PROCEDURE FOR THE CERTIFICATION OF MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

CONTENT

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1. Introduction

This procedure describes the certification process of an organisation's management system and the rules that apply to it and contains the actions that both BQA and the organization must perform.

2. Definitions and Abbreviations

Management system	general system that refers to the management system for quality, environment, energy, safety and/or other.
Applicant	organisation that wishes to obtain the certification of its management system by BQA.
Customer-company	organisation whose management system has been certified by BQA and which has a certificate of conformity issued by BQA.
Certification Body	third party evaluating the compliance of the management system with published standards as well as with any additional documentation prescribed in the context of the management system.

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3. Reference documents

The certification process is based on demonstrating compliance with the requirements of the current version of the international standards/reference systems listed below and their European and national equivalents:

- ISO 9001 – Quality management systems - requirements
- ISO 14001 – Environmental management systems – requirements with guidance for use.
- ISO 22000 – Food safety management systems – requirements for any organisation in the food chain.
- ISO 50001 – Energy management systems – requirements with guidance for use.
- ISO 45001 – Occupational health and safety management systems – requirements with guidance for use.
- *ISO 27001 – Information security management systems - requirements*
- And other equivalent reference documents.

The basis of the certification can be expanded with other national or international normative documents in function of the accreditations that BQA has, such as Care4Quality (C4Q), Vlarema, etc… or the accreditations it obtains

4. Request for certification

Any organisation interested in the certification of its management system can submit an application to BQA NV. Upon receipt of this, BQA sends the 'request for quote' document, in which the following information is requested:

- the general details of the organization (name, address, tel., company number, etc…)
- the standard(s) of the requested certification
- the program of the requested certification (initial audit, renewal, etc...)
- the activity(ies) or process(es) to be certified,
- the number of employees (expressed in full-time equivalents) and the site(s) involved
- the certification(s) already obtained
- additional data

The application can also be submitted directly via the BQA website. The 'request for quote' document is available on-line on the website www.bqa.be.
If desired/necessary, a BQA employee can visit the company to explain the quote.

As soon as all necessary information has been collected and reviewed, a quote is prepared and sent to the applicant.

Note: the offer does not contain the additional visits and/or audits that may prove necessary in case the management system of the organization is not in accordance with the reference document followed.

To place an order, the applicant completes, signs and returns the documents titled "Certification Mission" to BQA.

By doing so, BQA undertakes

- to handle the application file in accordance with the applicable standards, guidelines and regulatory provisions;
- not to communicate anything to third parties with regard to the application and its handling, without the consent of the applicant.

By doing so, the applicant undertakes to:

- comply with this procedure;
- to take all measures to ensure compliance of the management system with the applicable standards and regulatory provisions;

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- make all necessary arrangements for the conduct of the audit, including the possibility to study the documentation and to have access to all departments, to the files and to the members of staff.

5. The Certificate

5.1 Objective

The BQA certificate for a management system is an official confirmation that the system is implemented by a customer company and that it corresponds to the requirements of the reference document (standard, guideline, reference system, ...).

5.2 Validity period

The BQA certificate is valid for a period of three years from the date on which the Certification Committee met, and analysed and positively evaluated the certification audit report. The period can be adjusted taking into account the limitations of the validity period of the normative reference document.

5.3 Validity conditions

A certificate from BQA remains valid provided that the certified customer company continuously complies with the following conditions:

- The certified management system is continuously maintained.
- The required documented information is maintained on site by the organization, for evaluation by BQA.
- A controlled current copy of a process flow diagram/overview of the management system processes (or a management system manual) as well as a recent organisation chart are available.
- Any significant change to the management system will be communicated to BQA within a period of two weeks from the date of its implementation.

