



IAF Mandatory Document

Generic Competence for AB Assessors: Application to ISO/IEC 17011

Issue 1, Version 2

(IAF MD 20:2023)

The International Accreditation Forum, Inc. (IAF) facilitates trade and supports industry and regulators by operating a worldwide mutual recognition arrangement among Accreditation Bodies (ABs) in order that the results issued by Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) accredited by IAF members can be accepted globally.

Accreditation reduces risk for business and its customers by assuring them that accredited CABs are competent to carry out the work they undertake within their scope of accreditation. ABs that are members of IAF and their accredited CABs are required to comply with appropriate international standards and IAF mandatory documents for the consistent application of those standards.

ABs that are signatories to the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) are evaluated regularly by an appointed team of peers to provide confidence in the operation of their accreditation programs. The structure of the IAF MLA is detailed in IAF PL 3 - Policies and Procedures on the IAF MLA Structure and for Expansion of the Scope of the IAF MLA. The scope of the IAF MLA is detailed in the IAF MLA Status document.

The IAF MLA is structured in five levels: Level 1 specifies mandatory criteria that apply to all ABs, ISO/IEC 17011. The combination of a Level 2 activity(ies) and the corresponding Level 3 normative document(s) is called the main scope of the MLA, and the combination of Level 4 (if applicable) and Level 5 relevant normative documents is called a sub-scope of the MLA.

- The main scope of the MLA includes activities e.g. product certification and associated mandated standards e.g. ISO/IEC 17065. The attestations made by CABs at the main scope level are considered to be equally reliable.
- The sub scope of the MLA includes conformity assessment requirements e.g. ISO 9001 and scheme specific requirements, where applicable, e.g. ISO 22003-1. The attestations made by CABs at the sub scope level are considered to be equivalent.

The IAF MLA delivers the confidence needed for market acceptance of conformity assessment outcomes. An attestation issued, within the scope of the IAF MLA, by a body that is accredited by an IAF MLA signatory AB can be recognized worldwide, thereby facilitating international trade.

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Introduction to IAF Mandatory Documents

The term “should” is used in this document to indicate recognised means of meeting the requirements of the standards. These requirements can be met in an equivalent way provided this can be demonstrated. The term “shall” is used in this document to indicate those provisions which, reflecting the requirements of the relevant standard, are mandatory.

IAF Mandatory Document for the Application of ISO/IEC 17011

This document shall be read in conjunction with ISO/IEC 17011. All clauses of ISO/IEC 17011 continue to apply and this document provides supporting criteria to that standard.

1. INTRODUCTION

ISO/IEC 17011 is an International Standard that sets out the requirements for bodies operating accreditation systems for Conformity Assessment Bodies.

The objective of this document is to ensure the consistent and harmonized application of ISO/IEC 17011 for defining the generic competence for assessors. The 2012 Accreditation Body Assessor Job Task Analysis was created to achieve this objective.

2. BACKGROUND

In 2009, the IAF Assessor Competency Task Force undertook a Job/Task Analysis (JTA) to identify the tasks, knowledge, skills and attributes (KSAs) required of Accreditation Body (AB) Assessors. A Job Task Analyses (JTA) study in 2010 was conducted followed by a survey validation study of the results of the JTA conducted in 2010 through 2011. The JTA for AB Assessors was presented at the IAF Technical Committee during the IAF mid-year meetings 2012 in Frankfurt, Germany.

The JTA study methodology followed industry standard practices. This included the following activities:

- i) Selecting the JTA participants
- ii) Conducting the JTA meeting
- iii) Conducting a JTA validation survey
- iv) Reviewing the results of the study

3. SCOPE

This document defines the generic competencies for assessors involved in the accreditation of Certification Bodies/Conformity Assessment Bodies. The objective of this document is to enable Accreditation Bodies to harmonize their application of ISO/IEC 17011 for the accreditation of Certification Bodies/Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs).

Annex 1 contains the competency profile for Accreditation Body assessors. When an assessor does not perform one or more of the tasks as delineated in this document, the AB can consider the exclusion of application of the respective competencies shown in Annex 1.

