



**GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR
CERTIFICATION BODIES:
CERTIFICATION OF PERSONS SCHEME**

APO-AB 1003:2020

Issue 4

Issue 4 supersedes Issue 3 (APO-AB 1003:2020/Issue 3, 2020) dated 26 February 2020, which has been technically revised.

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1. Introduction

This document specifies the accreditation procedures and general requirements for certification bodies (CBs) operating APO certification of persons (APO-CoP) schemes. The requirements developed by the APO Accreditation Body (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 ensures 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, 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 under which a CB is seeking 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:

2.1 Accreditation criteria: A set of requirements that a CB shall meet to be accredited under the APO-CoP.

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

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

2.4 APO-AB: Asian Productivity Organization Accreditation Body.

2.5 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.

2.6 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.

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

2.8 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.

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

2.10 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.)

2.11 Certification scheme owner: Asian Productivity Organization (APO).

2.12 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.

2.13 APO Certification Scheme for Persons (APO CoP): The schemes developed and maintained by the APO to certify professionals with specific competencies in productivity enhancement-oriented areas.

2.14 Extraordinary event or circumstance: A circumstance beyond the control of the organization, commonly referred to as “force majeure” or “an act of God.” Examples are wars, strikes, riots, political instability, geopolitical tension, terrorism, crimes, pandemics, flooding, earthquakes, malicious computer hacking, and other natural or man-made disasters.

3. Eligibility for Application for Accreditation

CBs that intend to apply for accreditation for the APO CoP scheme shall meet the following criteria:

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 regarding the accreditation of CBs.

4.1.2 The classification of APO-AB documentation and procedures is given in **Clause 7.1 APO-AB 6001** Personnel Records, Document Control, and Record Control.

4.2 Criteria for Competence, Procedures, and Amendment of Conditions

4.2.1 The APO-AB has the right to prescribe the relevant criteria under 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 shall meet to demonstrate capability and competency in certifying persons for a specific scope and that its certification scheme meets Clause 8 of ISO/IEC 17024 to the extent applicable to APO CBs. A guidance checklist is given in **Appendix 2**.

4.2.3 Any other additional criteria may be prescribed at the discretion of the APO-AB. The APO-AB shall specify the procedures for application for accreditation, as stated in **APO-AB 4001 Procedure for 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, a reasonable time shall 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 transition time of six months from the date of notification of change by the APO-AB shall be given for a CB to carry out the necessary adjustments to its procedures. Accredited CBs shall notify the APO-AB when such adjustments have been completed. If necessary, the APO-AB may verify the changes through an adequacy and/or onsite assessment depending upon the circumstances.

4.3 Processing and Granting of Accreditation

4.3.1 Initial Accreditation

When an application for CB accreditation is received and **the application form APO-AB 2001 (Appendix 1)** is confirmed to contain sufficient information, the CB shall sign Agreement **APO-AB 3006** with the APO-AB.

4.3.2 All CBs shall comply with and fulfill 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; and
- g) Follow the APO-AB policy on the use of the accreditation symbols/logos.

4.3.3 An application for accreditation shall 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 Two-stage Assessments

The APO-AB shall assess the applicant CB by performing:

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

(Note: Depending upon circumstances, a preliminary visit to the applicant CB may be carried out at the request of the CB or APO-AB with the agreement of the CB. The preliminary visit is not an assessment visit.)

- 2) **Stage 2 Assessment.** Assessment to establish whether a CB is capable and competent in developing and operating the CoP scheme for which it seeks accreditation. The assessment shall include a witnessed evaluation (in personnel certification, CBs do not conduct audits) based on a sampling of activities in accordance with **APO-AB 4014 Procedures for Witnessing Audit.**

(Note: The checklist **APO-AB 2007:2020** for Assessing CBs based on APO-AB 1003:2020 is given in **Appendix 2.**)

- 3) The above two phases of assessment may follow the traditional methodology of CBs involving physical office and onsite assessments of CBs and/or using online or remote e-assessments to complement the traditional physical assessment. However, remote assessment is performed only upon mutual agreement between the APO-AB and the CB

to be assessed. The principles and approach used will follow the IAF Informative Document IAF ID 12 on Principles on Remote Assessment.

- 4) In the case of an extraordinary event or circumstance that affects the operations and activities of a CB, the APO-AB accreditation approach or methodology may follow the guidelines outlined in IAF ID 3 Document for Management of Extraordinary Events or Circumstances Affecting ABs, CABs and Certified Organization, except for Clause 5.1, Breakdown of an AB (until the APO-AB becomes an MLA signatory of the IAF).