  For example – non-exhaustive list:
  - ✓ change in the Board of Directors and/or change in the contact person / persons concerning the management system.
  - ✓ change in the scope of the management system including any change in the outsourced processes,
  - ✓ any significant increase/decrease in the number of employees of the organization,
  - ✓ any change of name or address of the organization,
  - ✓ any change in the legal structure, articles of association, etc…
  - ✓ any merger, demerger, absorption, discontinuation or transfer of a company branch or of all activities of the company that fall within the scope of the certificate
  - ✓ significant changes in the processes and/or products

- Specific to ISO 45001:2018 : the certified customer shall inform BQA without delay of the occurrence of a serious incident or violation of legislation for which the competent authority has imposed an information obligation. BQA reserves the right to take specific actions (including suspension and revocation of the certificate) if a serious failure of the management system can be demonstrated.

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6. Description of the certification procedure

6.1 Composition of the audit team

An audit team is appointed before the start of an audit assignment. Within the audit team, a lead auditor is appointed who takes on the responsibility for the organisation of the audit. He/she is the contact person of the applicant. This audit team will be communicated in writing to the applicant, who may refuse the participation of any auditor/technical expert and, where applicable, any internal auditor. This refusal (including motivation) is to be communicated in writing at least three weeks before the start of the certification process.

6.2 Initial certification audit – phase 1

A certification audit – phase 1, will take place in order to obtain a general overview of the level of compliance of the management system with the requirements of the reference document. The date of that audit is determined by mutual agreement between the lead auditor and the applicant. An evaluation report is drawn up on the basis of this audit. This includes any gaps and/or non-conformities that need to be remedied in order to ensure compliance with the relevant standard.
During the initial audit phase 1, the system documentation will be reviewed as well as the implementation of the management review and of the internal audits.
After this phase 1 audit BQA grants, where applicable, the applicant the necessary time to fine-tune their management system, including its implementation.
However, if the seriousness of the non-conformities and/or the number of them is too great, it can be decided not to let the phase 2 audit go ahead. A new phase 1 audit will then have to be planned.
The phase 1 audit may or may not be immediately followed by the certification audit phase 2.

6.3 Certification audit – phase 2

The certification audit phase 2 can only take place if:

- the management system has been applied for a sufficiently long time (at least 3 months) so that sufficient relevant evidence is available
- the system of internal audits is fully operational and can be considered effective
- the management has carried out at least one evaluation of the management system (management review)

The lead auditor draws up the work plan and the activity matrix. He informs the organisation about the audit program, which includes a precise description of all activities and services that will be subject to an audit, and of the persons involved.

The audit starts with an opening meeting at which at least the management /representation of the management of the organization and the auditors are present. During this meeting, the participants introduce themselves and the details of the audit program are determined.

During the audit, it is evaluated to what extent the organisation meets the requirements of the reference document(s) and the requirements of the (internal) procedures drawn up by the customer company. To this end, all staff involved in the management system can be interviewed.

During the audit, a room will be made available to the audit team for the auditor meetings.

The audit ends with a closing meeting at which at least the management /representation of the management of the organization and the auditors are present.
ISO 45001:2018 also requires the management legally responsible for OH&S and the employee representatives with responsibility for OH&S to be present at the closing meeting.

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During this meeting, the auditors present the conclusions of the audit, including, where applicable, the non-conformities. The non-conformities are classified into two categories, namely minor and major non-conformities. Considered a major non-conformity is one that affects or compromises the management system's ability to achieve its intended results. Minor non-conformities are those that do not affect the management system's ability to achieve the intended results.

In case there are no non-conformities, the report can be submitted immediately to the Certification Committee.

In case of minor non-conformities, the customer company will provide the fully completed corrective actions (ACAN) within 15 days to the lead auditor. After evaluation and in case of acceptance by the lead auditor, the report can be submitted to the Certification Committee.

In case both minor and major non-conformities have been identified, the customer company shall provide:

a) for all minor non-conformities, the completed corrective actions to the lead auditor within 15 days.
b) for all major non-conformities, the corrective actions completed in full, including evidence of the actions taken, within the period agreed to with the lead auditor.

