



**General Requirements for Certification Bodies:
Certification of Persons Scheme
APO-AB 1003:2020
*Issue 3***

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1. Introduction

This document specifies the accreditation procedures and general requirements of certification bodies (CBs) operating APO certification of persons (APO-CoP) schemes. The requirements developed by the APO-AB for CBs operating APO-CoP schemes were adapted from ISO/IEC 17024:2012 - Conformity assessment, General requirements for bodies operating certification of persons.

Compliance with the requirements will ensure the competence and reliability of CBs in conducting CoP.

These requirements should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

ISO/IEC 17024:2012, Conformity assessment, General requirements for bodies operating certification of persons;

CASCO Document on How to Develop Schemes for the Accreditation of Persons (ISO/IEC 17024);

ISO/IEC TS 17027:2014, Conformity assessment, Vocabulary related to competence of persons used for certification of persons;

APO certification scheme in which CB is sought for accreditation; and

Other additional rules or specific requirements that may be issued/endorsed as APO-CoP requirements relating to schemes for CoP.

2. References, Terms, and Definitions

For the purpose of this document, the normative references, terms, and definitions are as stated and defined in ISO/IEC 17024.

In addition the following definitions apply:

Accreditation criteria: A set of requirements which a certification body must meet for it to be accredited under the APO-CoP.

Accredited CB operating CoP: A CB to which an APO-CoP accreditation certificate has been granted.

Approved signatory: A person assigned/approved under the APO-CoP system to sign APO-CoP-endorsed accreditation reports issued by the APO-AB.

APO-AB: Asian Productivity Organization Accreditation Body.

Certificate of accreditation: A certificate issued by the APO-AB attesting that a CB is recognized as competent to perform CoP under the APO-CoP accreditation system.

Inoperative accreditation: Accreditation status held in abeyance until remedial action has been taken. While accreditation is inoperative, no certification can be issued.

Suspension: Accreditation held in abeyance by the APO-AB. This term applies to all or part of the activities under the scope of accreditation of an accredited CB. No further CoP certificates may be issued by an accredited CB for the suspended activities.

APO-CoP accreditation: APO-AB recognition that a CB is competent to carry out CoP.

Schedule of accreditation: A schedule issued with a certificate of accreditation listing the accredited scopes of CoP schemes that the APO-AB recognizes a CB is competent to perform.

APO-CoP certificate: A certificate that includes the APO-AB accreditation logo or a statement that a CB is accredited under the APO-CoP scheme and that the CoP scheme has been performed in accordance with APO-CoP requirements and conditions.

Certification body (CB): A CB is an organization responsible for all tasks in the operation of the APO-CoP scheme. (Note: A CB can be an NPO, a government agency or authority, or another entity.)

Certification Scheme owner: Asian Productivity Organization (APO)

APO Certification of Persons Accreditation Scheme (APO-CoP): The APO-CoP is an APO-AB accreditation scheme for the accreditation of CBs operating CoP and administered by the APO-AB.

APO Certification scheme for persons (APO CoP): The schemes developed and maintained by APO to certify professionals having specific competencies on productivity enhancement-oriented areas.

3. Eligibility for Application for Accreditation

Criteria for Application

CB that intend to apply for accreditation for their CoP scheme must meet the criteria listed below:

- 3.1 Have certified at least five (5) persons under the scheme for which accreditation is sought.
- 3.2 Have completed at least one internal audit and one management review

4. Authority for the Granting of APO-CoP Accreditation

4.1 General

- 4.1.1 Under the APO-CoP accreditation scheme, the APO-AB Council is responsible for all policies and decisions affecting the accreditation of CBs

conducting CoP, including the granting, maintenance, renewal, extension, reduction, and suspension of accreditation.

4.1.2 The Chair of the APO-AB Council has the authority to approve all documents and procedures related to the accreditation scheme.

4.2 *Criteria for Competence, Procedures, and Amendment of Conditions*

4.2.1 The APO-AB has the right to prescribe the relevant criteria for competence against which a CB is assessed.

4.2.2 The accreditation standard adopted by the APO-AB is as set out in document ISO/IEC 17024, Conformity assessment, General requirements for bodies operating certification of persons. It contains the requirements the CB must meet to demonstrate its capability and competency in certifying persons for a specific scope and that its certification scheme meets Clause 8 of ISO/IEC 17024. A guidance checklist based on ISO/IEC 17024 is given in **Appendix 1**.

4.2.3 Any other additional criteria may be prescribed at the discretion of the APO-AB. The APO-AB will specify the procedures by which application for accreditation can be made, as stated in APO-AB PRO 4001/2019 Procedure or Accreditation of Certification Bodies, and the conditions for granting, maintaining, extending, reducing, suspending, reinstating and renewing accreditation.

