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## How to check the authenticity of a certificate

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### 1. Introduction:

With the intention of creating a safer and a quality environment, international standards setting bodies such as ISO, IEC develop many standards. Usually, the compliance on these standards are audited by a certification body and a certificate is issued based on the audit evidence. Yet, the certification appears to be a profitable trade and thereby, many certification bodies have been operating in Sri Lanka. However, the authenticity of the certificates issued by these certification bodies is questionable. This has become a significant issue as the certification bodies try to come up with newer certifications to generate more business. One of the ways to check the authenticity is that the issuance of a certificate by an accredited certification body where the accreditation body is operated with the recognition of International Accreditation Forum (IAF). This system however is purely voluntary and therefore there is no obligation for a certification body to either get accredited at all or get accredited under the IAF system.

### 2.0 Identification of an authentic certificate:

#### 2.1 An authentic certificate should contain the followings.

- 2.1.1 Name and address of the organization certified
- 2.1.2 Scope of certification describing its activities under certification  
e.g. type of the product, type of the management system etc.,
- 2.1.3 Standard/ Scheme/ Regulation against which certification is granted  
e.g. ISO 14001 or ISO 22000 (standards)  
AS 9100 or FSSC 22000 (schemes)
- 2.1.4 Date of issue and the expiry in the current cycle of certification
- 2.1.5 Date of last certification
- 2.1.6 Identification number or Barcode/QR code, if any
- 2.1.7 Name and address of the certification body (CB)
- 2.1.8 Logo of the certification body
- 2.1.9 Logo and/or Name of AB which has accredited the certification body (In most countries, unless the law requiring certification bodies to register, accreditation is the only way of recognizing a competent, authentic certification body)
- 2.1.10 IAF Mark – indicating that the certificate is covered under the Multilateral Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MLA) of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and hence is internationally equivalent and acceptable in the market

## Notes:

- i. It is important to check for the current version of the standard.  
e.g. The certificate shall be issued for ISO 14001:2015; if it is issued for ISO 14001:2004 or earlier, the certificate has no validity.
- ii. Presence of a logo of the certification body (CB) and the accreditation body (AB) would enhance the authenticity of the certificate

If it doesn't carry the logo of the AB, either the certification body is not accredited or the CB doesn't indicate the AB's logo as a practice. Hence the certificate could be still valid. However, when the CB is not accredited, it would not be a part of international system and it is not under any oversight.

- iii. When the logo of AB also appears in the certificate, verify if the AB is a part of the IAF (International Accreditation Forum) system. This can be verified from IAF website (<https://iaf.nu/en/accreditation-bodies/>). If the AB is listed there, the certificate is likely to be authentic.
- iv. Check whether it carries the logo of IAF. If YES the certificate is likely to be genuine and indicates it's internationally equivalent. If NO the certificate may not be internationally equivalent. *Use of IAF Mark is optional and its absence does not necessarily mean the certificate is not internationally equivalent.*
- v. You can always verify your certificate on the IAF website since the IAF has created a database of certificates IAF CERTSEARCH (<https://www.iafcertsearch.org/>). However, this database is in the process of being developed – so absence on this website does not mean your certificate is not genuine.
- vi. You can also check the status of accreditation of a certification body using their website.  
e.g. Click this link (<https://www.slab.lk/accredited-organizations-2/>) to check the status of certification bodies accredited under Sri Lanka Accreditation Board.
  - a. Status include the validity of the accreditation, scope of the certification body.
  - b. Make sure that the scope of the certificate issued by the CB is in the accredited scope.

C.N. Ghana

Chandrika Thilakaratne  
Director/CEO  
Sri Lanka Accreditation Board

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