The report can be provided to the Certification Committee as soon as:

a) for all minor non-conformities: after positive evaluation of the ACAN's and their acceptance by the lead auditor

and

b) for all major non-conformities: the corrective actions have been positively evaluated either after a documentary verification of the actions taken or after verification on-site at the customer company, depending on the follow-up method agreed to by the lead auditor with the customer company.

6.4 Granting of the certificate

The audit report is analysed and evaluated by the Certification Committee of BQA.

The certificate is granted to the organization following a positive decision by the Certification Committee and after signature, by the customer company, of the certification contract whereby the customer company undertakes to respect the conditions of the granting during the period of validity of the certificate, including the follow-up audits.

The decision of the Certification Committee is communicated to the organization within fifteen working days.

When granted, the certificate is issued on the date of the positive decision of the Certification Committee.

6.5 Follow-up audits

In order to maintain the validity of the certificate during the 3 years as foreseen, follow-up audits are carried out.

These follow-up audits consist of at least the following elements:

- the review of the internal audits, the management review and the corrective actions
- the review of customer complaints and their handling
- the follow-up and effectiveness check of the corrective actions in response to non-conformities from (the) previous audit(s)

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- the review of the effectiveness of the management system with regard to the achievement of the objectives, the operational control and the progression of the continuous improvement actions
- the verification of changes to the documentation system
- the verification of the use of the certificate and logos
- standard-specific elements

In general, all elements of the normative reference document will be re-audited during the validity period of the certificate.
In the case of a certification that integrates the evaluation of conformity with regard to the regulatory requirements (European directives), the requirements laid down by law apply automatically.

In principle, the follow-up audits are performed by an auditor who has been involved in the certification.

If BQA is of the opinion that the situation identified during the planned follow-up audits does not provide a representative picture, BQA is authorized, exceptionally, to inform the customer company that audits can take place without prior notice.

The suggested audit frequency during the first 3-year period consists of two follow-up audits per year, performed every 6 months from the date of the certification audit. This frequency can be changed depending on the size of the organization or after the first certification period insofar as this can be justified on the basis of the findings made during the follow-up audits and the effectiveness of the management system.

The reports are submitted to the Certification Committee at their next meeting. The Committee decides whether to maintain, transform, suspend or revoke the corresponding certificate.

6.6 Renewal audit

A renewal audit will take place at the end of the validity period of the certificate. This renewal audit is carried out in the period of three months prior to the expiry date of the certificate and in all cases before the expiry of the validity period of the certificate.
This renewal audit follows the same procedure as the certification audit phase 2 mentioned above. The program takes into account the acquired knowledge of the management system that is being re-audited and the results of the previous audits.

6.7 General provisions

During the audits, the auditor(s) may freely choose the activities and places to be audited within the scope of the management system.

The customer company is expected to cooperate fully during the audit. To this end, the customer company must monitor the working conditions in the organization so that the safety and health of the auditor(s) cannot be compromised during the performance of the audits. If applicable, personal protective equipment and/or safety regulations must be made available.

Any complaint from a third party regarding the 'quality' of the products/services that fall within the scope of the management system shall be made known at the start of each audit or upon request of the auditor.

Specifically for ISO 45001:2018: the certified customer will inform BQA without delay of the occurrence of a serious incident or violation of legislation for which the competent authority has imposed an information obligation. BQA reserves the right to take specific actions (including suspension and revocation of the certificate) if a serious failure of the management system can be demonstrated.

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<u>Specific to ISO 27001 audits:</u> prior to the certification audit, the customer company is asked to indicate whether there is ISMS-related information (e.g.ISMS records or information about the design and effectiveness of the controls) that cannot be made available to the auditors due to the confidential or sensitive nature of the information. If it is considered that no adequate audit of the ISMS can be carried out without this information, the customer company will be informed that no certification audit of the ISMS can be carried out until appropriate access arrangements are granted.

All financial obligations of the customer company with regard to BQA NV are met.

7. Special cases

7.1 Extension / reduction / transformation of the certificate

A customer company may request that the scope of its management system be extended or reduced. This question can refer to new products, services, activities, departments or locations. The extension or reduction may also arise as a result of the introduction of another reference standard or the modification of any exclusions allowed within the framework of the reference document.

