



Swiss Association
for Quality and Management
Systems (SQS)

Product Rules

SQS Conformity Assessment



Swiss Made

MEMBER OF



1. Introduction

SQS has established the general terms and conditions, as well as the rights and obligations in connection with its services (namely, certification of management systems and products, as well as assessment, inspection, verification/validation, and training) in its Regulations for SQS services and warranty marks.

In this product rules, SQS regulates the specific procedure and conditions for conformity assessment activities related to the normative standards listed below. These product rules apply in conjunction with the Regulation for SQS services and warranty marks.

Further information on the individual products is available on the SQS website under «[Overview of SQS Accreditations](#)».

2. Product Segments and Approval Systems

The product categories listed below, which are subject to a conformity assessment by SQS, are governed by the provisions of this regulation, unless product-specific rules exist or apply in addition (subject to change).

The links provided lead to the respective SQS homepage, «[Overview of SQS Accreditations](#)», which lists not only accreditations but also relevant references to approvals, recognitions, and non-accredited products.

Where product-specific provisions deviate from or conflict with the provisions of these SQS Product Regulations, the product-specific provisions shall prevail. In all other respects, the provisions of these SQS Product Regulations shall apply.

2.1 Accredited certification systems for management systems, products, and inspection bodies (Type A)

Information on accredited products can be found on the SQS homepage under «[Overview of SQS Accreditations](#)» under [Swiss Accreditation Service \(SAS\)](#), Accredia (Italy) «[Banche Dati - Accredia - Organismi accreditati e riconosciuti](#)» and other accreditations.

2.2 Approval/Recognition by System Owners

Products that are not accredited but are approved or recognized by another organization are listed on the SQS website under «[Overview of SQS Accreditations](#)» in the section «Other Approvals».

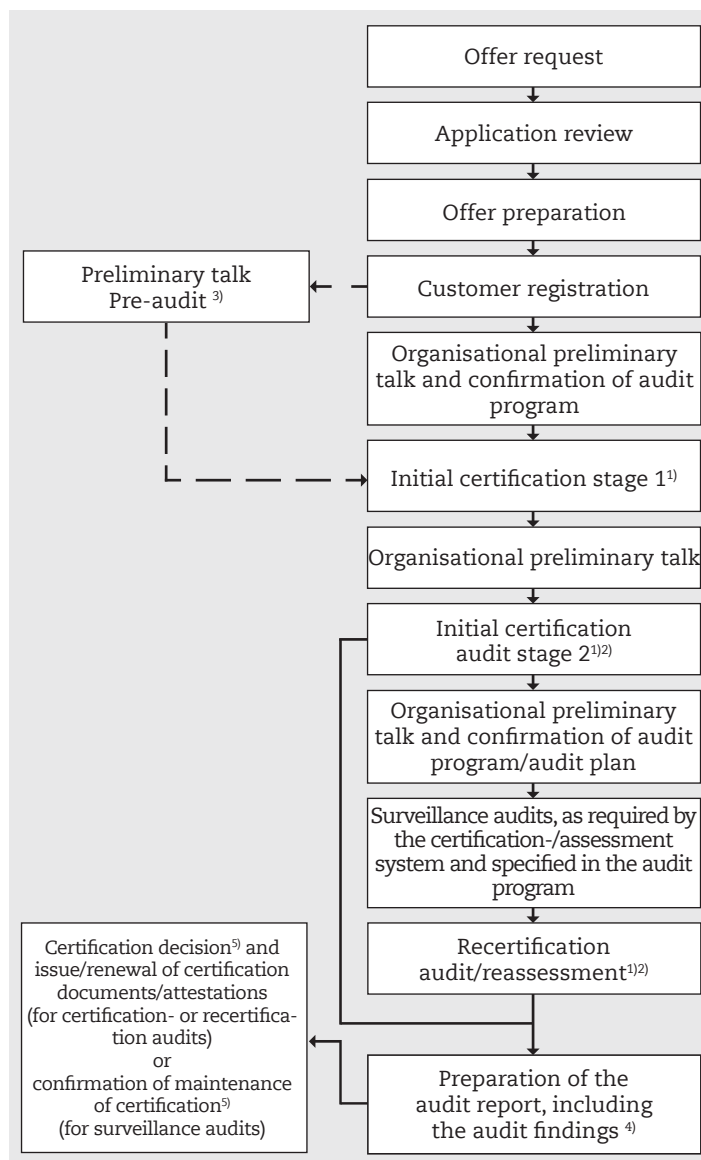
2.3 Non-accredited assessment systems

Information about non-accredited products, or additional information about products, can be found in the section «[Services](#)».

