



International Organization for Standardization



International Accreditation Forum

Date: 13 January 2016

## **ISO 9001 Auditing Practices Group**

### **Guidance on:**

#### **Competence**

The following information is provided to guide auditors performing certification audits in understanding the ISO 9001 requirements for 'competence of persons doing work under the control of the organization regardless of their employment status.

These requirements are usually audited as part of QMS processes and not in isolation. However, it is recognised that some organizations will have separate human resource processes, where most of the evidence needed can be found.

This document identifies typical activities performed by organizations to ensure the competence of their persons and to evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken to satisfy those competence needs, and gives guidance to auditors regarding the types of evidence they should aim to find, and provide examples where appropriate.

To satisfy the competence/effectiveness requirements of ISO 9001, an organization will typically need to do several things:-

- Determine what competencies are required by persons performing work which affects quality
- Determine which persons already performing the work have the required competencies
- Decide if additional competencies are required
- Decide how these additional competencies are to be obtained – training of persons (external or internal), theoretical or practical training, hiring of new competent persons, assignment of existing competent personnel to different work
- Train, hire or reassign persons
- Review the effectiveness of actions taken to satisfy competence needs and to ensure that the necessary competence has been achieved
- Periodically review competence of persons

Throughout the process, the organisation is required to retain appropriate documented information (e.g. records) of education, training, skills and experience. However, ISO 9001 does not specify how the process will be established or the exact nature of the records needed.

In auditing competence, an auditor would typically be seeking evidence that the following issues are addressed:-

- 1 - An organisation needs to identify what competencies are required by persons performing work that affects quality.

**Guidance** - The objective of the auditor should be to determine whether there is a systematic approach in place to identify these competencies and to verify that the approach is effective. The outcome of the process may be a list, register, database, human resources plan, competencies development plan, contract, project or product plan, etc.

Discussions could initially be held with top management to ensure they understand the importance of identifying the competencies required. These may also be a potential source of information regarding new or changed activities or processes, which may lead to different competency requirements in the organization.

A review of competencies might also be needed when a new tender or contract is being considered. Evidence of this could be found in related records. Competence requirements may be included in contract documents where the activities of subcontractors can have an impact on processes and/or product quality characteristics.

Auditors need to determine whether the organisation has identified new or changed competence needs during surveillance audits.

- 2 – Are competent people assigned to those work place activities necessary to control the quality characteristics of its processes and products?

**Guidance** - Verify that some form of evaluation process is in place to ensure that the competencies are appropriate to the organization's activities, and that the persons selected as competent are demonstrating these competencies. Also, the process should ensure that any deficiencies are being acted upon and the effectiveness of persons is being measured. Verify that the activities that affect quality are performed by persons selected as competent. Evidence may be obtained throughout the audit with an emphasis on those processes, activities, task and products where human intervention may have the greatest impact. The auditor may review job descriptions, testing or inspection activities, monitoring activities, records of management reviews, definition of responsibilities and authorities, nonconformity records, audit reports, customer complaints, processes validation records etc.

- 3- The organization needs to evaluate the effectiveness of the actions taken to satisfy the competence needs and to ensure that the necessary competence has been achieved

**Guidance** - The organization may use a number of techniques including role-play, peer review, observation, reviews of training and employment records and/or interviews (see ISO 19011, Table 2, for further examples). The appropriateness of a particular evaluation method will depend on many factors. For example, training records could be viewed to verify that a training course had been successfully completed (but note, this alone would not provide evidence that the trainee is competent). However, this same method would not be acceptable to evaluate whether an auditor performed satisfactorily during an audit. Instead, this may require observation, peer review, interviews, etc. The organization may need to demonstrate the attainment of competence of its persons through a combination of education, training and/or work experience.

#### 4 – Maintenance of competence.

**Guidance** – The auditor needs to verify that some form of effective monitoring process is in place and being acted upon. Ways of doing this include a continuing professional development process (such as the one described in ISO 19011), regular appraisals of persons and their performance, or the regular inspection, testing or auditing of product for which individuals or groups are responsible. Ongoing changes in competence requirements may indicate that an organization is proactive in maintaining persons performance levels.

---

For further information on the ISO 9001 Auditing Practices Group, please refer to the paper: *Introduction to the ISO 9001 Auditing Practices Group*

Feedback from users will be used by the *ISO 9001 Auditing Practices Group* to determine whether additional guidance documents should be developed, or if these current ones should be revised.

Comments on the papers or presentations can be sent to the following email address: [charles.corrie@bsigroup.com](mailto:charles.corrie@bsigroup.com) .

The other ISO 9001 Auditing Practices Group papers and presentations may be downloaded from the web sites:

[www.iaf.nu](http://www.iaf.nu)

[www.iso.org/tc176/ISO9001AuditingPracticesGroup](http://www.iso.org/tc176/ISO9001AuditingPracticesGroup)

#### **Disclaimer**

This paper has not been subject to an endorsement process by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), ISO Technical Committee 176, or the International Accreditation Forum (IAF).

The information contained within it is available for educational and communication purposes. The *ISO 9001 Auditing Practices Group* does not take responsibility for any errors, omissions or other liabilities that may arise from the provision or subsequent use of such information.