

1 PURPOSE

The purpose of the procedure is to describe the required elements of the accredited standards certification process that shall be carried out in accordance with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17021-1 standard, enabling activities to be conducted in a controlled, consistent, and effective manner

2 SCOPE

This procedure applies to all applications for certification received and describes the operational management activity directly relating to audit, certification, surveillance, certificate renewal, transfers and changes to scope specific to accredited certifications by CERE.

3 RESPONSIBILITIES

All CERE staff involved in the operational management aspects of certification activities are responsible for the implementation of and conformance with this procedure. Typically, this would include the Certification Director, Auditors and Administrative staff. The Certification Director and the Quality Manager have the responsibility for the periodic review and update of this procedure

4 PROCEDURE

The certification activities to be performed are determined by the conformity assessment requested to CERE and that currently is:

4.1 Application

Applications related to the accredited certification standard will be made according to the application form for certification services QF9.3, signed by an authorized representative of the client. The document shall be common to the initial request, surveillance, recertification, extension, amendments and for a notification change. All applications will be received and assessed by the Certification Director

4.2 Application review

If the application is appropriate, a review of the application will be carried out. This review verifies the documentation submitted to CERE. It will also be checked whether the scope requested is consistent with the CERE 's scopes of certification and the accredited standards.

If the application or the documentation presented does not comply with the established procedures or there are inconsistencies between the requested procedure and the information declared by the interested party in the application form, CERE shall request the interested party to correct the deficiencies found by email within the next 10 working days.

If the application meets all the requirements demanded and there are not inconsistencies between the requested procedure and the information declared in the application form, the application will be admitted for processing

When an application is admitted by the Certification Director a commercial offer and a contract review is performed. Any changes to the application indicated by the client shall be reviewed by the Certification Director and a decision made to accept the contract or issue a new proposal.

When the application is accepted by the client, a contract file is opened, including the application, commercial offer, certification agreement and any other associated document.

4.3 Processing

Based on information from the commercial offer and approved competencies in the qualification matrix, an appropriate qualified audit team is appointed to conduct the stage 1 & 2 audits. The audit team size and composition shall be made by the Certification Director based on the size of the organisation to be audited, the outsourced processes and the relevant technical area skills, and the auditor status required to cover the scope of the audit.

CERE administrative staff shall prepare a notification letter to be sent by email to the client well in advance of each booked activity. The client shall be requested to confirm their agreement in writing with the established dates and the proposed audit team.

The audit team leader shall contact the client sufficiently in advance of the booked audit dates to allow for obtaining any necessary advance information or documentation from the client and send them the audit plan.

4.4 Certification process

The main objectives of the certification process are to generate documented and traceable certification decisions and to provide certification documents to clients within a timely manner. These objectives are achieved by documented and impartial certification decisions, selecting, qualifying and appointing competent personnel for such decisions, and issuing CERE certificates within the defined time limits.

The certification process describes the process for the decision about granting (issuance), refusing, maintaining, renewing, suspending, reinstating, withdrawing and annulment of certificates, certification decision, and the competence and monitoring criteria for persons involved in these decisions.

4.4.1 Certification decision

The criteria for suspension, reinstatement, withdrawal and annulment of certificates are defined and legally binding agreed by the client through its acceptance of QF8.3 Offer, including any sector specific amendments.

All decisions (unless in the case of terminations by the client) about suspension, reinstatement, withdrawal and annulment shall be done by the Certification Director and the client shall be informed accordingly by written. If the customer does not accept the ruling, the impartiality committee can be called upon. CERE administrative staff responsible client service personnel participate and assist in the separate steps of the process and is responsible for the necessary status adjustments of the certificates in the CERE data base, notifications to the client, and recalling the original certificates.

4.4.2 Audit due to special circumstances

Audit due to special circumstances can be necessary for the following reasons:

- Extension or expansion of scope of operation
- Announcement of audit at short notice to review complaints, major changes and suspension of certificates.

This may be conducted in conjunction with a surveillance audit, recertification, or extra-ordinary audit. For this audit, the audit aims and criteria shall be defined from case to case by the CERE.

Stage 1 is not normally required for scope expansions or extension of scope such as adding remotes; address changes as long as the management system has not been affected; or scope wording changes/corrections. Additions to scopes will need to be evaluated as to the effects on the management system; a stage 1 may or may not be required depending on the significance to the management system.

4.4.3 Suspension

CERE is entitled to suspend temporarily a certificate if Client violates certification, contractual or financial obligations towards CERE, including but are not limited to

- Corrective actions to the management system have not been demonstrably and effectively implemented within the agreed upon time frame.
- The schedule of audits suggested by CERE for audit(s) necessary for the maintenance of the certification have not been complied.
- CERE has not been informed in a timely manner about planned changes to the management system and other changes which affect the system's conformity with the standard which forms the basis for the certification.
- The certified client has a voluntary requested a suspension.
- A CERE certificate or a certification symbol has been used in a misleading or unauthorized manner.
- Due payments for auditing and certification services have not been made in time, following at least one written reminder.

CERE will notify Client of a proposed suspension in writing. If the reasons for the proposed suspension are not eliminated within two weeks, CERE will inform Client in writing of the suspension of the certificate stating the reasons as well as the corrective actions necessary for the certification to be reinstated. Certificates are suspended for a restricted period (usually a maximum of 90 days). If the required measures have been implemented demonstrably and effectively by the established deadline, the suspension of the certificate is cancelled. If the required measures have not been implemented within the established deadline, CERE may withdraw the certificate as set forth below.

4.4.4 Reinstatement

CERE verifies the effective implementation of the identified corrective actions from the certified client before the end of the suspension period. This verification shall take place on site or not, at the decision of CERE. If the required measures have been implemented demonstrably and effectively by the established deadline, the suspension will be lifted, and the certificate reinstated. The decision has to be taken by the Certification Director, depending on the results of the verification. If the required measures have not been implemented within the established deadline, CERE may withdraw the certificate as set forth below. The decision about reinstatement or withdrawal shall be notified to the client.

4.4.5 Withdrawal

CERE is entitled to withdraw certificates or to declare them invalid upon written notice to client if:

- The suspension period of the certificate has been exceeded.
- The conformity of the management system with the standard or specification on which it is based is not ensured or client is not willing or able to eliminate nonconformities.
- Client continues to use the certification for promotion following the suspension of the certificate.
- Client uses the certification in such a way as to undermine the reputation of the accreditation body or CERE.
- The preconditions which led to issuing the certificate no longer apply.
- Client files any voluntary or involuntary petition in bankruptcy.
- Client effectively terminates its contractual relationship with CERE.

When the decision is to withdraw the certificate, the client shall be informed about the decision, its consequences (it is not any allowed to use the certificate for marketing or any other purposes) and shall be requested to return the original certificate.

4.5 Certificates

The certificate data such as scope, addresses, dates, etc. shall be published directly from the client database using the appropriate CERE approved certificate template. The certification document shall be

formatted to fit on ISO A4 size security paper. Font sizes and formatting may be adjusted slightly where sensible to do in order to adjust the certificate content to a single page. All issued certificates will be included in the CERE database Certificate.

CERE certificate templates are available in Spanish and/or English languages, according to the client requested language.

4.6 Maintaining certification

This process applies to all accredited audit procedures based on ISO/IEC 17021-1. As a rule, CERE certificates have a validity of 3 years.

Surveillance audits needs to be planned/scheduled based on the last day of the preceding initial audit at least once in 12 months.

The date of the first surveillance audit following initial certification shall be no more than 12 months from the last day of the stage 2 audit and should be conducted no more than 3 months prior to the “due by date”.