

POL.010 Impartiality Structure

1. Purpose and Scope

This policy defines the purpose and requirements of the Q-Audit Impartiality Committee and the role of its members.

To ensure impartiality of their operation, CABs (conformity assessment body) providing management system certification are required to have a documented impartiality structure which safeguards impartiality within themselves and within their operation, eg: an impartiality committee or equivalent.

2. Impartiality Committee

The impartiality structure needs to involve the participation of all parties concerned with the development of policies and principles for the content and functioning of a CAB's certification / registration system.

The Impartiality Committee should be given the authority to review and require action on:

- ▮ The current and intended activities of the CAB
- ▮ The competence of the key personnel and
- ▮ The potential risks associated to the CAB's operation

Impartiality needs to be established at three levels within the CAB, for:

- ▮ Strategies and policies
- ▮ Decisions on certification / registration
- ▮ Auditing

The impartiality structure is required to safeguard impartiality at all three levels and can be an independent structure or combined with the management function (as long as so single interest predominates). In order to ensure that no single interest predominates, there should be formal rules of procedure that establish the duties and rights of the members, eg: rules for attendance, quorum and voting. The CAB management may be represented on the impartiality committee, given such safeguards against predominance.

One function of the impartiality committee is to ensure that commercial or other considerations do not prevent the objective provision of the certification services. This is particularly important when the commercial interests of the owners can have influence over the certification policies and decisions.

The CAB should ensure that relevant interested parties are represented as impartiality committee members, with no single interest predominating. These include the CAB itself, regulatory authorities, NGOs (such as cultural associations etc. depending on the type of certification scheme), contestants, academia, as well as the intermediate (industry) and final users (consumers) of the CAB's accredited conformity assessment services.

It is intended that this group be a high-level group with responsibility for ensuring impartiality and not be predominantly technical/sector based group.

In particular, it is not expected that the composition of the group should reflect the range of technical expertise of the CAB. However, it can be supported in its operation by technical experts, as and when required.

The members of the group shall sign declarations of confidentiality and absence of conflicts of interests.

It is for the CAB to demonstrate the adequacy of the process for identifying and involving the relevant interested parties and for the Impartiality Committee itself to demonstrate the adequacy of their participation.

In order to enable provision of proper and impartial certification / registration, the management of the CAB should provide all the information required for the Impartiality Committee to perform their job, including, but not limited to, the reasons for:

- ▶ All significant decisions and actions, and
- ▶ The selection of persons responsible for particular activities in respect to certification / registration.

The Impartiality Committee has the right to take independent action if the certification body does not respect the advice it provides. This could include informing authorities, accreditation bodies or key stake holders. Confidentiality should be maintained.

3. Requirements of the CAB

- ▶ Ensures the appropriateness and composition of the Impartiality Committee and ensures that interests are represented and that expertise is brought to the Impartiality Committee (when necessary).
- ▶ Observes the documented terms of reference and rules of procedure and the way the impartiality structure achieves its tasks in general.
- ▶ Ensures the ability of the Impartiality Committee to intervene in a timely fashion in response to the changing needs of the CAB.
- ▶ Evaluates the adequacy and effectiveness of the Impartiality Committee.
- ▶ Ensures that content and accuracy of the management reports to the Impartiality Committee.
- ▶ Ensures that the Impartiality Committee is advised on the results of external assessments and any recommendations that may be made by the assessor(s).