

Policy on assessment of inspection bodies with multi-locations and witness assessment

1. Scope:

This document explains SLAB's policy on selection of inspections and inspectors for on-site inspection witness and assessment of Inspection Bodies with multi-locations.

2. Responsibility:

Technical Manager/ Deputy Technical Manager/ Team Leader/ Technical Assessor
Authorized representative of Inspection Body
Authorized Officer

3. Reference:

ISO/IEC 17011:2017 - Conformity assessment – Requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies
ISO/IEC 17020:2012 - General criteria for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspection
ILAC P15:05/2020 - Application of ISO/IEC 17020: 2012 for the Accreditation of Inspection Bodies

4. Definitions

4.1 Site

Any location where an inspection activity is being undertaken on a temporary or permanent basis

4.2 Premises

Locations that belong to the inspection body with an involvement in inspection activities. Such location may be owned, rented or leased by the inspection body.

4.3 Multi-location organization

An organization with a central office in which certain activities are performed or managed with a network of locations at which such activities are fully or partially carried out. All locations have a direct legal or contractual link with the central office of the organization and are subject to a common quality system.

5. SLAB Policy on Inspection Bodies with multi-locations

5.1 Application for Accreditation

5.1.1 An applicant that operates from a main/ head office through a number of locations seeking a single accreditation shall provide information on inspection and related activities performed at main / head office and locations and agreed that the conditions specified by the SLAB for multi-location inspection bodies and other accreditation criteria are fulfilled. The inspection body shall indicate the number of locations and the range of scopes for each location being operated in the application or further supporting documents prepared by the Inspection Body.

5.1.2 The Onsite Assessment will be carried out two stages namely Pre-assessment and Initial Assessment (The Final Assessment for the grant of Accreditation). During both these stages, witness assessments at the site of the applicant Inspection Body's Client shall be performed. Although there are no strict demarcations for these two assessments, the objectives of these Assessments may be expressed in the following manner.

5.1.3 If an inspection body carries out at least one of the following activities at different premises, prior to granting accreditation, all premises shall be assessed as per ISO/IEC17020 and other requirements as relevant;

- Policy formulation
- Processes and /or procedures development
- Process of initial selection of inspectors and as appropriate
- Contract review
- Planning conformity assessments
- Review and approval of conformity assessments
- Contract review separate from the Head office
- Maintenance of records not kept at Head Office
- Maintenance of management system documentation not kept at Head Office
- Maintenance and calibration of specific equipment kept separate from Head Office

5.1.4 SLAB will seek to establish through objective evidence and by using various techniques that:

- All locations are operating under the same quality system;
- All locations are included in the internal audit programme and central management review process.

5.1.5 Temporary locations shall be working to the same requirements and may be subject to assessment on a sampling basis as part of the accreditation process to provide evidence of the operation and effectiveness of the system.

5.1.6 During the central office assessment, SLAB assessment team needs to see records of certain activities, which are being carried out at different locations.

5.1.7 If the SLAB assessment team observes non-conformity at the Head Office or at any one of the locations of an organization with multiple locations; the corrective action procedure shall apply to all locations, where applicable. In the event that the results of any of the assessments of sample locations reveal that there is a significant weakness or inconsistency in the application of the quality system, SLAB will review the assessment programme and may increase the number of locations to be assessed during the surveillance or re assessment or arrange special assessment to location/s in questioned in order to verify the issues or request Inspection body to submit evidence for taking satisfactory actions or request relevant personnel for an interview with SLAB officers / any assessor appointed by the Director/CEO.

5.1.8 Failure by one location to comply with SLAB accreditation requirements or any suspension enforced by the relevant regulator may lead to removal of the location from the schedule of accreditation/ List of accredited inspection locations. If the cause of nonconformity is due to the lack of monitoring and operation by the Head Office, then the accreditation status shall be reviewed by the SLAB and results may lead to suspension or withdrawal of accreditation from all locations.

