

Client information note

Assessment Process – Stage 1

Overview

This Client information note explains our Stage 1 process for Management System assessment and certification. Please see other CINs in this series for explanations of our other processes.

Objective of the visit

The assessor will review the system to determine that it fulfils the requirements of the assessment criteria and covers the activities detailed within the assessment scope.

The assessor will then interview the senior management of the company to determine that they have undertaken the following:

- Stakeholder Analysis
- Strategic Analysis
- An analysis of the risk that could impact upon their business
- That they have determined the context in which the system will operate, and
- That they have identified any applicable legal, statutory or regulatory requirements that the system has to address

The assessor will then use the information gathered as a result of these interviews to review the design of the system, to determine if you have addressed the potential risk within the system and to determine if the needs of your stakeholders have been addressed.

In addition, the assessor will review and confirm the contractual arrangements you have in place with LRQA. This includes any changes required as a result of the outcome of the Stage 1 visit (including changes to the scope of assessment, duration of the Stage 2 visit, and duration of subsequent surveillance visits). The assessor will also determine the planning, logistics, sampling, etc. that will be used during the Stage 2 visit.

Carrying out the visit

The LRQA office will confirm the details as to the assessor or assessment team, the dates and duration of the visit to you in advance, the assessment team leader will confirm the timings of the visit and any logistical issues with you on their initial contact.

The visit starts with an opening meeting. The assessor will explain to your management team how we carry out assessments, and you will be able to introduce your company. The assessor will agree the details of the plan for the visit with you.

As part of the plan for the visit the assessor will then:

- Review the design and documentation of your system against the assessment standard and proposed assessment scope
- Produce a detailed plan for the Stage 2 visit, and
- Produce a focused report which describes both positive findings, and any issues requiring your attention before the Stage 2 visit takes place. The report will identify the grading of these issues as if they were findings outstanding at the end of the Stage 2 visit.

The assessor will also need to review:

- **Policy**
- **Main roles and responsibilities**
- **Site activities** – the assessor will, as appropriate, tour the site to:
 - Confirm the processes and products covered by the management system
 - Identify current controls and performance, and
 - Get to know the site ready for the Stage 2 assessment.
- **Product and statutory requirements** - our assessor will look at any product and service performance or standards compliance claims that you make in your company literature. They will also check that any applicable legal, statutory or regulatory requirements, relating to your organization and the assessment criteria to be met, have been addressed in your management system.
- **Continual improvement** – the assessor will look at your objectives and assess whether they reflect your policy. He or she will also make sure that:
 - Objectives are established and support continual improvement
 - Appropriate planning has been conducted to achieve objectives, and
 - Measuring and reporting on performance have been dealt with.

- **Operational arrangements** – the assessor will check that procedures are established to control your management system processes.
- **Monitoring and measurement** – the assessor will check that an appropriate range of measuring and monitoring processes, including internal audit programmes and reports, are in place to measure performance. He or she will also review how your management system performs, including your progress against objectives.

Our assessor will then look at whether the following system elements are in place:

- **Management system documentation**
- **Corrective and preventive action**
- **internal audits**, including a review of the audit programme and reports
- **Management review process**, including a review of records.

The visit ends with a closing meeting to present the Stage 1 report and agree the next stage of the assessment process.

The documentation reviewed during the Stage 1 visit will be used at future visits as a baseline. However, you should continue to amend system documents as a result of internal improvement activities. At each visit we will need to identify the changes between the latest issue and the baseline.

Reporting

At the end of the visit we will produce a report which details the outcome of the visit and any findings raised.

Further information

To find out more about how LRQA can help you to increase performance and reduce risk, please visit our website www.lrga.com. From here you can also visit one of our country specific websites to find out about LRQA in your country.