4.2.4 The APO-AB reserves the right to amend, alter, add, or delete any part of these regulations and procedures if it believes that such alterations, amendments, or additions are reasonable and necessary to maintain the credibility or smooth operation of accreditation of the APO-CoP.

4.2.5 In the event of such alterations, reasonable time will be given to a CB to carry out the necessary adjustments to its procedures and certification schemes to comply with the altered terms and conditions. Unless otherwise specified, a period of six months from the date of notification of change by the APO-AB will be given for a CB to carry out the necessary adjustments to its procedures. The accredited CB will notify the APO-AB when such adjustments have been completed.

4.3 *Processing and Granting of Accreditation*

4.3.1 When CB application for accreditation is received and the application form APO-AB Form 2001/2019 is confirmed to contain sufficient information, the CB will sign an Accreditation Agreement with the APO-AB, APO-AB TOR 3006/2019

4.3.2 All CBs must comply with and fulfil the following requirements:

- a. Extend cooperation to the APO-AB in conducting assessment activities for accreditation.

- b. Provide access to CB personnel, locations, information, reports, and documents relevant to performing the assessment for accreditation.
- c. Claim accreditation only with respect to the scope for which a CB has been accredited.
- d. Not use accreditation in any manner that would bring the APO-AB into disrepute.
- e. Inform the APO-AB without delay of significant changes relevant to accreditation such as legal status, organizational structure, and scope of accreditation.
- f. Assist in the investigation and resolution of any accreditation-related complaints involving the APO-AB.
- g. Follow the APO-AB policy on the use of the accreditation logo.

4.3.3 An application for accreditation will be valid for two years from the date of acceptance of the application and lapse at the end of the two-year period if accreditation is not successful. The APO-AB reserves the right to extend this period as it deems appropriate.

4.3.4 The APO-AB will assess the applicant CB by performing:

1) Stage 1 Assessment. Adequacy assessment through a review of its quality manual and associated documents in meeting the ISO/IEC 17024 requirements.

2) Stage 2 Assessment. Compliance assessment to establish whether a CB is capable and competent in developing and operating the CoP scheme for which it seeks accreditation. The compliance assessment will include a witnessed audit based on a sampling of activities in accordance with APO-AB PRO 4012/219 on Procedures for Witnessing Assessment.

4.3.5 The APO-AB will only consider the granting of accreditation upon satisfactory resolution of all non-compliance issues found during the assessments.

4.3.6 The APO-AB will grant an APO-CoP certificate of accreditation after it is satisfied that a CB complies with these conditions and all APO-CoP criteria.

4.3.7 The certificate of accreditation will be valid for four years from the date of approval by the Chair of the APO-AB. Thereafter the certificate is renewable at four-year intervals subject to meeting the requirements.

4.3.8 The certificate of accreditation is not transferable.

4.3.9 Subject to the limitations stated in these conditions, changes in the certificate of accreditation such as a change in the name of a CB or its organizational structure, change in its legal status, change of address or premises, change in approved signatories, or other editorial changes may be considered by

the APO-AB if in its opinion those changes are not considered to constitute significant changes to the CB quality system or do not affect its technical competence. The APO-AB reserves the right to conduct an assessment or other forms of evaluation to confirm continued compliance with the APO-CoP accreditation criteria, if required.

4.3.10 All accredited CBs will be listed in a directory maintained by the APO-AB.

4.4 *Monitoring, Surveillance, and Reassessment of CBs*

4.4.1 The APO-AB will indicate how the monitoring of compliance with these conditions and the relevant APO-CoP accreditation criteria will be carried out.

4.4.2 The APO-AB will schedule assessments of accredited CBs and their certification schemes as shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Surveillance 1	Approximately 12 months from the granting/renewal date
Surveillance 2	Approximately 15 months from the surveillance date
Reassessment	Approximately 3 months before the expiration date

Table 1. First cycle of accreditation

Surveillance	Approximately 18 months from the previous expiration date
Reassessment	Approximately 6 months before the expiration date

(Note: The interval between assessments must not be more than two years)

Table 2. Subsequent cycle of accreditation

4.4.3 In addition to or as part of its program of surveillance, the APO-AB or its authorized agent(s) reserves the right to carry out unscheduled assessments of accredited CBs if there are reasons to suspect that they or their certification schemes have failed in their obligations to meet the APO-CoP accreditation criteria or conditions.

