

# GUIDE FOR MANAGEMENT SYSTEM CERTIFICATION



Interface NRM Limited  
e-Innovation Centre  
University of Wolverhampton  
Priorslee  
Telford  
Shropshire  
TF2 9FT

Phone: 01952 288325  
[info@interface-nrm.co.uk](mailto:info@interface-nrm.co.uk)

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## INTRODUCTION

Interface NRM Limited (Interface) provides internationally recognised third party certification for ISO 9001:2008 and 14001:2004 management systems

Interface operates in accordance with the International Standard "ISO/IEC 17021:2011 Conformity Assessment – Requirements for Bodies Providing Audit and Certification of Management Systems" and ISO 19011:2011 Guidelines for auditing management systems.

Interface is the leading Certification Body in the West Midlands and operates nationwide.

Throughout this guide Interface's client is referred to as the "Organisation."

## CERTIFICATION

Certification to these management standards provides market confidence that the organisation is capable of systematically meeting the requirements set out in the standard, adds profitability to that organisation through efficient processes, legal and product conformity and high levels of customer satisfaction.

ISO 17021 requires Certification Bodies (CBs) to conduct a three year cycle of audits:

- Year 1 – Initial Certification.
- Year 2 & 3 – Surveillance Audit(s).

In the 4<sup>th</sup> year Interface is required to conduct a recertification audit to ensure that the organisation continues to fulfil the requirements.

The Initial Certification audit is in two stages, in summary:

- Stage 1 – A documentation review and assessment as to the readiness of the organisation to progress onto a full system audit.
- Stage 2 – A full system audit, reviewing the processes and controls in place.

Please note that all audits are performed on the basis of limited sampling. If discrepancies are not discovered, it is not guaranteed that they do not exist.

## **CERTIFICATION APPLICATION**

### **Application for Certification**

The first step to certification requires the organisation to complete an application form. This information enables Interface to understand the nature of the organisation's business, the activities that support it and to establish a match with Interface's expertise.

### **Quotation and Contract**

When Interface receives a completed application, it sends a quotation with a contract to the organisation. If the organisation wishes to proceed, receipt of the signed contract starts the process.

## **INITIAL AUDIT AND CERTIFICATION**

### **Stage 1 Audit**

The purpose of stage 1 is to assess the organisation's documented policies and procedures against the requirements of the standard(s), and to identify and report any shortfalls prior to the stage 2 audit.

The stage 1 audit will typically consist of:

- An audit of the management system documentation to ensure that all the applicable requirements have been addressed.
- Confirmation that all legal/technical requirements are identified and documented.
- A site walk around and planning for the stage 2 audit.
- An evaluation of the location, processes and site conditions.
- Confirmation that all relevant personnel are prepared for the stage 2 audit.

We will also audit, wherever possible, and where sufficient records are available:

- Internal audit processes
- Management review
- Senior management commitment
- Complaints
- Purchasing
- Objectives and targets
- Any off site activities if feasible and time allows

To minimise disturbance to the organisation, generally the document review will be conducted at our offices, followed by a visit to the organisations premises being audited, this enables the organisation to establish a rapport with the auditor and may help reduce the incidence of nonconformances at the next stage.

We will compile a detailed report and a planned audit schedule for stage 2. These will be discussed with the organisation and provided for information. If deemed appropriate, a stage 2 audit date will be arranged at the closing meeting.

Providing sufficient evidence is available at stage 1, it will not be necessary to re-audit these activities again during stage 2 audit.

## Stage 2 Audit

All stage 2 Audits are conducted at the organisations site(s) which are within the requested scope of Certification.

We will audit the organisation according to the management system and the requirements of each applicable standard by gathering objective evidence to demonstrate compliance.

Audit structure and activities will typically consist of:

- An opening meeting
- Staff interviews
- Examination of records
- Observations of processes
- Evaluation of audit results
- A closing meeting

Where possible a process-based approach is employed.

The audit, will be conducted according to an audit plan. Sufficient samples are taken to ensure all requirements are addressed. This includes performance monitoring, measuring, reporting and reviewing against key performance objectives and targets (consistent with the expectations in the applicable standard).

