

1 Application for Certification

To enable **BVQA** to accurately estimate the amount of time and expertise needed for audits, organizations (client) are required to complete questionnaire and return to **BVQA**.

2 THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS

The details of the services to be provided will be agreed between organizations and **BVQA** by signing Service Contract. **BVQA** will provide an audit programme prior to the commencement of the audit.

3 Initial certification audit

The initial certification audit of a management system shall be conducted in two stages: stage 1 and stage 2.

4 Stage 1 audit

The stage 1 audit shall be performed to:

- Review the organization's documented management system against the requirements of the Standard
- Evaluate the organization's location and site specific conditions and their preparedness for the stage 2 audit.
- Review the organizations status and understanding of the requirements of the Standard in particular significant key performance, processes, objectives and operation of the management system.
- Gather information relating to the scope of the management system, processes, equipment used and location(s) of organizations including statutory and regulatory aspects and compliance.
- Review the allocation of resources and arrangements for the stage 2 audit.
- Gain sufficient understanding of the organizations management system and operational processes to enable effective planning for the stage 2 audit.
- Evaluate the status (planned or performed) of internal audit and management review to substantiate organizations are ready for the stage 2 audit.

Stage 1 audit can be conducted at the **BVQA** local office (off site), or at organization's premises (on-site) in order to achieve the objectives stated above. The decision will be at the discretion of **BVQA**'s Team Leader of subsequent stage 2 audit, or upon Client's request.

Clients shall make available to **BVQA** at least 4 weeks before the audit all valid documents relating to the management system (manual, procedures, and where appropriate, work instructions & forms) for document review.

If stage 1 audit is conducted off-site, in order to achieve the objectives stated above for stage 1 audit, other necessary information will be gathered through many effective methods such as email, fax, telecommunication, teleconferencing, meeting with Client's representatives at **BVQA** office or at Client's premises etc. Audit findings will be informed to Clients via email, through telecommunication, teleconferencing etc. If potential nonconformities, and/or observations, and/or opportunities for future improvement are identified, stage 1 audit report will be sent to Clients for necessary actions need taken.

In determining the interval between stage 1 and stage 2 audits, consideration shall be given to the needs of organizations to resolve areas of concern identified during the stage 1 audit. For food safety management systems, the interval between stage 1 and stage 2 audits is reasonably expected to be not longer than 6 months. **BVQA** may also need to revise its arrangements for stage 2 following stage 1 audit findings.

5 Stage 2 audit

The purpose of the stage 2 audit is to evaluate the implementation, including effectiveness, of the organization's management system. The stage 2 audit shall take place at the site(s) of organizations. It shall include at least the following:

- Information and evidence about conformity to all requirements of the applicable management system standard or other normative document;
- Performance monitoring, measuring, reporting and reviewing against key performance objectives and targets (consistent with the expectations in the applicable management system standard or other normative document);

- The organization's management system ability and its performance regarding meeting of applicable statutory, regulatory and contractual requirements;
- Operational control of the organization's processes;
- Internal auditing and management review;
- Management responsibility for the organization's policies;

The **BVQA** audit team will discuss any non-conformities, observations, opportunities for improvement if and when they identified during the audit.

The **BVQA** audit team will prepare and present to organization's management a report of the audit, which will include: The audit findings, audit conclusion and seek agreement where necessary, on the nature of any corrective actions to be taken.

6 Nonconformity

Major Non-conformities: nonconformity that affects the capability of the management system to achieve the intended results.

Minor Non-conformities: nonconformity that does not affect the capability of the management system to achieve the intended results.

Clients shall plan corrective actions for all non-conformities, including analysing root cause, describe correction and corrective/preventive actions may taken, deadline for implementation and person in charge. **BVQA** will verify evidences of correction and corrective actions for major non-conformities before recommending certification. Evidences of correction and corrective actions for minor non-conformities will be verified in the next audit. Major Non-conformities must be closed within 6 months after the audit. If **BVQA** is not able to verify the implementation of corrections and corrective actions of any major nonconformity within 6 months after the last day of stage 2, BVQA shall conduct another stage 2 prior to recommending certification.