The granting of an extension of the certification is always accompanied by an audit. This will, as far as possible, be combined with a follow-up audit or a renewal audit.

When an extension is granted, a new certificate is issued. If the extension is made within the validity period of the certification, it will not affect the validity period of the current certification.

A reduction of the certification does not necessarily give rise to an additional audit. A new certificate is issued. If the reduction occurs within the validity period of the certification, it will not affect the validity period of the current certification.

In all cases, the customer company will be asked to return the old certificates to BQA.

7.2 Certification of an organisation with multiple sites (multi-site)

On request, BQA can organize a certification of several organisations/sites belonging to the same group.
In that case, a single certificate is issued by BQA, with formal reference to the various organisations/sites.

7.3 Combined certification

On request, BQA can simultaneously certify the management system against multiple reference standards/guidelines (e.g. quality, environment, safety, energy, etc.).
The parts specific to each management system are reviewed separately, according to the requirements of the different reference standards or guidelines that apply.

7.4 Transition audit – revision of the reference standard of the certificate.

When the reference standard of a certificate issued by the Certification Committee of BQA to a customer company is changed, a 'transition audit' is necessary so that the certificate is changed and makes reference to the new version of the standard.

This 'transition audit' aims to evaluate how the customer company has adapted their management system to the new requirements of the revised standard. For this, the customer company has access to a transition period determined by the organization who is the owner of the standard.

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When the customer company:

- Has identified the differences in requirements in the revision(s) of the standard(s) in order to integrate them into their management system,
- Has implemented the transition plan
- Provided training and information to those involved in the customer company,
- Has updated the management system and performed an internal audit of the system in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the transition (management review),

then the customer company can request a transition audit from BQA.

In addition to the initial certification audit which may be performed in the transition period according to either the revised standard or not, a transition audit will be performed during the follow-up audit(s) or renewal audit(s) of the current cycle. *In that case, there will be an increase in the audit duration according to specific modalities depending on the standard/scheme. These modalities are communicated by mail to the relevant customer companies*.

If desired, the customer can also request certification against a new version of the standard outside the regular follow-up or renewal audit(s). *In that case, there will be an increase in the audit duration according to specific modalities depending on the standard/scheme*. *These modalities are communicated by mail to the customer company.*

In the event that the transition audit does not yield a result that is in accordance with the new (version of the) standard, the current certificate or certificates can still be maintained, provided an additional follow-up audit with regard to the previous (version of the) standard(s). In other cases, a phase 1 audit may have to be started again or the procedure to suspend the certificate starts. (see also section 9.2).

In case the transition to the new version of the standard has not yet been completed by the customer company, by the end of the transition period, a new audit must be performed equal to an initial certification audit with corresponding audit duration.

8. Use of the certificate

Due to the international recognition of the value of the certificates awarded to the customer companies by third parties, every effort is made to ensure that the certificates in circulation actually, indisputably and exactly confirm the conformity with the reference document.

BQA takes all possible preventive measures to prevent the fraudulent use of its certificates.

These measures are intended to prevent the spread of false certificates and to avoid the slightest doubt on the part of third parties regarding the certificate issued, as well as to the interpretation of its scope.

BQA also ensures that the references to a certificate, which are mentioned by its customer companies, cannot mislead a third party about the content of the certificate issued. If practices that mislead third parties are identified, BQA will take all necessary corrective actions, including through the press or legal means, to put an end to this.

9. Suspension and/or revocation of the certificate

9.1 Suspension of the certificate

A customer company can request a temporary suspension of the certificate during the validity period of a certificate.

In such cases, the Certification Committee is empowered to make a decision to suspend. In doing so, the Certification Committee may impose the following conditions (not exhaustive) on the customer company:

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- refrain from any form of publicity regarding its certification on its website and its commercial brochures;
- proactively and spontaneously inform all of their customers about the duration of this suspension;
- provide proof to BQA of the proper implementation of their obligations

A decision to suspend the certificate can be communicated by BQA to third parties.