Annex 2 contains additional information to assist in understanding the competency profile. While these competencies and associated knowledge and skills should be considered by the AB when evaluating assessors or the assessment team, the AB does not have to have documented evidence of its assessors (or assessment team) meeting every individual competence or all of the knowledge listed.

However if the competencies are considered by the AB, then the AB may consolidate the evidence of conformance (e.g. summary results of an onsite evaluation). Typically these competencies can be demonstrated in a variety of ways; but most commonly during interviews, personal interaction and/or during onsite evaluations.

4. NORMATIVE REFERENCES

ISO/IEC 17011 Conformity Assessment – general requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies.

5. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Assessor: person assigned by an accreditation body to perform, alone or as part of an assessment team, an assessment of a conformity assessment body.

The use of the term “assessor” in this document does not require that all of the activities must be conducted by each individual assessor; however, the same competence would be required for the specific task whether it is being performed by the assessor or other AB personnel.

Accreditation Body Assessor is an individual who performs an assessment of a Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) for an Accreditation Body (AB) against an accreditation standard or normative document by reviewing documents and conducting onsite visits and/or observing Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) activities.

Competence: ability to apply knowledge and skills to achieve the intended results.

Job Task Analysis: a documented process for analyzing the tasks performed by individuals in an occupation, as well as the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) required to perform those tasks. Abilities can include physical capabilities such as vision, hearing and mobility.

6. ACCREDITATION BODY ASSESSOR COMPETENCE PROCESS

6.1 The AB shall have assessors or other personnel (e.g. lead assessors, technical officers, programme managers) with competence to perform tasks assigned by the AB in accordance with Annex 1, Section B, Generic Assessment Competencies (1-5).

Where any assessment is conducted by a team, the level of competence required should be held within the team as a whole and not by each individual member of the team.

6.2 The AB shall establish and document procedures for selecting, training and formally approving assessors (or assessment team) and in so doing should consider the competency profile outlined in Annex 1, Section B, Generic Assessment Competencies (1-5).

6.3 The AB shall maintain evaluation records to demonstrate that any assessor competencies identified by the AB have been achieved consistent with the competency profile in Annex 1, Section B, Generic Assessment Competencies (1-5).

Annex 2 (informative) contains personal behaviours to be considered during the selection and training process as well as when monitoring the assessor activity. These are characteristics that affect an individual's ability to perform specific functions. Therefore, knowledge about the behaviours of individuals enables an AB to take advantage of their strengths and to minimize the impact of their weaknesses. Desired personal behaviours that are important for personnel involved in accreditation activities are described in Section D, Foundational Competencies of Annex 2.

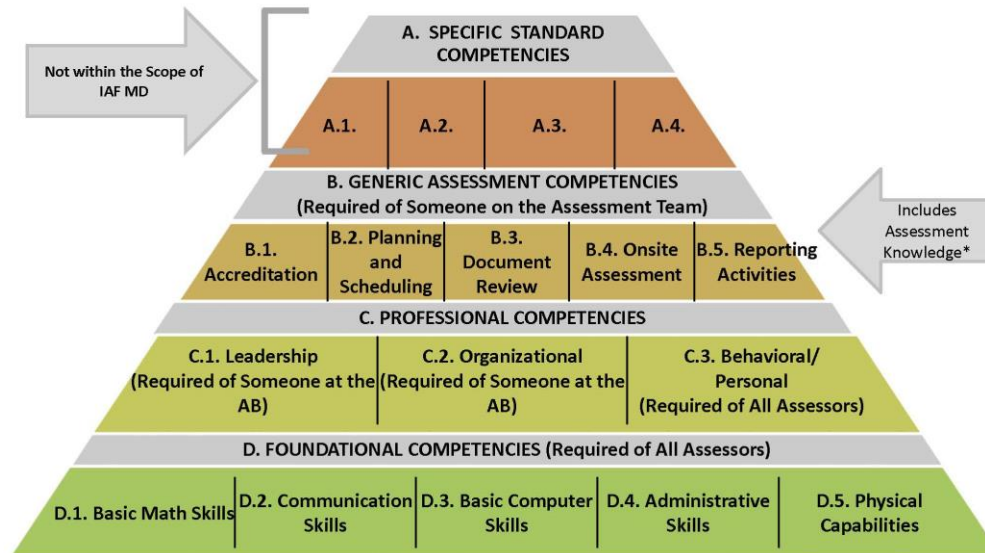
6.4 When evaluating/monitoring the competence of assessors (or the assessment team) the competency profile in Annex 1, Section B, Generic Assessment Competencies (1-5) shall be considered.

