



COVID-19: Guidance

2 February 2021

1. Introduction

This document provides normative guidance on certification audit requirements during COVID-19 restriction measures. The documents applies to the GGL certification bodies (CBs) and to the GGL certificate holders as Biomass Producers (BP), Traders and End-Users.

The approach taken includes:

- Remote auditing for initial certification, surveillance activities and re-assessments audits. A remote audit is defined as an audit where Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is used for auditing purposes to replace on-site audit activities (Reference IAF MD 4:2018)
- Terms for postponing surveillance activities
- Extension of time periods for those certificates that are about to expire
- Requirements for CBs

The following guidelines apply to audits scheduled until the further notice by the GGL Foundation.

GGL will continue to monitor the COVID-19 developments and keep sending updates as required.

2. Reference documents

- GGL Certification regulation v7-3
- Dutch Accreditation Council (RvA) Management of extraordinary events or circumstances affecting RvA accredited bodies and their customers Document code: RvA-T051-UK Version 3, 22 March 2020
- IAF Informative Document on the Management of Extraordinary Events or Circumstances Affecting ABs, CABs and Certified Organisations (IAF ID 3: 2011 - Issue 1)
- IAF MD 4:2018 IAF MD for the Use of ICT for Auditing/Assessment Purposes
- ISO 19011:2018 Guidelines for auditing management systems

3. Guidance

3.1. General

- 3.1.1. The CB will need to take account the extent of the impact of COVID-19 on the certified organization or product, to determine whether it is possible for certification to be maintained under the circumstances
- 3.1.2. The evaluation procedure refer to IAF ID3, and should consider:
 - Gathering of relevant information from the certified organization
 - Understanding when the organization will be able to function normally

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- Understanding when the organization will be able to ship products or perform the service defined within the current scope of certification?
- Understanding if the organization will need to use alternative manufacturing and/or distribution sites? If so, are these currently covered under the current certification or will they need to be evaluated?
- Understanding if the existing inventory still meet customer specifications or if the certified organization contacted its customers regarding possible concessions?
- Understanding If the certified organization is certified to a management system standard that requires a disaster recovery plan or emergency response plan, has the certified organization implemented the plan and was it effective?
- Understanding if some of the processes and/or services performed or products shipped be subcontracted to other organizations? If so, how will the other organizations 'activities be controlled by the certified organization?
- Understanding to what extent has operation of the management system been affected?
- Understanding if the Certified organization conducted an impact assessment?
- Identify alternative sampling sites, as appropriate

3.1.3. When the risk of continuing certification is high the CB should consider other means of auditing that may be available such as remote assessments (refer to IAF MD 4), desktop reviews of documentation submitted or other methods

3.1.4. If contact with the organization cannot be made, the CAB should follow normal processes and procedures for suspension and withdrawal of certification

3.2. Requirements for initial Certification GGLS1 and GGLS6

3.2.1. Initial certification can be done remotely if the full planned scope and appraisal can be assessed in a satisfactory manner

3.2.2. Initial certification audits can be done remotely for Traders and End-Users.

3.2.3. Biomass Producers must be assessed with an on-site audit when the emergency status has been lifted and the normal situation and operation is restored

3.2.4. The on-site audit should be planned after 6 months from the date of the remote audit

3.3. General requirements for Surveillance activities GGLS1 and GGLS6

3.3.1. Surveillance audits can be done remotely for Biomass Producers, Traders and End-Users if the full planned scope and appraisal can be assessed in a satisfactory manner

3.3.2. Surveillance audits can be postponed for a period not exceeding 6 months after the date of the planned audit and no more than 18 months from date of initial certification.

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3.3.3. Surveillance activities must be completed as quickly as possible once the emergency status has been lifted and as soon as the normal situation and operation is restored

3.4. Requirements for initial Certification GGLS2 and GGLS5

3.4.1. An on-site audit is required as part of a main assessment prior to issuing a certificate

3.4.2. Assessment activities must be completed as quickly as possible once the emergency status has been lifted and as soon as the normal situation and operation is restored

3.5. General requirements for Surveillance activities GGLS2 and GGLS5

3.5.1. An on-site audit is required for surveillance activities

3.5.2. Surveillance audits can be postponed for a period not exceeding 6 months after the date of the planned audit and no more than 18 months from date of initial certification.

3.5.3. Surveillance activities must be completed as quickly as possible once the emergency status has been lifted and as soon as the normal situation and operation is restored

3.6. Recertification

3.6.1. Providing that sufficient evidence has been collected to provide confidence that the certified management system is effective; the certificate validity can be extended to a period not exceeding 6 month beyond the original expiry date

3.6.2. The extension of the certification validity has to be requested by the CB to GGL and the request must include the results and evidences collected in compliance with the measures included in this normative document

3.6.3. If the recertification assessment cannot be undertaken within 6 months the certificate should be suspended. In this case the regular policy of the CB in case of suspension will be applicable.

3.7. Requirements for CBs

3.7.1. The CB shall establish a documented policy and process, outlining the steps it intends to take when:

- A certified organisation is affected by the COVID-19 event; or
- the COVID-19 event affects the ability of the CB to undertake certification activities.
- alternative potential short-terms methods of assessment are defined.

3.7.2. The documented policy shall apply the guidance in IAF ID 3: 2011 - Issue 1 section 3. "Extraordinary event or circumstance affecting a certified organization"

3.7.3. The documented policy should include an evaluation of the extent of the impact of COVID-19 on the ability of the certified organization to continue to operate in accordance with the certification requirements.

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- 3.7.4. The outcome of the certification activities must be recorded and must be available for assessment by RvA on demand.
- 3.7.5. CBs that have to deal with an extraordinary event or circumstance that could affect RvA accredited certificates, must inform their RvA contact person of the existence of this event or circumstance within one month.
- 3.7.6. The CB should be able to provide the following information on request of the RvA:
- Scope and extent of the affected services and business areas and sites,
 - Number of affected clients,
 - When the CB will be able to function normally within the current scope of accreditation,
 - Alternative assessment methods which will be applied like e.g. remote assessments (IAF MD 4) or desktop reviews of documents submitted,
 - Alternative programs planned to maintain confidence in the certified clients systems during the period that access cannot be gained,
 - Planning of the re-establishment of the regular oversight activities according to CB oversight plans when the normal situation is restored.
- 3.7.7. The CB shall immediately inform GGL of any changes affecting a certificate.
- 3.8. Records and information to the RvA**
- 3.8.1. The CB will maintain full records of actions and deviations from the established certification program, together with the rationale behind decisions on actions taken. These records shall be made available for RvA to review upon demand.