9.2 Revocation of the certificate following an established non-conformity

The certificates issued by BQA confirm that the customer company meets the requirements of the reference document. However, it is not a certificate of conformity on a specific date, but a certificate of permanent conformity for a period of 3 years.

If the customer company does not comply with this agreement during the period of 3 years - including the continuous improvement of its management system - then the customer company can no longer refer to the certificate delivered. In such cases, the Certification Committee is empowered to take a decision to revoke the certificate.
BQA has installed a number of specific measures to prevent the occurrence of above mentioned situations:

- The lead auditor will, to the extent possible during the audit, inform the organisation's management of any non-conformities that could lead to a revocation;
- The Certification Committee will give notice of default to the organization if no action has been taken to correct a persistent nonconformity, whereby the Certification Committee gives a maximum period of six months for the implementation of corrective actions.

A decision to revoke the certificate leads contractually to the immediate cancellation of the certificate and will be communicated to third parties. BQA makes every effort to ensure that the customer company complies with the consequences of such revocation (the customer company is requested to return the original certificates to BQA and not to refer in any way to the issued certificate).

9.3 Revocation of the certificate on request of the customer company

A customer company can decide during the period of the validity of the certificate that they wish to renounce the certification contract.
In such cases, the Certification Committee is empowered to take a decision to revoke the certificate.
A decision to revoke the certificate leads contractually to the immediate cancellation of the certificate and will be communicated to third parties. BQA will make every effort to ensure that the customer company complies with the consequences of such revocation (the customer company is requested to return the original certificates to BQA and not to refer in any way to the issued certificate).

10. Complaints and appeal procedure

BQA not only continuously strives to maintain the quality of its certification activities, but also to continuously improve them.
In this sense, a complaint from a customer company is handled, more specifically with continuous improvement as the objective. This irrespective of whether it concerns a complaint as a result of a material error, a specific act, a finding or a decision taken by persons involved in these certification activities.

- Material errors are, for example, incorrect translations, incorrect data on the certificate, sending documents to the wrong recipient;
- Actions that can give rise to complaints are, for example, the dissemination of confidential information, the behaviour of an auditor, the refusal to include the point of view of the customer company in an audit report;
- Findings that may give rise to complaints refer to findings made by the auditors during the audit of the customer company;

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- A decision against which a complaint can be submitted is, for example, the decision of the Certification Committee with regard to the certificate.

In order to facilitate the dialogue with the customer companies, the procedure for submitting such complaints has been kept as flexible as possible, with a guarantee that they will be seriously investigated.

For example, a simple telephone call is sufficient to ensure that a complaint about a material error is investigated and, if this complaint turns out to be justified, the necessary measures are taken.

With regard to differences of opinion regarding the findings made by the auditors, the latter are obliged to mention this in their audit report so that the Certification Committee would be aware.

For complaints about certain actions of persons involved in the certification process or about a decision regarding a certificate, the customer companies are requested to submit them in writing to the attention of the Director of BQA.

For each complaint submitted, an investigation is carried out and conclusions formulated, which are systematically communicated to the customer company. In addition, the latter will be informed of the possibilities of appealing against these conclusions if they consider them to be insufficient. (see also process flow diagram on the BQA website).

11. Confidentiality

Confidentiality in the handling of the information collected by the auditors and members of the Certification Committee is an important element for the customer companies. As part of the certification activities, the following measures have been taken to guarantee this:

- each auditor and each member of the Certification Committee must prior to any assignment, commit to maintain the strict confidentiality of all information obtained in connection with this assignment;
- the retention by the auditor and each member of the Certification Committee of the documents for the period strictly necessary for the performance of his assignment, in such a way that the risk of disclosure to third parties is limited;
- the rules for the circulation of documents have been set up in such a way as to prevent these documents from ending up in the hands of third parties

The organisations accept the possible presence of representatives of accreditation bodies who accompany BQA auditors during certification, follow-up and renewal audits.