7 Issuance of Certification

BVQA makes a decision to grant certification to Clients if there is sufficient evidence of conformity. The certificate will detail the specification(s) to which organizations have been found compliant at the time of audit and the scope of the management system.

Accompanying the certificates will be a policy document explaining how to display and use the **BVQA** Certification Mark and associated logos.

8 Surveillance Audit

The Certificate is valid in three years. Surveillance audits will be conducted annually by **BVQA** to ensure that Client's management system continues to meet the requirements of the standard(s) and operating effectively.

The planning and performance of surveillance audits follows the procedure of the initial certification audit. Surveillance audits are on-site audits, but are not necessarily full system audits, and shall be planned together with the other surveillance activities so that **BVQA** can maintain confidence that the client's certified management system continues to fulfil requirements between recertification audits, i.e. it is not necessary to audit all processes as the initial certification audit, but it must be ensured that each requirement of the standards and representative areas and functions covered by the certified scope of the management system shall be evaluated at least once during the certification period. Each surveillance for the relevant management system standard shall include:

- a) internal audits and management review;
- b) a review of actions taken on nonconformities identified during the previous audit;
- c) complaints handling;
- d) effectiveness of the management system with regard to achieving the certified client's objectives and the intended results of the respective management system (s);
- e) progress of planned activities aimed at continual improvement;
- f) continuing operational control;
- g) review of any changes;
- h) use of marks and/or any other reference to certification.

The date of the first surveillance audit following initial certification shall not be more than 12 months from the certification decision date. The first three-year certification cycle begins with the certification decision. Subsequent cycles begin with the recertification decision. The baseline for calculating surveillance due dates (and also recertification due dates) is the initial certification decision date.

Surveillance audits should be conducted one month before the due dates. Extensions or delays do not change the due date of the following audit.

The approval of **BVQA** for an extension of **two additional months** can be obtained before passing of the due date. After this period, the certificate will be suspended. But for the first surveillance audit of the initial certification cycle, certification will be suspended if the first surveillance audit following initial certification is delayed more than 12 months from the certification decision date.

Beyond the six month window the certificate will be withdrawn. The suspended or withdrawn status of the certification will be publicly accessible via www.bvqa.org. Renewal of registration then requires a full certification audit.

BVQA has the right to request unscheduled visits if circumstances indicate that continued confidence in the certified management system cannot be sustained.

Prior to the surveillance audit the auditor reviews changes in system documentation and parameters. The client maybe requested to provide this information in writing about four weeks before the due date of the audit.

If non-conformities are detected, the auditor follows the same procedure as initial certification audit. While waiting for verifying correction and corrective actions for non-conformities, the current certificate maybe suspended. Beyond the required deadline but correction and corrective actions evidence for non-conformities not available to **BVQA**, certification will be withdrawn.

9 Re-certification Audit

Every 3 years, **BVQA** will conduct recertification audit to review organization's certification.

The recertification audit shall be planned and conducted to evaluate the continued fulfilment of all of the requirements of the relevant management system standard or other normative document. The purpose of the recertification audit is to confirm the continued conformity and effectiveness of the management system as a whole, and its continued relevance and applicability for the scope of certification.

The recertification audit shall consider the performance of the management system over the period of certification, and include the review of previous surveillance audit reports.

Recertification audit activities may need to have a stage 1 audit in situations where there have been significant changes to the management system, the client, or the context in which the management system is operating (e.g. changes to legislation).

The recertification audit shall include an on-site audit that addresses the following:

- a) the effectiveness of the management system in its entirety in the light of internal and external changes and its continued relevance and applicability to the scope of certification;
- b) demonstrated commitment to maintain the effectiveness and improvement of the management system in order to enhance overall performance;
- c) the effectiveness of the management system with regard to achieving the certified client's objectives and the intended results of the respective management system (s).

The recertification audit should be performed within a one month window before the due date. Extensions or delays do not change the due date of the following audit or the validity of the certificate.