End of IAF Mandatory Document Generic Competence for AB Assessors: Application to ISO/IEC 17011.

Annex 1 – Competency Profile

Annex 1 contains the competency profile for Accreditation Body assessors based on the generic competencies identified in the job/task analysis. When an assessor does not perform one or more of the tasks as delineated in this document, the AB can consider the exclusion of application of the respective competencies shown in Annex 1. A.1 through A.4 below are not included within the scope of this MD and relate to specific standards (products, persons, management systems, etc.) associated with Level 3 of the MLA.

**ACCREDITATION BODY ASSESSOR
COMPETENCY PROFILE**



B. GENERIC ASSESSMENT COMPETENCIES (REQUIRED OF SOMEONE ON THE ASSESSMENT TEAM)	
B.1. Accreditation	Knowledge, skills and competencies associated with accreditation
	Different types of onsite assessments
	Different types of organizational structures for CABs
	Legal entity structures and the types of documents that confirm the legal status of CABs
	Different management structures
	Accreditation standards, guidance and mandatory documents / Requirements of accreditation
	Typical management systems
	Technical terms associated with scopes assessor is assessing
B.2. Planning and Scheduling	Common understanding of accreditation terms and definitions (Non-conformity [NC], Opportunity for Improvement [OFI], key activity, etc.)
	Knowledge, skills and competencies associated with planning and scheduling an assessment
	Typical assessment team compositions
	Typical resources required during an assessment
	Prioritizing assessments by risk areas
	Creating sampling plans
	Preparing assessment plans
	Providing input into the selection of the assessment team
B.3. Document Review	Assigning roles and responsibilities for the assessment team
	Knowledge, skills and competencies associated with conducting a document review
	Reviewing applications for accreditation and identifying appropriate documentation of legal status
	Determining the documents that will be needed for the assessment
	Checking the documents for completeness
	Determining if the documents meet the requirements
	Establishing investigative lines for the onsite assessment
	Communicating to the CAB the results of the document review
Confirming the CAB's readiness for an onsite assessment	
Determining if sufficient evidence exists to document conformity	

B.4. Onsite Assessment	Knowledge, skills and competencies associated with assessment (including onsite assessment)
	Achieving consensus of the team on findings
	Adapting assessment plans based on circumstances
	Analyzing assessment findings (including identifying and reviewing findings)
	Assessing management systems and controls
	Assessing technical requirements
	Assessing the CAB against accreditation requirements
	Communicating preliminary findings to CAB
	Competence in coaching the trainee assessor
	Conducting closing meetings
	Conducting interviews
	Conducting opening meetings
	Conducting pre-assessment meetings
	Conducting witness assessments
	Confirming assessment plans
	Confirming completion of the assessment plan
	Confirming the methods of reporting
	Confirming the objectives of the assessment were met
	Confirming the scope of accreditation
	Create records to document objective evidence gathered
	Creating working papers, notes and completing checklists
	Describing the final assessment conclusions
	Determining if requirements have been met
	Establishing the official channels of communication
	Explaining that the assessment is a sampling process (not everything was reviewed)
	Explaining the next steps (appeal procedures, post-assessment processes, final decision schedule/timeline, potential follow-up assessments, etc.)
	Extending sampling in case of NC