12. Reference to certificates, reference to accreditation and use of logos.

12.1 Requirements when referring to the certification

The certified organisation may refer to the certification on informational or advertising documents insofar as

- this reference is directly related to the activity(ies) and scope to which the certificate drawn up by BQA applies and
- traceability is possible by stating the certification body BQA and the number of the certificate

The certified organization may not refer to a certification of the management system on any calibration certificates, test reports, inspection reports, technical drawings, technical data sheets of products, product specifications, certificates of analysis, etc. that it issues. In that context, the reports/certificates are considered products.

Any reference by a customer company to a certificate may not give rise to misleading third parties.

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A statement may be made on packaging and accompanying documents that the customer company has a certified management system.
The following requirements must be respected here:

a) is considered packaging of a product: the packaging material that can be removed without breaking or damaging the product. Any other packaging is considered part of the product.
b) accompanying documents are those that are separately available or easily removable. Labels or nameplates are considered part of the product.
(c) the statement may in no way give the impression that the product, process or service is certified.
d) The statement must contain the following information/references:
- ✓ identification of the certified customer company
- ✓ type of management system (example QMS, EMS, ..) and the standard (example: ISO 9001, ISO 14001)
- ✓ reference to the organization that has certified the management system (BQA).

12.2 Requirements regarding the use of the certification logo made available by BQA

The certification logo made available by BQA ("Certification BQA ISO XXXXX") may appear on informational or advertising documents insofar as this use is directly related to the activities and the scope to which the certificate issued by BQA applies.

The certification logo may appear:
- On condition that the number of the certificate, issued by BQA, is mentioned under the logo.

The certification logo may <u>not</u> appear:
- on documents related to activities other than those covered by the issued certificate;
- neither on products nor on primary packaging;
- on calibration or inspection test reports, on calibration certificates, on technical drawings, technical data sheets of products, product specifications, certificates of analysis, etc. or other documents of the same nature issued by laboratories;

The certification logo may be used in black colour or in the dominant colour of a pre-printed document.

The dimensions of the certification logo may be changed provided that the dimensions of the company's own logo are not smaller than the dimensions of the BQA certification logo.

12.3 Requirements regarding the use of the BELAC-symbol

The BELAC symbol is represented by the BELAC logo with below it the number of the BQA accreditation certificate for the relevant accreditation application.

The BELAC symbol may appear on informational or advertising documents insofar as this use is directly related to the activity(ies) and the scope to which the certificate issued by BQA applies.

The symbol may be applied provided that:
- the own logo and/or the name of the holder of the certificate also appears on the document;
- it occurs jointly with the logo of BQA or the name of BQA, and with mention of the certificate number;
- the accreditation number of BQA is mentioned under the BELAC logo.

The symbol may <u>not</u> be applied:
- on documents related to activities other than those covered by the issued certificate;
- on letterhead of the certified company that is used for general purposes;
- neither on products nor on packaging;

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- on calibration or inspection test reports, on calibration certificates, on technical drawings, technical data sheets of products, product specifications, certificates of analysis, etc. or other documents of the same nature issued by laboratories.

The specific colour of the logo is Pantone Rubine red. However, it may also be used in black colour or in the dominant colour of a pre-printed document.

The dimensions of the logo may be changed provided that:
- the square shape and legibility of the logo are preserved;
- the dimensions remain smaller than the dimensions of the own logo and the logo of the accredited institution, being BQA.

In accordance with the requirements of BELAC 2-001, paragraph 4 – 2nd sub-paragraph, BQA takes the necessary actions and informs BELAC about any misuse or incorrect reference to the accreditation.

The Belac 2-001 regulations are available on the BELAC website:
https://economie.fgov.be/sites/default/files/Files/Publications/files/Belac-EN/BELAC-2-001-EN.pdf

An organization that refuses any BELAC observer during the certification process may not refer to the BELAC accreditation.

Further information is available on the BQA website www.bqa.be.

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