

1. Pre-Certification Activities

1.1 Application Phase

- Client submits application including:
 - Desired scope of certification
 - Details of all sites and locations
 - Processes/functions covered
 - Number of personnel
 - Legal status & ownership
 - Outsourcing arrangements

1.2 Application Review

- AXC reviews application to ensure:
 - Sufficient information provided
 - Competence and capability available (auditor qualification, IAF/NACE code)
 - No threats to impartiality
 - Proposed scope is auditable

Outcome: Application accepted or clarification requested.



2. Audit Programme Development

- Develop 3-year audit programme (initial → surveillance → recertification).
- Consider client size, complexity, system maturity, risks, and changes.



3. Audit Duration Determination

- Determine audit time based on:
 - Organization size and complexity
 - Scope and outsourcing
 - Number of sites and dispersion
 - Risks and maturity
 - Previous audit results
 - Technology/regulatory context
 - Combined/joint/integrated audits



4. Audit Planning

- Define audit objectives, scope, and criteria.
- Prepare **Audit Plan** including:
 - Dates, duration, and team
 - Audit objectives and scope
 - Processes and functions to be audited
 - Opening/closing meeting schedule

Audit Team Selection:

- Based on competence (standard + IAF/NACE code)
- Impartiality and no conflict of interest
- Appropriate technical expertise



5. Initial Certification Audit

Stage 1 Audit:

- Review documented management system (on-site/off-site)
- Evaluate readiness for Stage 2
- Identify nonconformities or areas of concern

Stage 2 Audit:

- On-site assessment of system implementation
- Verify effectiveness and conformity
- Determine ability to achieve intended outcomes



6. Conducting Audits

Key Steps:

- **Opening Meeting** → Confirm plan, objectives, and logistics
- **Communication During Audit** → Daily briefings, ongoing communication
- **Evidence Collection** → Interviews, observation, record review

- **Nonconformity Recording** → Classify (Major/Minor), issue Corrective Action Request (CAR)
- **Closing Meeting** → Present findings and next steps

7. Audit Reporting

Audit Report Includes:

- Scope, objectives, criteria
- Team and participants
- Audit summary and findings
- Nonconformities with evidence
- Observations and OFIs
- Recommendation on certification

Timeliness: Issued within defined period post-audit.

8. Certification Decision

Decision Process:

- Conducted by independent reviewer/panel not involved in audit
- Review all audit evidence, corrective actions, and reports
- Decisions based solely on objective evidence of conformity

Outcome:

- **Certification Granted, Deferred, or Denied**

9. Maintaining Certification

Surveillance Audits:

- Conducted at least annually
- Verify ongoing conformity, effectiveness, and improvements

- Focus on changes, key processes, previous nonconformities

Recertification Audits:

- Before expiry of 3-year cycle
- Full system review for continued relevance and effectiveness



10. Special Audits

Conducted When:

- Complaints or performance issues
- Significant organizational changes
- Follow-up on suspension
- Scope extension
- Unannounced audit required



11. Suspension, Withdrawal, or Scope Reduction

Triggers:

- Persistent failure to meet requirements
- Refusal of audits
- Misuse of certification mark
- Voluntary withdrawal

Actions:

- Formal notification to client
- Suspend/withdraw certification and update public register
- Define conditions for reinstatement



12. Appeals and Complaints

Appeals:

- Client may appeal certification decision
- Handled impartially by individuals uninvolved in original decision

Complaints:

- Accepted from any interested party
- Investigated and resolved appropriately
- May trigger special audits if related to certified client performance



13. Client Records Management

Controls Include:

- Identification, indexing, storage, and retrieval
- Retention and disposition policies
- Confidentiality and data protection