	Grading findings (if required)
	How to confirm confidentiality of the process
	How to determine if an assessment should be aborted
	How to thank the participants
	Identifying criteria that will be used for the assessment
	Identifying technical areas and when additional expertise is needed
	Judging the effectiveness of corrective actions (when required)
	Managing and solving conflicts in the team
	Observing CAB processes
	Obtaining written acknowledgement of the NC
	Prepare reports
	Presenting an explanation of the assessment methodology
	Presenting and reviewing findings (NCs and/or OFIs)
	Presenting the assessment team/CAB personnel
	Reviewing and finalizing the NCs
	Reviewing team member roles and responsibilities for closing meeting
	Reviewing the CAB files and records
	Sampling CAB processes and records (protocols and AB criteria)
	Techniques for providing positive feedback
	When to ask for escorts (safety issues, etc.)
	Writing CAB NCs and OFIs
B.5. Reporting Activities	Knowledge, skills and competencies associated with reporting activities
	Evaluating assessment team members
	Demonstrating knowledge of personnel evaluation methods
	Producing a clear and concise report that reflects the assessment and the findings
	Creating a report on the performance (and conformance) of the CAB with reference to the accreditation criteria
	Reporting conclusions and recommendations of the assessment that reflect the overall assessment and report content

Annex 2 - (Informative)

Annex 2 contains additional information to assist in understanding the competency profile. While these competencies and associated knowledge and skills should be considered by the AB when evaluating assessors or the assessment team, the AB does not have to have documented evidence of its assessors (or assessment team) meeting each individual competence or knowledge listed.

However if the competencies are considered by the AB then the AB may consolidate evidence of conformance (e.g. summary results of an onsite evaluation). Typically these competencies can be demonstrated in a variety of ways; but most commonly during interviews, personal interaction and/or during onsite evaluations.

C. PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES	
C.1. Leadership Competencies (required of someone at the AB)	These are knowledge, skills and competencies associated with leading a team or others
	Meeting management – ability to manage meetings including creating the agenda (if required), facilitating the meeting and adhering to the time schedules to achieve the assessment process objectives
	Leader/leadership – displays the ability to guide a team or others and has the ability to mentor others
	Ability to identify the competencies required of an assessment team
	Ability to provide input into the selection of an assessment team
	Ability to assign roles and responsibilities to the assessment team
	Ability to coach team members during an assessment process
	Ability to achieve consensus from an assessment team regarding assessment findings.
Maintaining control – ability to manage situations to ensure that the objectives of the assessment process are accomplished	
C.2. Organizational Competencies	These are knowledge, skills and competencies associated with organizing and managing an assessment process

(required of someone at the AB)	Ability to reason/good judgment – ability to assess situations or circumstances and formulate sound conclusions
	Accurate – draws the correct conclusion when interpreting the facts as related to a standard, rule or model. Produces results that are correct and based on fact
	Adaptable/flexible – displays an ability to adjust oneself to novel or different conditions throughout the assessment process
	Analytical – ability to synthesize and interpret data to formulate a conclusion
	Confidential – ability to identify information that should not be revealed. Maintains confidentiality by not disclosing confidential information
	Critical thinking – the process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating information to reach a valid conclusion
	Customer focused/oriented – displays an ability to view the process from the CAB’s perspective and to take into consideration the CAB’s perspectives during an assessment
	Focused – demonstrates full attention to tasks and the assessment process. Not distracted by other external matters
	Safety conscious – displays an awareness of safety hazards and takes steps to prevent accidents
	Stress management – ability to reduce or control stress during stressful situations in order to make objective decisions
	Team player/cooperative – works collectively with members of a team or group to accomplish the tasks. Displays the ability to subordinate personal preference when working in a group for the good of the assessment process
	Work within one’s expertise. Can identify when technical expertise is needed
	Conflict resolution - practice of recognizing and dealing with differing opinions in a rational, balanced and effective way
	Formulating questions/questioning techniques – ability to ask purposeful questions to elicit relevant information
	Ability to deliver a negative message that facilitates a positive action
C.3. Behavioral/Personal Competencies	These are the “soft” skills and other competencies associated with a person or a person’s behavior
	Ability to focus/concentration – does not appear distracted during an assessment

