

Revisions

Revision	Changes	Date
1	Added clarifications about treatment and classification of NC1, NC2 and Opportunities of improvement	07.02.2022

1. SCOPE OF APPLICATION

This instruction defines common principles, rules and workflow of the audit by third party management system by the Certification Body including the audit team responsibilities connected with the execution of the audit stages.

2. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

The terms and definitions used in the procedure are according:

- UNI EN ISO / IEC 17021-1:2015;
- ISO/IEC 17000:2020,

3. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The main activities and their consistency in the audit certification of management systems are described in sequence in this instruction.

The opening meeting of the audit is lead by the lead auditor and it's conducted jointly with the top management of the client company and, if it's possible, with the managers or workers that will be audited.

The participants are recorded in the software which generate F 9.0-01.1 participants list.

The opening meeting provides a brief explanation of the activities that will be undertaken during the audit and include the following elements:

- presentation of participants, including a description of their roles;
- confirmation of the certification scope;
- confirmation of the audit plan (including the type and scope of the audit objectives and criteria), any amendments and other arrangements with the client, the date and time of the closing meeting, interim meetings between the audit team and management of the organization;
- confirmation of official channels for the exchange of information between the audit team and management of the audited organization;
- confirmation that the resources and the necessary conditions are available;
- confirmation of professional secrecy;
- confirmation of appropriate safety procedures, emergency and security audit team;
- confirmation of the role and identity of all monitoring auditor and trainee auditors;
- reporting methods, including audit findings;
- information about the conditions under which the audit may be prematurely terminated;
- confirmation that the audit team represents the certification body and it's responsible of the audit including the activities and the documentation of the audit;
- confirm the status of the findings from the previous review, if applicable;
- methods and procedures that will be used to perform an audit of a sample;
- confirmation of the language that will be used during the audit;

- confirmation that the client will be informed about the progress of the audit and the problems encountered;
- opportunity for the client to ask question.

The opening meeting ends with a short tour of the company, in order audit team to acquire an overview of the organization, location, key processes management system, infrastructure, work environment and others.

The lead auditor ensures that observers do not influence or interfere in the audit process or the results of the audit and each auditor must be accompanied by a guide, unless otherwise agreed with the client. The audit team must ensure that guides do not influence or interfere in the audit process or the results of the audit.

The audit team members periodically exchange information with each other and the lead auditor periodically informs the customer about the progress of the audit and any problems encountered and, when necessary, reallocate tasks among team members considering their competences.

When the audit evidence indicates that the audit objectives are not feasible or is established immediate and significant risk (eg safety), the lead auditor immediately notifies the client and certification body which determines appropriate action.

Such actions may include:

- modification of the audit plan
- changes in the objectives of the audit and / or its scope
- termination of the audit

The lead auditor reports the results of actions taken to the Head of the certification body.

The information relating to the objectives, scope, criteria and audit activities are collected using a sample to make proof of the audit.

The main methods for the collecting information are (but are not limited to):

- review of documents and records;
- interviews with the personnel;
- monitoring of the processes and activities .

The audit findings are recorded to allow the decision on certification or its maintenance to be done. The audit findings are a summary of the results of the methods used to collect evidence of compliance to the system management requirements and where they aren't reached (non-conformity).

The opportunities for improvement and the non-conformities are collected in the software, the non-conformities can't be recorded as opportunities for improvement.

The non-conformities must contain a clear statement of compliance and to define in detail the objective evidence on which is based the inconsistency.

The non-conformities are discussed with the client to ensure that the evidence is accurate and that

they are understood.

Non conformities classification:**NC1:**

Significant non compliance with one or more audit criteria.

A NC1 can affect the ability of the audited company to achieve the desired result. Such a non compliance could be, for example, the absence of any evidence that support the fulfilling with the requirements of standards or guidelines.

NC1 can refer to a document (absent or incomplete) or to the way the company operates.

When a NC1 is found, the audited organisation needs to immediately perform a “Root cause analysis” where it is explained the cause that brought to the NC1.

The method of closing the NC1 is established by the Lead Auditor, depending on the seriousness of the NC1:

- Through the submission of documents (of any type) that provide objective evidence of the closure of the non-conformity.
- By means of an extra visit by the auditor to verify that the organization is operating in conformity with the requirement.

A non-conformity of this type must be closed within 3 months of its opening, and as long as a non-conformity of this type is open, no certificate can be issued in the case of first-time certification. In case of surveillance phase and the NC1 is not closed within 3 months, the certificate is suspended and the process of its withdrawal is started.

NC2:

An NC1 is a non-serious non-conformity: It may refer to incomplete implementation of a procedure or only partial compliance with the requirements of one point of a standard.

An NC1 does not seriously reduce the effectiveness of the management system, it only reduces its ability to achieve the desired objectives to a sub-optimal level.

An NC2 does not prevent the issuance, renewal of a certificate or the success of a surveillance.

These types of nonconformities must, however, necessarily be checked during the next audit.

The closure of an NC2 is achieved by showing the auditor of the next audit objective evidence of its closure (a Root Cause Analysis is not necessary). If this evidence provided is not considered sufficient by the Lead Auditor, the NC2 becomes an NC1 and must go through the NC1 process, with the possibility of suspension of the certificate.

Communication and closure of NC1 and NC2 are both handled through the "F 9.0-06 Non Conformity Form".

Opportunities of improvement:

An improvement opportunity is a slight discrepancy with the requirements of the standard; it can address both the documentation and operational portions.

The actions taken by the organization with a view to capturing such opportunities identified by the auditor are reviewed and documented during the subsequent audit.

The absence of such actions constitutes non-compliance with the "Continuous Improvement" principle, which is at the heart of all certification schemes. In this case, the improvement opportunity may become a NC2, which does not directly compromise the issuance or renewal of certification.

The lead auditors should make every effort to resolve any differences of opinion and interpretation of requirements between the audit team and the customer in terms of audit evidence or findings.

All different outstanding issues are documented in an audit report.

Legal requirements:

The certification body considers a management system complying with a given standard as an added value to an organizational structure that complies with all legal constraints imposed by the country in which it operates.

For this principle, in the event that, during an ISO 14001 or ISO 45001 audit, non-compliance with legislative obligations relevant to the certification scheme should arise, these would constitute Type 1 Non-Conformities, and would prevent the issue or the decision of maintaining the the certificate until their closure.

Preparation of audit findings

The audit team meets before the closing meeting and it:

- reviews the objectives of the audit findings and any other appropriate information collected during the audit;
- agrees to the audit conclusions, considering the uncertainty associated with the audit process;
- determines the necessary follow-up;
- confirms the correctness or determine any necessary changes (eg scope, time or date of the audit, frequency of supervision, competence)

The audit closes with a formal closing session including the top management of the audited organization and possibly, with the managers or workers that will be audited.

The purpose of the meeting is to present audit findings, including recommendations on certification.

The presentation of non-conformities is done in a way that ensures that they are understood and deadline for submission of reply to reconcile them. Understanding the non-conformities does not necessarily mean that the they are accepted by the customer.

The main elements of the closing meeting include:

- informing the client that the evidences gathered by the audit is based on sampling, and it can bring to some uncertainty;
- the method for the review of the report, including the classification of audit findings;
- the review process of the non-conformities;

- deadline for submission of customer plan correction and corrective actions for all non-conformities;
- the activities of certification body office after the audit;
- information on the procedure for complaints and objections.

The client can make questions and any diverging opinions regarding the findings or conclusions of the audit between the audit team and if it's possible the client should be discussed and resolved during the audit, otherwise they have to be resolved according MP 9.7.