4.5 *Suspension of Accreditation and Appeal*

4.5.1 The APO-AB may at its discretion suspend accreditation if the following occur:

- 1) Violation of the terms and conditions of accreditation;
- 2) Failure to provide reasonable cooperation with or facilities for APO-AB assessors and/or authorized agents to discharge their official duties; and

3) In the reasonable view of the APO-AB, an accredited CB makes unreasonable or irresponsible use of a subcontract.

4.5.2 The APO-AB reserves the right to determine the period of suspension of accreditation depending on the severity of the non-conformities in relation to the APO-AB accreditation criteria and conditions.

4.5.3 Before the APO-AB suspends a certificate of accreditation, it will issue a notice to the accredited CB. The CB is required to show cause for why the certificate of accreditation should not be suspended within 14 working days of receipt of the notice.

4.5.4 If a written appeal is received, the APO-AB will consider the explanations given and offer the accredited CB an opportunity to be heard by the Appeal Panel as soon as possible, following the appeal procedure in APO-AB PRO 4008/2019.

4.5.5 If no appeal against the notice of suspension is received by the APO-AB, the accreditation will be suspended after the 14-day period and the CB will be informed of the suspension in writing.

4.5.6 A CB that has been suspended cannot issue APO-CoP endorsed certificates for the suspended certification scheme/scope.

4.6 *Confidentiality*

4.6.1 All information gained by the APO-AB, its assessors, and authorized agents in processing, granting, maintaining, renewing, extending, reducing, and suspending accreditation will be treated as confidential between the APO-AB and the accredited CB. Such information will be handled on a strict need-to-know basis and will not be divulged without the written permission of the CB unless required by law.

4.6.2 The APO-AB and its committees, assessors, and technical experts will be made aware of and abide by this requirement for confidentiality.

5. Obligations of CBs

5.1 *General*

5.1.1 Participation in the APO-CoP does not in any way exempt CBs from or diminish their responsibilities in observing/complying with existing laws and regulations currently enforced in their countries.

5.1.2 CBs will at all times:

- 1) Maintain practices and certification schemes to a standard complying with APO-CoP regulations, accreditation criteria of the APO-AB Guidelines and ISO/IEC 17024, and other conditions and requirements prescribed by the APO-AB.

- 2) Offer all clients a standard of quality service consistent with APO-CoP regulations, accreditation criteria, and requirements and maintain credibility and commercial integrity in all operations.
- 3) Not vary the terms or conditions under which the certificate of accreditation is issued during the period of accreditation unless written notice is given to the APO-AB of the intention to do so and written confirmation of the variation is received from the APO-AB. It is the responsibility of CBs to demonstrate that such variation does not render the certificate of accreditation invalid.
- 4) Not use the APO-AB accreditation or the certificate of accreditation in any manner that would bring the APO-CoP scheme into disrepute and not make any statement pertaining to its accreditation which the APO-AB may reasonably consider to be misleading.
- 5) Endeavour to ensure that no APO-CoP endorsed certificate or any part thereof will be used by a client, or be authorized for use by a client, for promotional or publicity purposes if the APO-AB considers such use to be misleading.
- 6) Retain a record of all reports for at least six years or as required by law or organizational or contractual arrangements.

5.2 *Impartiality, Independence, and Integrity*

5.2.1 CBs and their personnel must be free from any commercial, financial, and other pressures or inducements that might influence their technical judgment and evaluations.

5.2.2 CBs will not allow external persons or organizations to influence the results of CoP.

5.2.3 CBs will not engage in any activity that may endanger trust in its independence of judgment and integrity in relation to its activities.

5.3 *APO-CoP-endorsed Certificates*

5.3.1 All APO-CoP-endorsed accreditation certificates must be signed by the Chair of the APO-AB Council for the scheme/scope of APO-CoP accreditation.

5.3.2 All APO-CoP-endorsed accreditation certificates will carry the APO-AB logo for accreditation of CBs for the CoP scheme and contain the accreditation certificate identification number.

5.4 *Cooperation with the APO-AB*

5.4.1 CBs will offer the APO-AB, its assessors, and technical experts all cooperation necessary to enable the monitoring of compliance with the regulations and requirements of ISO/IEC 17024 and any other relevant accreditation criteria. This cooperation will include:

- 1) Affording the APO-AB, its assessors, and technical experts reasonable access to relevant areas of a CB to observe the CoP scheme;
- 2) Preparing, packaging, and dispatching, at the expense of the CB involved, the documents, reports, or other items needed by the APO-AB;
- 3) Permitting inspection by the APO-AB, its assessors, and technical experts of the results of the CB's own internal audits and management reviews; and
- 4) Assisting the APO-AB, its assessors, and technical experts in the investigation and resolution of any properly authenticated complaints made by third parties or outside parties concerning the CB's accredited CoP scheme.

