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# HKCAS Information Notes No. 1

## Application Procedures for HKCAS Accreditation

### *(Informative)*

This document provides a summary of the procedures for accreditation of certification bodies, validation and verification bodies under HKCAS. Detailed accreditation procedures are given in Chapter 4 of HKAS 002 – ‘Regulations for HKAS Accreditation’.

#### **STEP 1 - SUBMISSION OF APPLICATION**

- (i) A potential applicant organisation contacts HKAS Executive in writing.
- (ii) For an initial application for accreditation, HKAS Executive provides an appropriate HKAS accreditation criteria documents as shown below to the potential applicant organisation upon request:

For management system certification body:

HKCAS 003      Technical Criteria for Accreditation of Management System Certification Bodies

For product certification body:

HKCAS 023      Technical Criteria for Accreditation of Product Certification Bodies

For accreditation criteria documents directly adopted from accreditation standards (e.g. ISO/IEC 17029, ISO 14065, ISO 14066, ISO 14064-3), the applicant organisation is required to purchase the standards from the standards body. Other HKAS published documents are available at HKAS website ([www.hkas.gov.hk](http://www.hkas.gov.hk)) for free download.

- (iii) The applicant organisation submits an application including the following documents to HKAS Executive:
  - (a) A completed HKCAS 005 ‘Application for Accreditation of a Certification Body (CB) or Validation and Verification Body (V/VB) / Application for Extension of Scope of Accreditation of a CB or V/VB’

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(b) A completed applicable Assessment/Reassessment Questionnaire together with the required documents:

- HKCAS 007 (with Annex I and applicable Annex II) - for a management system certification body
- HKCAS 013 (with Annex I and Annex II) - for a product certification body
- HKCAS 021 (with Annex I and applicable Annex II) - for a validation and verification body

(c) An appropriate application fee as stated in HKCAS 006

## **STEP 2 - PRELIMINARY VISIT [For an initial application only]**

- (i) After reviewing the documents submitted by the applicant organisation, HKAS Executive arranges a preliminary visit to the organisation to:
  - (a) answer any queries regarding HKAS accreditation requirements and procedures,
  - (b) identify any obvious nonconformities with the accreditation criteria,
  - (c) evaluate the organisation's readiness for a HKCAS assessment visit,
  - (d) determine an appropriate schedule for the initial assessment visit to the organisation.
- (ii) Where necessary, the applicant organisation submits additional/revised documents as required by HKAS Executive after the preliminary visit.

## **STEP 3 - PREPARATION FOR ASSESSMENT**

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- (i) The assessment team leader may ask the applicant organisation for further information during document review. HKAS Executive may decide not to proceed with the initial assessment visit if the team leader has identified a critical or significant nonconformity during document review and/or the preliminary visit. HKAS will then inform the applicant organisation in writing.
- (ii) HKAS Executive, where necessary, selects suitable technical experts or assessors to undertake the initial assessment of the organisation.
- (iii) The assessment team leader proposes the date(s) of initial assessment visit for the applicant organisation's agreement.

Note : An applicant organisation may object to the appointment of any assessment team member only if it can provide a valid reason.

#### **STEP 4 - ON-SITE ASSESSMENT VISIT**

- (i) The assessment team assesses the office of the organisation and its branch offices where key activities are performed. The assessment team also conducts on-site witnessing of the organisation's audit/validation/verification team in providing certification/validation/verification services and interview with personnel.

For certification, the assessment team may select initial certification audits (including both stage 1 and 2 audits for assessment of management system certification bodies), surveillance or recertification audits for witnessing.

Normally, the assessment team witnesses the full on-site audit/validation/verification, unless objectives for assessing the competence in performing a particular activity can be satisfied with a partial witnessing. The assessment team, at its discretion, witnesses post-audit/validation/verification activities (for examples, nonconformities handling, audit/validation/verification report reviewing, certification/validation/verification decision making, etc.) and/or review relevant records.

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- (ii) Upon completion of the assessment visit, the assessment team provides the management of the organisation with an assessment report which includes
- the assessment team’s recommendation on granting of accreditation to the applicant organisation for all or part of activities shown in the scope of accreditation sought;
  - a list of actions, where applicable, to be undertaken by the applicant organisation before HKAS Executive makes a decision on granting accreditation to the applicant organisation; and
  - details of follow-up actions to be taken by HKAS Executive.

Note : Personnel involved in certification/validation/verification activities, for example, those carrying out contract reviews, those conducting audits or validations/verifications, those reviewing audit reports or validation/verification opinions, and those making decisions, should be available for interview on the assessment dates. Where necessary, HKAS Executive would notify the organisation being assessed for interview arrangement in advance.

## **STEP 5 - ASSESSMENT OUTCOME**

- (i) For an assessment visit under a new certification/validation/verification service, the assessment results will be reviewed by HKAS Executive as well as Accreditation Advisory Board (AAB). After review, HKAS Executive will issue the assessment results to the organisation through an outcome letter.
- (ii) For an assessment visit for extending the scope of accreditation under a certification/validation/verification service for which the organisation is already accredited, the assessment results will normally be reviewed by HKAS Executive only. After review, HKAS Executive will issue the assessment results to the organisation through an outcome letter.
- (iii) In most cases, specific matters which require the applicant/accredited organisation’s attention before accreditation can be further considered are listed in the assessment report and/or in the outcome letter.

## **STEP 6 - REMEDIAL ACTIONS (if required)**

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- (i) Upon receipt of a written reply from an applicant/accredited organisation that all required actions have been taken, HKAS Executive will take an appropriate follow-up action. The actions undertaken by the applicant/accredited organisation may be confirmed through reviewing documents submitted by the applicant/accredited organisation and, where necessary, a follow-up visit by the assessment team. Under certain circumstances, a full on-site assessment visit will be conducted by the assessment team.
- (ii) Once all actions undertaken by the applicant/accredited organisation are acceptable, HKAS Executive will make a decision on granting accreditation to the organisation through a formal notification letter, which includes the scope of accreditation. HKAS Executive will issue a certificate of accreditation to the organisation if accreditation is granted under a new certification/validation/verification service.

## **STEP 7 - AFTER GRANTING ACCREDITATION**

- (i) After accreditation is granted to a new accredited organisation, such organisation will be reassessed every three years. Regular surveillance visits will also be conducted routinely every six or twelve months to ensure that the accredited organisation maintains its competence for performing specific activities in accordance with the accreditation criteria. HKAS Executive has discretion to vary the period for surveillance visit as it sees fit.
- (ii) An accredited organisation may apply to HKAS Executive for extending or reducing its scope of accreditation. Such changes may require an on-site assessment.
- (iii) Under HKAS Regulations, an applicant/accredited organisation is required to notify HKAS Executive immediately in writing of any changes in the organisation's circumstances which may affect its continued compliance with HKAS accreditation requirements. Examples of such changes are given in Clause 5.9 of HKAS 002.

**END**