3. Certification-, assessment-, inspection-, and verification/validation procedures

To determine and, where applicable, monitor ongoing compliance with the requirements for management systems, products, evaluation systems, inspection activities, and validation and verification activities, SQS applies the following procedures:

Certification-/assessment procedure



1) For some certification systems, the audit has to be conducted on-site at the customer's premises.

2) An audit plan is prepared in advance

3) Optional services

4) Audit findings are the conclusions of the audit team based on the evidence gathered during the audit and its evaluation against the applicable requirements. Audit findings may include, in particular nonconformities, opportunities for improvement, and positive findings. All audit findings are presented to the customer during the closing meeting and documented in the audit report. The customer must address nonconformities in accordance with SQS guidelines and—where applicable—in accordance with the relevant programs, regulations, or certification systems.

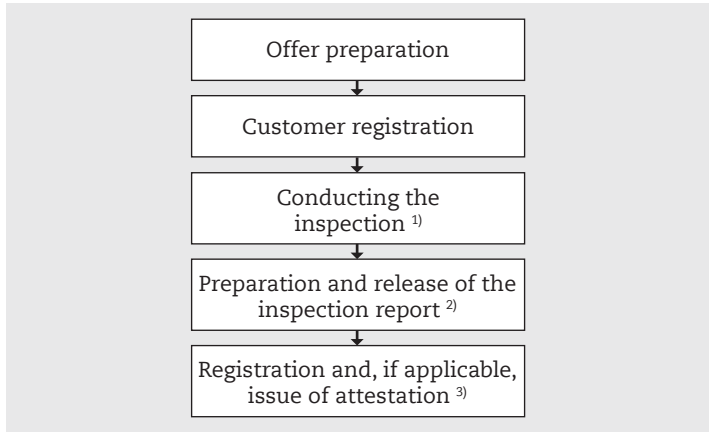
5) Before the decision is made:

- Major nonconformities must be resolved

- In the case of minor nonconformities, corrective action plans must be proposed by the customer and accepted by the lead auditor.

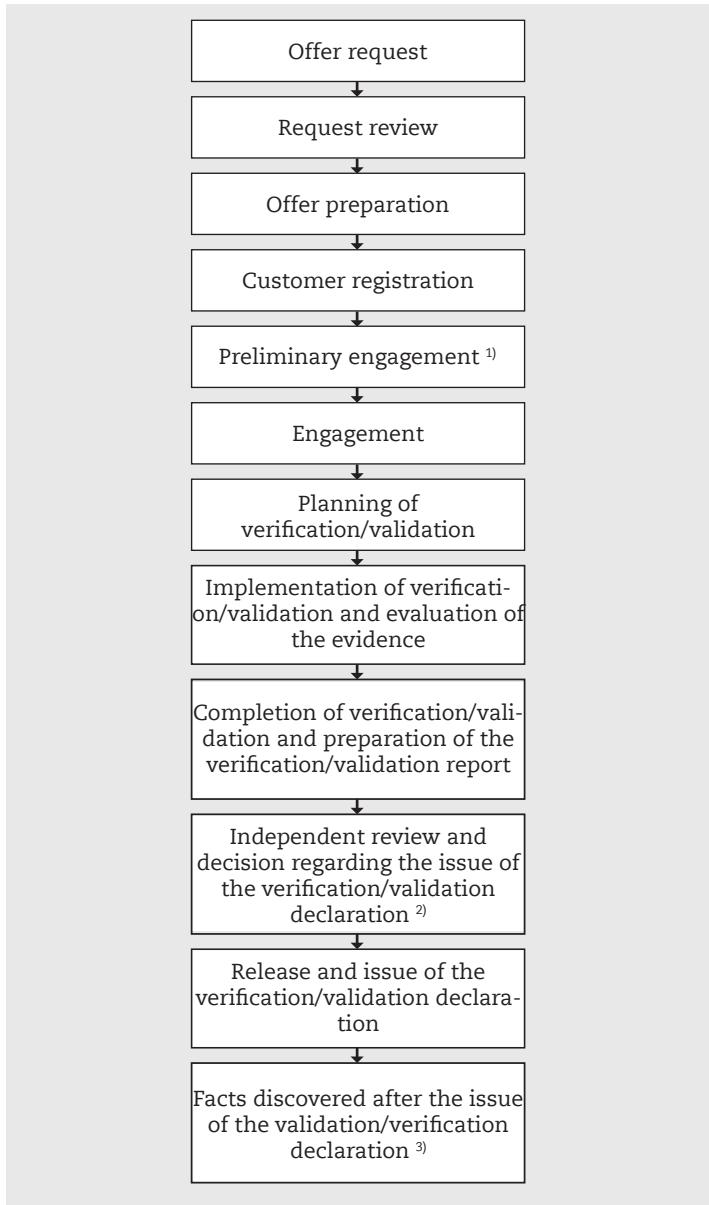
The deadlines for processing non-conformities depend on the respective certification/assessment program and will be communicated to the customer by the lead auditor during the closing meeting of the relevant audit or assessment.