Findings of the audit will be documented in an audit report. If there are any areas of concern to the auditors, one or several of the following findings may be raised:

- A **major nonconformity** is when the organisation has failed to meet a requirement of the standard being audited.
  - Any major nonconformity must be rectified and reviewed before certification can be recommended by the Lead Auditor.
- A **minor nonconformity** is when the organisation has failed to meet its own specified arrangements or other requirements to which the organisation subscribes.
  - Organisations are required to inform the Lead Auditor of its planned corrective action before certification can be recommended.
- **Observations for improvement.** These relate to existing conditions which, according to the auditor, may warrant clarification or investigation so as to improve the overall status and effectiveness of the management system.
  - They do not affect the recommendation for certification.

At the close of the audit, the Lead Auditor will notify the organisation of their recommendation on certification.

## **Certification**

Following the stage 2 audit, the auditor's report is reviewed at our office by the Certification Manager. This includes the corrective actions that the organisation has implemented to resolve any nonconformity raised. On satisfactory completion of these activities a certificate will be issued.

## **MONITORING AND MAINTAINING CERTIFICATION**

### **Surveillance and Recertification**

Interface's certification is valid for a three-year period and is monitored at regular intervals.

During this time we are required to conduct further audits of the organisation at least once each year (the first of which is typically 10 months after the initial registration). All visits to the organisation are by appointment, thereby ensuring availability of relevant personnel.

In order to continue the certification at the end of the initial three year period, we are required to perform a full re-audit of the organisation for recertification. This is similar in style to the stage 2 audit.

Fees for the recertification audit will be kept to a minimum and discussed with the organisation in advance, normally six months prior to recertification. The aim is to inform the organisation in advance if extra time is needed and to help them budget accordingly.

Following successful completion of the recertification audit, we will issue a new certificate.

## **SPECIAL AUDITS**

### **Extension to the Scope of Certification**

Extensions to the certified organisations scope are possible. Audits for this extension can be carried out with minimum disruption to the organisation, often by allocating extra time around the time (but not instead of) of a routine surveillance visit.

### **Short Notice Audits**

It may be necessary for Interface to conduct audits of certified organisations at short notice to investigate complaints, or in response to changes, or as follow up on suspended organisations.

## **SUSPENDING, WITHDRAWING OR REDUCING THE SCOPE OF CERTIFICATION**

### **Suspending Certification**

Interface will review and may suspend certification in cases when, for example:

- The organisations management system has persistently or seriously failed to meet certification requirements.
- The organisation does not allow surveillance or recertification audits to be conducted at the required frequencies.
- The organisation has voluntarily requested a suspension.

Under suspension the organisation's certification is temporarily invalid. Promotion of Interface's certification will not be allowed.

Failure to resolve the issues that have resulted in suspension in a time established by Interface will result in the withdrawal of certification.

### **Reduction to Certified Scope**

Interface will review and may reduce the organisations certified scope to exclude parts not meeting the requirements, when the organisation has persistently or seriously failed to meet the certification requirements for those parts of the scope of certification.

### **Withdrawal of Certification**

Interface shall review and may withdrawal certification when specified arrangements with Interface to resolve suspension are not resolved. The organisation will not be able to continue to promote itself as certified by Interface.

## **APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS**

### **Appeals**

Organisations have the right to appeal the decision of an Auditor, information on and the procedure can be found on Interface's website or upon request.

### **Complaints**

Interface takes any complaint against its services very seriously, information on and the procedure can be found on Interface's website or upon request.

## **CERTIFICATION INFORMATION**

### **Certification Status**

Interface makes available information on the status and validity of a certified organisation to interested parties when requested. This includes suspension, withdrawal or reduced scope. In exceptional cases, access to certain information can be limited on the request of the organisation.

## **MARKS OF CERTIFICATION**

### **Certificate**

Upon certification, the organisation will be issued with a hard copy certificate for display in a suitable position and an electronic copy for its website, marketing material or dispatching electronically as part of PPQ's etc.

### **Logos**

Logos can be used on the organisations website and any promotional or advertising literature. The organisation also has the right to use certification marks on letterheads and brochures, etc. for related publicity activity.

### **Confidentiality**

Any organisation's information received by Interface or its agents, during the course of certification, will be treated in strict confidence and will not be divulged to a third party without prior written consent of the organisation, except as required by the laws of the land or other relevant accreditation bodies.