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- 5.1.9** Generally, each location under scope of accreditation from which an inspection body is operating shall be visited before granting accreditation and thereafter at least once during the three-year assessment cycle. However, the Head Office shall be visited based on assessment programme.
- 5.1.10** SLAB shall be informed of any changes to location addresses, authorized signatories, major equipment, inspection methods, suspension by regulatory bodies and activities above mentioned. The establishment of any new locations from which the inspection body proposes to offer an accredited service shall be approved by SLAB before these can be included in the scope of accreditation. The need for assessment of the new location shall be reviewed and assessment may be carried out during surveillance, reassessment or separate assessment where necessary. Risks to credibility of accreditation is considered when taking decisions on actions for changes of accredited Inspection Bodies.

6. Implementation

- 6.1** Authorized Officer in consultation with the Technical Manager /Team Leader/ Technical Assessor/ Authorized Representative of Inspection Body and information provided in the application documents shall identify the activities performed at locations other than the Head Office of the Applicant Inspection Body and select the number of locations associated with Inspection Body. For surveillance and re assessments, authorized officer shall consider the locations which have been included during surveillance / re assessments.
- 6.2** Authorized officer shall inform number of sites considered as the premises where above activities are carried out by Inspection Body and tentative assessment plan for all premises during pre assessment and initial assessment. In case of new application, this communication may be sent along with the Document & record review report and planning stage of pre assessment. For re and surveillance assessments, authorized officer shall review locations witnessed at the previous assessments and select new or previous sites which require follow up from previous witnessing and inform the inspection body.
- 6.3** Inspection body shall inform any changes given in 4.1.10 above to the SLAB within one month.
- 6.4** Authorized Officer shall maintain the assessment programme or any further document which contains information of head office, locations and its witnessing details, locations, authorized signatories, inspectors, witnessing of inspectors, main equipment etc.

7. Inspection bodies operating only through Head Office

- 7.1.** Inspection bodies operate only through Head Office may perform inspections only at head office/ only at site / site and head office. Before granting accreditation, inspections perform at permanent office/ head office and sites shall be witnessed. Thereafter, both inspections performed at permanent and sites shall be witnessed at least every two years.

8. Selection of Inspections & Inspectors

- 8.1** The choice of inspectors and locations to be witnessed by the SLAB assessment team shall be decided by the SLAB considering the critical factors such as results of previous observations, new employees, new equipment, scope of inspection body, the risk associated with credibility of accreditation, the complexity of the inspection activity, technical, procedural and legislative developments relevant to the inspections. However, this does not mean that every inspector is witnessed on-site.

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8.2 Authorized officer shall request following information from the inspection body in advance in order to plan the pre/initial/ surveillance /re assessment with main office assessment and witnessing activities.

- Complete set of documentation of Inspection Body (Quality manual, management system procedures, SOPs, inspection methods etc,)
- List of inspectors with their competence level and authorized areas
- Inspection schedule of Inspection body due during coming months
- Other supporting information as requested by the SLAB

8.3 Prior to grant accreditation, at least all major inspection activities under each field of inspection as given in the scope of accreditation are witnessed. Thereafter, all inspection activities shall be covered within the accreditation cycle.

Example: NDT Inspection is considered as field of inspection and inspection activities/ methods such as radio graphic, ultrasonic, magnetic particle testing etc. are considered as major inspection activities.

When selecting Inspections and Inspectors at least following aspects may be considered;

- Fields and major inspection activities/ inspection methods given in the scope of accreditation
- Extent to which inspectors are required to exercise professional judgment
- Number of inspectors due during the SLAB assessment period (within two months)
- Frequency of inspections done by inspectors and inspection body
- Competence requirements of inspectors e.g. personnel certification or formal qualification and competence
- Nonconformities of previous assessment

In addition, when deciding on which inspectors will be assessed account will be taken of:

- New recruits or new authorizations
- Qualifications and experience
- Location
- Any statutory requirements
- Extent to which inspectors are required to exercise professional judgment and competence required for each field of inspection
- Inspection body's procedure for training, qualifying, selection and monitoring of inspectors will also be considered and as far as possible, inspectors qualified for more than one area will be selected for initial assessments and thereafter other inspectors during accreditation cycle.

8.4 During the SLAB assessment period, if there are no inspections for particular field which is required to witness, SLAB may schedule a special witness in association with the Inspection body. The cost for the witness assessment will be charged from the inspection body.