The approval of **BVQA** for an extension of up to six months can be obtained before passing of the due date. During this period, the certificate will be expired, but the audit can be performed with regular effort. The validity of the registration will remain as if the audit had been conducted on time (no extension of validity because of the delay).

Beyond the six month window the certificate will be withdrawn and removed from **BVQA** website and/or certification status will be noted with "Certification Withdrawn". Renewal of registration then requires a full initial certification audit.

Re-certification is carried out under the same conditions as initial certification. Results of previous surveillance audits, deviations and findings are taken into account during the planning phase.

10 Extension Audit/Expanding scope audit

Extension of the scope of an existing certificate is achieved by an extension audit, which can be conducted separately or during surveillance and re-certification. The period of validity of a certificate is not affected. Extensions can include changes / extensions of the standard, scope or exclusions or changes, addition or removal of location.

The audit team reviews the MS documents and audits all requirements relevant to the extension. The further procedure follows that of a certification audit.

11 Upgrade Audit/Transition Audit

Upgrade audits apply when companies request the “upgrade” of an older revision of a management system standard to the most recent version. Conditions for upgrade audits vary and will be defined along with the conditions that apply for the specific standard (e.g. such as issued by IAF). Upgrade audits are typically limited in time and not possible after the standard has officially expired (again, IAF usually provides guidance).

12 Short-notice Audits

It may be necessary for **BVQA** to conduct audits of certified clients at short notice or unannounced in one or more of the below situations:

- **BVQA** receive complaints against certified clients regarding certified MS scopes.
- Follow up on suspended clients.
- In response to changes (change of ownership, changes in personnel or equipment, relocation etc.).

In such cases, **BVQA** shall exercise additional care in the assignment of the audit team because of the lack of opportunity for the client to object to audit team members.

Based on short-notice audit findings, audit team will recommend **BVQA** for maintenance, suspension, withdrawal or reduction of the scope of certification.

13 Suspension, Withdrawal or Cancellation of the Certificate

BVQA reserves the right to suspend, withdraw, reduce, extend or cancel the certificate at any time and will give 2 months written notice or such shorter notice as the situation may require depending upon the information available to **BVQA**. If such actions are deemed necessary, the Clients will be fully briefed, the Clients will be given every possible opportunity to take corrective action before a final decision is taken on what action **BVQA** should take.

Client's certification will be suspended for one or more of the following reason(s):

- Results of surveillance audit reveals that the Client's certified management system has persistently or seriously failed to meet certification requirements, including requirements for the effectiveness of the management system,
- Regular surveillance audit can not be conducted at the required frequencies for reasons attributable to the Client,
 - Non-conformities are not corrected within specified time,
 - Failure to notify **BVQA** without delay of any significant changes in the certified management system or significant implementation changes which are of major importance for the certification,
 - Wrongful use of the certificate or the certification mark,
 - Failure to pay the fees after several reminders,
 - The certified client has voluntarily requested a suspension.

Under suspension, the Client's management system certification is temporarily invalid. In this time, the Client refrains from further promotion of the certification. Within 60 days since Letter of Suspension issued, if Client resolve the issues that have resulted in the suspension and inform **BVQA**, **BVQA** will verify the corrections and (with positive review results) will lift the suspension and the certification is back in effect.

If the suspension is not removed within the specified time, **BVQA** will release Letter of Withdrawal of Certification. After this time, Client must send back to **BVQA** all original certificates and cease from promotion of its certification.

BVQA reserves the right to publish the fact that such action has been taken. Upon request by any party, **BVQA** shall correctly state the status of certification of the Client's management system as being suspended, withdrawn or reduced.

14 Reducing the scope of certification

BVQA shall reduce the client's scope of certification to exclude the parts not meeting the requirements, when the client has persistently or seriously failed to meet the certification requirements for those parts of the scope of certification. Any such reduction shall be in line with the requirements of the standard used for certification. After reducing the scope of certification, certification status will be updated in website www.bvqa.org