Inspection procedure



- 1) The execution and evaluation of inspections, as well as the handling of findings, are governed by the requirements of the respective inspection program.
- 2) The results of the inspection are documented in an inspection report and communicated to the customer. Any follow-up actions, including the handling of nonconformities, confirmation of conformity, or the issue of certificates, are carried out in accordance with the requirements of the respective inspection program.
- 3) If provided for in the respective inspection program.

Verification-/validation procedure



- 1) If, during the preliminary engagement, significant facts are identified that could affect the previously established timeframe, it may be necessary to revise the previously submitted offer.
- 2) Before issuing the verification/validation declaration, all significant inaccuracies must be addressed, and the requirements of the respective program must be met.
- 3) If, after the validation/verification declaration has been issued, significant new information comes to light that could affect its findings, the implications will be assessed and, if necessary, appropriate measures will be taken, up to and including amending or revoking the declaration. The customer will be informed accordingly.

4. Actions to be taken if nonconformities are not corrected within the specified timeframe

If identified nonconformities or deviations are not effectively corrected within the specified timeframes, appropriate measures may be taken in accordance with the requirements of the respective certification, inspection, assessment, validation, or verification program. These may include, in particular, the restriction, suspension, or withdrawal of the certification, approval, attestation, or validation or verification declaration. The provisions of the Regulations for SQS Services and Warranty Marks, as well as the applicable program- or product-specific rules, shall apply.

In exceptional cases and with sufficient justification, a one-time deadline extension may be granted, if this is permitted under the requirements of the respective program and, where applicable, the accreditation requirements.

5. SQS certification documents, attests, and attestation for certifications, assessments, and inspections, as well as declarations for verification and validation

The decision to grant certification, an attest, an attestation, or a verification and validation declaration rests with the competent SQS Expert Commission.

The certification documents, attests, attestations, or declarations issued contain all the information required by the respective program and are clearly identified.

Details regarding the certification documents are set forth in the regulation «SQS Services and Warranty Marks» or in the product-specific rules.

5.1 Validity period and maintenance

The following provisions provide a general overview of the validity periods of certificates, attests, attestations and declarations, as well as any required intervals for repeat inspections, validations, and verifications. The deadlines applicable to each service are specified in the offer, contract, or applicable program and may vary depending on the service, product area, or set of rules.

Special requirements of the respective programs, as well as applicable legal, regulatory, normative, or product-specific requirements, remain reserved.

5.2 Accredited certification systems for management systems

For accredited management systems, the validity period of the issued certificate is generally 3 years. SQS certification/assessment is maintained in accordance with the procedure set forth in Section 3 of this regulative.

The first surveillance audit after the initial certification must be conducted within 12 months (from the date of release by the expert commission); each subsequent annual surveillance audit must be conducted within a tolerance of +/- 3 months (but at least 1 audit per calendar year).

If these deadlines or tolerances are not observed, the provisions regarding the suspension of certification set forth in the SQS Regulations «SQS Services and Warranty Marks» shall apply.

To maintain the validity of the certification documents, it is essential to ensure that the scheduled recertification audits are conducted on time. Delays or failure to conduct audits on time may result in the suspension of the certificate's validity. Retroactive reinstatement is not permitted.

5.3 Non-accredited assessment systems

Unless otherwise stated in the certification offer, the same prerequisites generally apply to non-accredited assessment systems as to accredited certification systems for management systems.

5.4 Accredited certification systems for products

For product certifications, the validity period is determined by the requirements of the respective certification system. These are established by the owners of the relevant product regulations and are typically 1, 3, or 5 years.

For any surveillance activities, the same rules apply as those described in section 5.1.

5.5 Accredited inspection activities

Inspection intervals and, where applicable, specified validity periods for inspection results are determined by the respective inspection program and the applicable legal, regulatory, or contractual requirements. Once the specified periods have expired, a new inspection must be conducted.

