Remote Audit Guidance

Your essential guide; outlining what to expect

and how to prepare for a remote audit.

PEERS QUALITY ASSURANCE LTD

Introduction

The objective of an Audit is to evaluate the implementation and continued effectiveness of your Management System, and to assess your organisation's compliance with ISO standards. This involves examining evidence of how you deliver your products or services, typically through the review of documents, systems, processes, and behaviours.

Historically, these audits have been conducted 'on site' at an organisation's main business premises or other operational locations, such as construction sites. As information and communication technology (ICT) becomes more sophisticated, it is important to be able to use ICT to optimize audit effectiveness and efficiency, and to support and maintain the integrity of the audit process. This could mean that neither our assessor, nor your team, need to be physically present on-site to complete an audit.

Continue reading to discover more about the remote audit process and how you can maximise its benefits.

What to Expect

If a written request is submitted to PQAL for a Remote Audit, we shall conduct a risk assessment in advance, to ascertain the potential for the audit to be conducted remotely. This shall conducted in line with the requirements IAF MD4: 2023.
The findings from the risk assessment shall be evaluated in conjunction with an analysis of your industry, to determine the feasibility of a remote audit. Subsequent to this evaluation, we shall inform you of the result.

Your Auditor shall make an effort to get in touch with you formally, to introduce themselves, book your audit date(s) and determine the online platform(s) that will be employed for the remote audit. Typically, this contact shall occur 1-2 weeks before your audit date. Following the discussion, the Auditor shall provide a meeting invititation containing details of the appropriate platform for the remote audit.

Prior to the audit, the Auditor may ask to review certain documentation. This could encompass (but is not limited to) internal audits, management reviews, key processes, and site plans. Providing documentation in advance of the audit can streamline the process and and may alleviate demands on your resources during the audit (e.g., scanning documentation). It may also enable the Auditor to concentrate more on process-based activities related to your Scope of Certification.

A remote audit shall follow the same processes as a traditional audit in terms of gathering evidence for the audit report, the only difference is that it will not be carried out on site. Communication tools like video chat (e.g., Facetime, Teams, Zoom) will help to facilitate meetings, interviews, and virtual site tours. Document sharing software such as OneDrive and WeTransfer can facilitate the sharing of files for the auditor to review. In the absence of video chat, telephone or audio calls are viable alternatives.

Risk Assessment

Introduction

Expectation

Delivery

FAQ's

Do I need to prepare any differently for a Remote Audit?

Similar to an on-site audit, you should ensure that documentation is readily accessible, and relevant personnel are available for interviews. It is recommended that you grant the Auditor access to documentation before the audit. Apart from using interactive platforms for the remote audit, the rest of the audit process shall be the same. Examples of documentation you should make available for the remote audit:

- Management System Processes
- Internal Audit records
- Management Review Meeting Minutes
- Non-Conformance logs and actions
- Training Records

Why can't my Audit be conducted remotely?

Either youself or the Auditor might lack the necessary technology to facilitate a remote audit.

It is possible that our Risk Assessment process (in line with IAF MD04 2023) may find that a remote audit is not suitable or permissible. Consequently, we will need to carry out an on-site audit.

What happens if I have connectivity or technical issues on the audit day?

The majority of our Remote Audits are successfully concluded without any problems. Nevertheless, in unfortunate circumstances, where there is a loss of connectivity or technical issues arise, the Auditor shall make every effort to continue with the Audit wherever feasible. We strongly encourage clients to test the agreed interactive platforms before the Audit day, to become familiar with them and ensure they operate as required.

Are Audit fees different for Remote Audits?

The duration of the remote audit shall be equivalent to that of an on-site audit. Despite the remote nature of the audit, the Auditor will exert the same amount of effort, time, and assessment. Consequently, we do not provide reduced fees for remote audits. However, there will be no travel expenses included on your invoice.

Remote Audit Tools

> *In the realm of remote auditing, selecting the most effective tools is paramount for ensuring a seamless and efficient process. Video conferencing platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams have proven to be invaluable, offering real-time communication and document sharing capabilities. Secure file-sharing services, like SharePoint or OneDrive, facilitate the seamless exchange of audit-related documents. Additionally, audit management software may play a crucial role in streamlining audit processes, allowing for structured planning, documentation, and follow-up actions. These tools collectively enhance collaboration, information sharing, and overall audit effectiveness in the virtual environment.*

PQAL Lead Auditor

Video Chat

You can use the video chat service on devices to conduct opening and closing meetings, top-level management interviews, staff interviews, and site tours. Video chat is readily accessible on most device, as well as on key interactive software packages like Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and others.

Document Sharing

You can share documents via online storage tools, such as OneDrive or Dropbox, allowing you to grant the Auditor access to records or documentation for review.

Other Methods

If video chat isn't an option, telephone calls or audio chats can be employed. Telephone functions and audio chats are also available on key interactive software packages like Facetime, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Skype, etc.

Additionally, text chat options (such as WhatsApp or SMS phone messages) can be utilised for information sharing, including photo media. Furthermore, email can be used to send documentation and, if possible, access to the company's management system can be arranged.

PQAL **Certifications**

UKAS Accreditation

PQAL holds Accreditation with The United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) for:

- ISO 9001
- ISO 14001
- ISO 45001 (and also the SSIP Sector Scheme)
- ISO/IEC 27001
- PAS 43, NHSS 17 & NHSS 17B

UKAS is the only national Accreditation Body recognised by the UK Government

UKAS Accredited Certification Bodies, such as PQAL, are regularly assessed against Internationally recognised Standards, to demonstrate their compliance, competence, impartiality and performance capability

UKAS have been licensed by BIS to use and confer the National Accreditation Symbols, which demonstrates Government recognition of the Accreditation process

UKAS Accreditation provides clients with an assurance of the competence, impartiality and integrity of Certification Bodies. UKAS Accredited Certification reduces the need for suppliers to be assessed by each of their customers

The UKAS involvement in international groups provides for mutual recognition, which further reduces the need for multiple assessments of suppliers and helps to reduce barriers to trade. It is therefore the policy of BIS to recommend the use of UKAS Accredited Certification Body services, whenever this is an option

As an IAF (International Accreditation Forum) member, UKAS Accreditation is recognised Worldwide

Federation of Certification Bodies

PQAL are an active member of the Federation of Certification Bodies (FCB). The purpose of the FCB is to provide Accredited Certification Bodies with a membership forum, to allow discussion of matters of common interest, with the view to support the delivery of Accredited Certification services. This may include collective discussion with representatives of Accreditation Body(s) and others to help achieve this aim

Membership of the FCB is open to all UKAS Accredited Certification Bodies (and Accredited Certification Bodies of other IAF MLA members)

Safety Schemes In Procurement (SSIP)

PQAL holds SSIP Certification Body Membership. This means that PQAL are able to provide ISO 45001 + SSIP Certification Services that meet both UKAS and SSIP requirements.

A stand-alone ISO 45001 Certificate does not meet SSIP requirements and falls outside of the SSIP Scheme. Any organisation wishing to hold ISO 45001 + SSIP must request this with PQAL so that the additional SSIP Scheme requirements are implemented during the assessment process, including data integration with the SSIP Portal for Deem to Satisfy purposes.

The SSIP is an umbrella organisation to facilitate Mutual Recognition between Health and Safety pre-qualification schemes.