformity will take place at the next routine surveillance visit.

STEP 4 GRANTING OF CERTIFICATION

Certificates are awarded to the client when all assessment activities have been satisfactorily completed, the assessment Team Leader has recommended that certification is granted, any non-conformities raised during certification assessment are cleared and ZABS Certification has formally reviewed the assessment report and reached a certification decision in accordance with its procedures.

Certificates are maintained and held in force subject to satisfactory completion of the requirements for maintenance of certification (see Step 5 Surveillance) but remain the property of ZABS. Normally the certificates are valid for 3 years

Details of certified clients are listed on the website at: www.zabs.org.zm

STEP 5 SURVEILLANCE

Once issued certificates are only valid subject to satisfactory maintenance of your system and product conformity. Ongoing assessments (surveillance visits) are conducted annually to verify continued implementation of your management system in accordance with “planned arrangements” and the requirements within the scheme criteria. The first surveillance must be conducted within 9 months of the end of the certificate issuance date but not more than 12 months of the Stage 2/recertification audit. During surveillance, certain mandatory elements will be reviewed at every visit together with other pre-selected processes. We will work with you to identify areas that are not conforming to support opportunities for improvement. An assessment plan will be forwarded in advance of the agreed assessment date.

STEP 6 RECERTIFICATION

ZABS operates a system of 3-year cycle of certification. As part of this programme, it is not necessary to conduct a complete assessment. Rather, we conduct a recertification visit which is more in-depth than surveillance visits but will ensure that we review all aspects of your system. The recertification assessment must be carried out and the major non-conformities closed prior to the expiry of your current certificate. The recertification assessment is the first visit of your new certification cycle.