4.3.5 Accreditation Decision Making

The APO-AB shall only consider the granting of accreditation upon satisfactory resolution of all nonconformities found during assessments.

4.3.6 Accreditation Certificate

The APO-AB shall 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 Accreditation Cycle

The certificate of accreditation shall 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 do not constitute significant changes to the CB quality system and 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 shall be listed in a directory maintained by the APO-AB.

4.4 Monitoring, Surveillance, and Reassessment of CBs

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

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

Table 1. First cycle of accreditation.

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 2. Subsequent cycle of accreditation.

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

Notes:

- 1) Remote assessment methodology as mentioned in 4.3.4.3) may be used by mutual agreement between the APO-AB and the CB concerned.
- 2) The interval between assessments shall not be more than two years.

4.4.3 In addition to or as part of its program of surveillance, the APO-AB reserves the right to assign an expert/s 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 Significant Changes in CB Activities

The APO-AB developed the procedure **APO-AB 4010 Handling Significant Changes in Its Accredited CBs** which includes organizational changes, authorized signatory, key personnel involved in the certification scheme, scope of accreditation, and changes in premise location.

4.6 Suspension of Accreditation and Appeal

Suspending Accreditation

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

- a) Violation of the terms and conditions of accreditation;
- b) Failure to provide reasonable cooperation with or facilities for APO-AB assessors and/or authorized agents to discharge their official duties; and
- c) In the reasonable view of the APO-AB, an accredited CB makes unreasonable or irresponsible use of a subcontract.

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

4.6.3 Before the APO-AB suspends a certificate of accreditation, it shall 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.

4.6.4 If a written response is received, the APO-AB shall consider the explanations given and offer the accredited CB an opportunity to be heard by the Accreditation Review Panel (ARP) as soon as possible, following the appeal procedure in **APO-AB 4008 Flow Chart for Assessment**.

4.6.5 If no response to the notice of suspension is received by the APO-AB, the accreditation shall be suspended after the 14-day period and the CB shall be informed of the suspension in writing.

Reducing the Scope of Accreditation

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

4.7 Confidentiality

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

4.7.2 The APO-AB and its committees, assessors, and technical experts shall 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 shall at all times:

- a) Maintain practices and certification schemes to a standard complying with APO-CoP regulations, accreditation criteria of the APO-AB and ISO/IEC 17024, and other conditions and requirements prescribed by the APO-AB;
- b) 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;
- c) Inform the APO-AB of any significant change that may affect its accreditation;

- d) Not use APO-AB accreditation or 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;
- e) Endeavor to ensure that no APO-CoP-endorsed certificate or any part thereof shall 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; and
- f) Retain a record of all reports for at least one accreditation cycle plus the current cycle or as required by law or organizational or contractual arrangements.

5.2 Impartiality, Independence, and Integrity

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

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

5.2.3 CBs shall 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 shall 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 shall carry the APO-AB symbol/logo of accreditation of CBs for the CoP scheme and contain the accreditation certificate identification number.

5.4 Cooperation with the APO-AB

CBs shall 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 includes:

- a) Affording the APO-AB, its assessors, and technical experts reasonable access to relevant areas of a CB to observe the CoP scheme;
- b) Preparing, packaging, and dispatching, at the expense of the CB involved, the documents, reports, or other items needed by the APO-AB;

- c) Permitting assessment by the APO-AB, its assessors, and technical experts of the results of the CB's own internal audits and management reviews; and
- d) Assisting the APO-AB, its assessors, and technical experts in the investigation and resolution of any 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 shall have full control of the issue of accredited certification following the regulations and criteria set out by APO-AB. The CB shall therefore take full responsibility and liability for the issuing of all certification.

5.5.2 The CB shall indemnify the APO-AB from all liabilities that may result from claims arising from CB certification.

5.6 Notification of Change

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

- a) Changes in personnel or certification scheme/scope of activity of an accredited CB;
- b) Any change in the CB's organization and management, e.g., head of the CB or quality manager;
- c) Any change, transfer, redesignation of duties, or resignation of key CB personnel, approved signatories, authorized representatives, and other senior CB staff;
- d) Changes in duties of approved signatories;
- e) Changes in address, premises, facilities, or other resources;
- f) Any change in the CB's legal, commercial, or organizational status; and
- g) 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 shall 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.