5.5 *Liabilities*

5.5.1 An accredited CB will have full control of the issue of accredited certification following the regulations and criteria set out by APO-AB. The CB will therefore take full responsibility and liability for the issuing of all certification.

5.5.2 The CB will indemnify the APO-AB from all liabilities that may be a result of claims arising from CB certification.

5.6 *Notification of Change*

5.6.1 An accredited CB will inform the APO-AB immediately of any changes bearing on its compliance with these regulations and other requirements affecting the CB's capability, competence, integrity, independence, or certification scheme/scope of activity. Such significant changes in an accredited CB include:

- 1) Changes in personnel or certification scheme/scope of activity of an accredited CB;
- 2) Any change in the CB's organization and management, e.g. head of the CB or quality manager;
- 3) Any change, transfer, redesignation of duties, or resignation of key CB personnel, approved signatories, authorized representatives, and other senior CB staff;
- 4) Changes in duties of approved signatories;
- 5) Changes in address, premises, facilities, or other resources;
- 6) Any change in the CB's legal, commercial, or organizational status; and
- 7) Changes in the CB's policy and procedures.

5.6.2 Any notice or other communication required to be given or sent under these regulations by the APO-AB and its authorized agents will be deemed to be given or sent if sent by registered post, email, or telefax to the postal address, email address, or telefax number of the accredited CB last known to the APO-AB

and deemed to be given at the time when it would have been delivered by any of these means under normal circumstances.

APPENDIX 1

The checklist below is a guide for CBs to address and requirements of the international standard of ISO/IEC 17024 to be referred to and complied with.

1. Legal Matters

A CB is a legal entity or defined part of a legal entity and its organizational structure must be documented. A CB that is part of government or is a government department is deemed to be a legal entity on the basis of its governmental status.

2. Responsibility for Decisions on Certification

A CB is responsible for all certification decisions and will not delegate its decisions relating to certification, including the granting, maintaining, recertifying, expanding or and reducing the scope of certification, and suspending certification.

3. Management of Impartiality

A CB will conduct its certification activities with impartiality and confidentiality and avoid conflict of interest in its certification activities. It must not engage in any commercial or financial activities that could compromise its impartiality.

A CB will continually identify and mitigate risks to its impartiality from its related bodies or from the relations of its personnel.

A CB will have a documented policy and procedure to safeguard impartiality.

4. Finance and Liability

A CB must have the financial resources to operate the accredited certification service related to its CoP as well as have adequate financial resources to cover its related liabilities.

5. Structural Requirements

5.1 A CB will document its organizational structure and line of authority and relationships, describing the duties, responsibilities, and management for the CoP.

5.2 A CB will ensure that all activities of the certification process are performed independent of training to assure impartiality. Training personnel cannot serve as examiners of candidates whom they trained for a period of two years from the date of conclusion of the training.

6. Resource Requirements

6.1 *General Personnel Requirements*

- 1) A CB will manage and be responsible for the performance of all personnel involved in the certification process.

- 2) A CB must have sufficient personnel with the relevant knowledge and competence to perform certification activities related to the type, range, and volume of work performed.
- 3) A CB must have documented procedures, job functions, and information that are kept current and available to its personnel.
- 4) A CB will maintain up-to-date personnel records, including qualifications, training, experience, professional memberships, and competence.
- 5) All personnel acting on a CB's behalf must keep confidential all information obtained or created during the performance of certification activities, except with the permission and authorization of applicants or certified persons.
- 6) A CB must require its personnel to sign a document committing them to compliance with the rules defined by the CB, including those relating to confidentiality, impartiality, and conflict of interest. Its personnel must declare any potential conflict of interest.

6.2 *Requirements for Examiners*

The documented criteria for the selection and appointment of examiners will ensure that they:

- 1) Understand the relevant certification scheme;
- 2) Are able to apply the examination procedure and methods;
- 3) Have competence in the field to be examined;
- 4) Are fluent, both orally and in writing, in the language of examination and, if an interpreter or translator is used, the CB must have procedures in place to ensure that it does not affect the validity of the examination; and
- 5) Have identified any known conflicts of interest to ensure that impartial judgments are made.
- 6) A CB will monitor the performance of the examiners and the reliability of their judgments. When deviations are found, corrective actions must be taken.
- 7) If invigilators and other personnel are employed, a CB must make a documented listing of their responsibilities and qualifications.

6.3 *Outsourcing*

A CB must have an enforceable agreement covering the contractual arrangement including confidentiality and conflict of interest with each outsourced assignment related to its certification process.