(required of all assessors)	Refrains from disagreeing with other assessment team members in front of the CAB
	Confident/self-confident/self esteem/conviction – having self assuredness in one’s personal judgment, ability and power. Does not delay or hesitate to make decisions
	Conscientious – demonstrates thoroughness, care and vigilance in the conduct of an assessment. Maintains a professional level of skepticism appropriate for assessments
	Courteous – interacts in a polite and respectful manner to the members of the CAB and others
	Persuasive/convincing others – demonstrates an ability to convince others that decisions are accurate and valid
	Culturally sensitive/sensitive to the thoughts of others – demonstrates a knowledge, awareness and acceptance of other cultures
	Ethical/honest/integrity/trustworthy – follows a code of conduct. Makes the correct decision when presented with a situation. Avoids acceptance of favors or gifts (acceptable value to be determined by individual ABs). Does not accept assignments outside of one’s area of expertise
	Good memory – ability to retain information (facts, etc.)
	Impartial/independent/neutral/lack of prejudice or bias/fair – Declares known or potential conflict of interest. Demonstrates objectivity (actual or perceived)
	Remains neutral and does not take sides during disagreements among assessment participants
	Initiative – demonstrates a willingness to fulfill responsibilities
	Objective – avoids opinions and personal biases and makes decisions based on fact (can support conclusions with objective evidence). Does not direct the CAB to a particular corrective action
	Patience – does not display irritation, loss of temper or the like, and has the ability to suppress restlessness or annoyance when confronted with delay or interruption
	Perceptive – demonstrates the ability to notice details and pick up cues to corroborate evidence during an assessment
	Perseverance/diligence/persistence/conviction/assertive – demonstrates the ability to remain focused on the goals of an assessment and to complete the assessment process despite resistance, difficulties, failure or opposition

	Professional – does not conduct personal business (phone calls, etc.) during an assessment. Does not make negative comments about the CAB’s personnel. Refrains from negative comments about the AB. Does not recommend consultants (friends, co-workers, etc.). Refrains from selling one’s own consulting services during an assessment
	Respectful – displays respect for others (does not make disparaging or demeaning comments, takes into account the expert opinions of other assessors)
	Responsible – commits the time and resources necessary to complete the assessment
	Self control/self discipline – does not lose temper and remains calm during assessments
	Tolerant – displays fairness and objectivity towards others whose opinions and practices differ from one’s own
	Open minded - ability to evaluate alternative solutions and a willingness to consider alternative ideas or points of view to achieve the same results
	Willingness to learn
	Works well with other people
	Participates in professional skill development (professional education, assessor harmonization meetings, and the development of AB policies and procedures)
	Resists undue influence from others (demonstrates one is not intimidated by someone to make an incorrect or inaccurate decision)
	Knowledge of typical human behavior characteristics (ability to read the audience)
	Adaptability – ability to adapt assessment plans based on circumstances

D. FOUNDATIONAL COMPETENCIES (FOR ALL ASSESSORS)	
D.1. Basic Math Skills	Perform simple math operations relevant to calculation of audit days/time and assessment days/time, multi-site sampling and creating sampling plans
	Collect information to solve a problem
	Compare numbers
	Basic understanding of finances

	Make rough estimates
	Perform simple math operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division
	Ability to use a calculator
D.2. Communication Skills	
	Written communication skills (concise writing skills, comprehensive writing and reporting skills)
	Verbal communication skills (communicating effectively regardless of language barriers, ability to explain information)
	Nonverbal communication skills/knowledge of body language
	Observation techniques
	Questioning techniques
	Listening techniques
	Interpersonal communication skills
	Reading comprehension skills
	Ability to analyze and synthesize information
D.3. Basic Computer Skills	
	Basic computer literacy
	Keyboarding skills
D.4. Administrative Skills	
	Note-taking
	Organized
	Detail oriented/attention to detail
	Time management
	Timeliness/prompt/punctual
D.5. Physical Capabilities*	
	Feel size, shape and temperature or texture of objects with hands (if applicable)
	Write or type at a fast speed
	Talk or communicate in some manner
	Hear speech
	Personal hygiene/appropriate dress/dresses appropriately for the assessment (consistent with the staff of the CAB)

	Physical stamina
	Can work inside and outside
	Can work in confined spaces (if applicable)

* It is noted that some physical capabilities outlined in Annex 2, D5 may be achieved through other mechanisms as determined by the AB (e.g. an assessor who cannot hear speech may make alternative arrangements with the AB to fulfil the assessment objectives).

Further Information:

For further information on this document or other IAF documents, contact any member of IAF or the IAF Secretariat.

For contact details of members of IAF see the IAF website: <http://www.iaf.nu>

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