

KQ Certification Limited (KQC) - Certification Process



Achieving Independent third-party Certification will provide your clients and stakeholders with confidence that you are able to routinely meet their requirements, are committed to continual improvement and proactively manage risk and opportunities. In addition, certification opens new opportunities that are not open to uncertified organisations.

KQC will guide you through the entire process in plain language with professional support.

Management systems Certification can be achieved and maintained in seven steps:



Introduction to the Certification Process

KQ Certification Limited (KQC) supports organizations through a structured certification process designed to ensure that management systems conform to internationally recognized standards. The certification journey provides a clear and transparent pathway from initial enquiry through certification and ongoing maintenance of certification.

The process is designed to ensure that certification decisions are based on objective evidence of conformity and that certified organizations continue to maintain effective and compliant management systems throughout the certification cycle.

Your enquiry for Certification services – Step one

Submit your enquiry to KQC outlining your certification requirements and objectives. KQC can then initiate the information gathering process to shape the required certification services solution.

Engagement for Certification services – Step two

Initially KQ Certification's team will take the time to understand your requirements and objectives for Certification, explain the process to achieve Certification, and provide a proposal for service.

On acceptance of the proposal, we will assign a client manager to guide you through the entire process, giving you the support that you should expect from a professional services provider. KQC operates in accordance with the principles of impartiality, confidentiality and competence required under ISO/IEC 17021-1.

Pre-Certification assessment (optional) – Step three

The Pre-Certification assessment is an evaluation of your organisation's management system and its actual or intended implementation against the requirements of the specific Standard(s) that Certification is sought for e.g. Quality Management Systems - ISO 9001:2015, Environmental Management Systems - ISO 14001:2015, Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems - ISO 45001.

Often referred to as 'gap analysis', this optional step provides a clear understanding of your organisation's state of readiness for Certification, identifying any areas which require attention and providing further improvement opportunities that will serve the organization in the future. For many it is a reassuring step that will provide confidence in knowing the level of conformity ahead of the assessment for Certification and helps to familiarize staff with the process for your formal assessment.

Initial Certification - Step four

Initial certification audits are conducted to establish suitability for Certification for the Standard(s) to be certified against. All initial Certification audits are conducted in two stages. The Audit duration is determined in accordance with applicable international accreditation requirements, including IAF Mandatory Documents. Initial certification - Stage one and Initial certification - Stage two audits as follows:

- **Initial Certification - Stage one audit**

The Initial certification - Stage one audit is used to assess your management system capability to conform to the requirements of the Standard(s) to be certified against and supports the achievement of the organization's policy and objectives, including regulatory compliance.

During the Initial certification - Stage one audit our team will assess the management system, as it has been defined, to establish that with implementation it has the capability of conforming with the requirements of the Standard(s) to be certified against and supports suitably defined organizational policy and objectives.

The outcome of the Initial certification - Stage one audit is either a recommendation to proceed to the Initial certification - Stage two audit and/or to proceed after areas of concern identified have been suitably addressed. The date of the Initial certification - Stage two audit can then be scheduled (within six months of the Initial certification - Stage one audit).

- **Initial Certification - Stage two audit**

The focus of the Initial Certification - Stage two audit is the assessment of the implementation of the management system for the full scope of the Certification sought; this will include suitable sampling of all operations against the full set of requirements from the Standard(s) to be certified against. Our team recognize that you have 'normal business' attend to and will seek to minimize disruption from the audit process.

The outcome of the Initial Certification - Stage two audit can be recommended for Certification, recommended for Certification once non-conformities identified have been addressed or are not suitable for Certification at this stage. Where non-conformities are identified your Lead Auditor will explain expectations for your response and corrective action plan, together with the timescales.

Certification decision - Step five

Upon completion of the initial audits for Certification (stage one and stage two) a KQC Certification decision maker (Certification Authority), will conduct an internal review of the audit to evaluate the outcomes of the audit process including related recommendations of the audit team.

Based on the objective evidence obtained during the initial certification audits and the conclusions of the audit team, the Certification Authority makes a decision to grant Certification where there is sufficient objective evidence of conformity.

Notes:

A similar review is conducted for the maintenance, renewal and/or restoration of certification to establish that there is sufficient objective evidence of conformity in the case of Surveillance (as applicable), Recertification or special audit visits.

Where there are audit conclusions that provide insufficient evidence of conformity or significant evidence of non-conformity, a decision to refuse, suspend or withdraw certification will be made.

Where the client organization seriously fails to meet Certification requirements such as timely completion of audits, lack of implementation of effective corrective actions or default of payment, the Certification decision maker (Certification Authority) may also decide on a reduction of scope, refusal, suspension or withdrawal of Certification.

Certification - Step six

With a positive decision for Certification from the Certification decision maker (Certification Authority) your Certificate(s) will be issued, and you have achieved the status of a registered organization.

You will receive guidance on the use of your new Certification and Certification marks so that you can get the most benefit from your newly gained Certification.

The guidance will also provide information on representing your new Certification accurately and what is required to maintain the Certification.



Certification maintenance - Step seven

To maintain your Certification surveillance audits are required in years one and two, within the anniversary of the Certification decision, with a Recertification audit completed before the third anniversary of the certification decision, to assess the on-going levels of conformity. Surveillance audits include coverage of key elements of the management system and sample other areas across the three-year certification cycle. The certification cycle is three years from the date of the certification decision.

The Recertification audit in year three is similar to the Stage two-Initial Certification audit, focusing on assessing the currency and implementation of the management system for the full scope of the Certification. This will include suitable sampling of all operations against the full set of requirements from the Standard(s) Certified against and consider the audit results through the Certification cycle.

The Lead Auditor will work with you to define an audit programme that includes the surveillance audits and sampling required, to ensure the Certification process objectives are met and continuity of certification is achieved.

For more information about Certification services please contact:
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