When a CB outsources work related to certification, the CB will:

- 1) Take full responsibility for all outsourced work;
- 2) Ensure that outsourced personnel are competent and comply with international standards requirements;
- 3) Assess and monitor the performance of the outsourced bodies;
- 4) Keep records to demonstrate that the work of the outsourced bodies meets the requirements in the documented procedure; and
- 5) Maintain a list of bodies conducting outsourced work.

7. Records and Information

7.1 Records of Certified Persons

A CB will maintain records confirming the status of a certified person for an appropriate period of time, i.e., for a minimum of one full certification cycle or as required by the recognition arrangement, contract, or legal agreement.

7.2 Confidentiality

A CB must establish documented policies and procedures for the maintenance of confidential information. It must ensure that information obtained during the certification process is not disclosed to any unauthorized party without the written consent of the individual or certified person, except when the law requires such information to be disclosed. The CB will also ensure that the activities of related bodies do not compromise confidentiality.

7.3 Security

7.3.1 A CB must develop and document policies and procedures to ensure security throughout the entire certification process and have measures in place to take corrective actions if security breaches occur.

7.3.2 Security policies and procedures must include provisions to ensure the security of examination materials, taking into account the following:

- 1) The location required to keep the materials secure;
- 2) The nature of the materials;
- 3) The steps in the examination process; and
- 4) The risk arising from repeated use of the examination materials.

7.3.3 A CB must take steps to prevent fraudulent examination processes by:

- 1) Requiring candidates to sign a nondisclosure agreement not to release confidential examination materials or participate in fraudulent test-taking practices;
- 2) Requiring an invigilator or examiner to be present;
- 3) Confirming the identity of all candidates;
- 4) Preventing unauthorized aids or assistance during examinations; and
- 5) Monitoring results for indications of cheating or fraud.

8. Certification Schemes

The CB shall use the certification schemes of APO.

8.1 A certification scheme must be in place for each category of certification.

8.2 Each certification scheme must contain the following elements:

- 1) Scope of certification;
- 2) Job and task description;
- 3) Required competence;
- 4) Abilities (when applicable, e.g., vision, hearing, etc.);
- 5) Prerequisites (when applicable); and
- 6) Code of conduct (when applicable).

8.3 A certification scheme must include the following certification process requirements:

- 1) Criteria for initial certification and recertification;
- 2) Assessment methods for initial certification and recertification;
- 3) Surveillance methods and criteria (if applicable);
- 4) Criteria for suspension and withdrawal of certification; and
- 5) Criteria for changing the scope or level of certification (if applicable).

8.4 A CB must maintain documents demonstrating that the following are included in the development and review of certification schemes:

- 1) The involvement of appropriate experts;
 - 2) The use of an appropriate structure that fairly represents the interests of all parties;
 - 3) The identification and alignment of the assessment mechanism with the competence requirements; and
 - 4) A job or practice analysis that is conducted and updated regularly.
- 8.5 A CB must ensure that each certification scheme is reviewed and validated on an ongoing basis.
- 8.6 When a CB is not the owner of a certification scheme it implements, it must ensure that all requirements contained in this clause 8 are met.

9. Certification Process Requirements

CB may follow the procedures as stated in the certification schemes which CB has been accredited by APO-AB.

10. Management System Requirements

10.1 Process and Procedures

A CB must establish a documented process and procedures for implementing and maintaining an effective management system capable of providing certification services conforming to international standards and in accordance with either Option A or Option B described in clauses 10.1 and 10.2 of ISO/IEC 17024. It must also ensure that the management system documentation is made available to all personnel.

10.2 Control of Documents

A CB must establish documented procedures to control documents, both internal and external, relating to the certification service which conform with international standards.

10.3 Control of Records

A CB must establish procedures to define the controls needed for identification, storage, protection, retrieval, retention period, and disposition of its records, including its confidentiality arrangements and accessibility.

10.4 Management Reviews

A CB's top management must have procedures to review the management system at planned intervals to ensure its continuing suitability, adequacy, and effectiveness related to the fulfillment of ISO/IEC 17024 requirements.

10.5 *Internal Audits*

A CB must establish procedures for internal audits to verify that it fulfills the requirements of ISO/IEC 17024 and that the management system is effectively implemented and maintained.

10.6 *Corrective Actions*

A CB must have procedures for identifying and managing nonconformities in its operations. When necessary, it must act to eliminate the causes of nonconformities to prevent recurrence.

10.7 *Preventive Actions*

A CB must have procedures for taking preventive actions to eliminate the causes of potential nonconformities.