5.6 Accredited verification-/validation activities

Validation and verification declarations refer to the scope and time-frame specified in the respective contract or program. Requirements for repeating validation or verification activities may arise from the applicable program, if applicable.

6. Additional requirements for the certification of management systems

6.1 Additional requirements for integrated accredited management systems

For integrated management systems (e.g., ISO 9001 in conjunction with ISO 14001 and/or ISO 45001), the mandatory requirements of the Global Accreditation Cooperation Inc. (Global ACI) apply, in particular those set forth in document IAF MD 11 or its successor regulations.

An integrated management system combines methods and tools for meeting requirements in various areas (e.g., quality, environment, safety) within a unified structure.

This includes, at least, an integrated approach to the following normative requirements:

System documentation (processes and related documents), policy and objectives, internal audits, improvement mechanisms, management review, and responsibilities for system maintenance.

The audit time depends on the degree of integration of the applied standards. The qualification profile and composition of the audit team are additional relevant factors in the risk-based calculation of audit time within the framework of integrated management systems. Changes to this baseline scenario could lead to a corresponding adjustment of the audit time.

6.2 Additional requirements for accredited management systems in multi-site organizations

An organization operating at multiple permanent sites may apply for a single certification covering all sites. In this case, the multi-site procedure is applied. The mandatory requirements of the Global Accreditation Cooperation Inc. (Global ACI) apply, in particular those set forth in document IAF MD 1 or its successor regulations.

An organization is considered multi-site capable if the following requirements are met:

- There is a common, centralized management system for all sites;
- A central function within the organization exists and is authorized to establish, enforce, and maintain the management system;
- All sites are subject to a centralized management review and a centrally managed internal audit program;
- There is a legal or contractual relationship between headquarters and the sites;
- Data, complaints, corrective actions, audit results, and legal and regulatory requirements are centrally recorded and evaluated.

If these requirements are not substantially met, each site will be treated as an independent single-site organization.

As part of the multi-site process, audits may be conducted on a random sampling basis, provided that the processes at the sites are essentially similar and are implemented using comparable methods and procedures. Different processes may be grouped into site clusters.

The audit program and the sample to be used are determined by the certification body in accordance with the applicable accreditation requirements and communicated to the customer in the certification offer.

The certification body issues a single certificate for the entire organization. This certificate includes the name and address of the headquarters; the certified sites are listed in an appendix. Upon request, additional site-specific certificates referencing the main certificate may be issued.

If nonconformities are identified at a site, the organization has to assess whether they affect other sites and implement appropriate corrective actions at headquarters and the affected sites.

If significant nonconformities (major deviations) are not corrected within the specified deadline, certification for all sites may be suspended. Subsequent exclusion of affected sites from the scope of certification to avoid suspension is not permitted.

The certification body may request additional evidence of the effectiveness of the corrective actions and may increase the scope and frequency of site sampling until the nonconformities have been fully resolved.

6.3 Additional requirements for organizations previously certified by another body (transfer of management system certification)

SQS conducts certificate transfers in accordance with the binding requirements of the Global Accreditation Cooperation Inc. (Global ACI), in particular IAF MD 2 and its successor regulations.

Only valid certificates from certification bodies accredited by Global ACI members and authorized to participate in the Global ACI MRA can be transferred. Suspended certificates are excluded from transfer.

A «pre-transfer review» is conducted prior to the transfer to verify the validity of the certification, any outstanding nonconformities, and the status of corrective actions. Open major nonconformities must be effectively resolved prior to the transfer; for minor nonconformities, accepted corrective actions must be in place.

The results of the «Pre-Transfer Review» are documented and form the basis for the certification decision. If no significant issues are identified, SQS takes over the existing certification cycle and establishes the audit program for the remaining term. The new certificate is issued with the same scope and original expiration date.

If significant issues are identified during the «Pre-Transfer Review», the transfer will not take place; the organization will be treated as a new customer and must undergo a full initial certification process.

All information relevant to the transfer, as well as communication with the previous certification body, is documented. In the event of transfer requests from other accredited certification bodies, SQS informs them of any suspensions or withdrawal of the certificate.

7. Usage of marks

The provisions of the regulation for «SQS Services and Warranty Marks» apply.

8. Customer registration

The registration form, signed by the customer and confirmed in writing by SQS, constitutes a contract between SQS and the organization using SQS's services. These regulations are an integral part of the contract.

9. Further provisions

The respective requirements of the applicable product-specific normative standards apply.