



SNS Certification

Standards and Systems Certification

Certification Audit Program

Audit Planning and Execution Procedure

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1.0 Purpose

This procedure describes how SNS Certification plans, manages and executes certification audit programs. It defines the main controls for Stage 1 audit, Stage 2 audit, surveillance, follow-up and recertification so that certification decisions are based on competent assessment and objective evidence.

2.0 Scope

This procedure applies to management system certification activities performed by SNS Certification for applicant and certified clients. It covers audit program planning after application and contract review, audit scheduling, audit team selection, audit execution, reporting, nonconformity handling, surveillance continuity and recertification planning.

3.0 Definitions

| Term | Meaning |
|---------------------|---|
| Audit program | Planned set of audit activities for a client certification cycle, including initial certification, surveillance and recertification. |
| Stage 1 audit | Readiness review used to understand the client management system, site conditions, scope, documented information and preparedness for Stage 2. |
| Stage 2 audit | Implementation audit used to evaluate conformity, effectiveness and operational control against the selected certification criteria. |
| Follow-up audit | Additional review or on-site assessment used when evidence is needed to verify closure of significant findings. |
| CAR | Corrective Action Request raised when a nonconformity requires correction, root cause analysis and corrective action evidence. |
| Major nonconformity | A failure that affects the capability of the management system to achieve intended results or shows significant absence/breakdown of a requirement. |
| Minor nonconformity | An isolated or limited failure that does not, by itself, indicate system breakdown but requires correction and corrective action. |

4.0 Reference Framework

- Applicable certification standard and scheme requirements agreed with the client.
- SNS Certification application review, contract review, audit planning, auditor competence and certification decision controls.
- ISO/IEC 17021-1 principles for management system certification body activities, where applicable.
- ISO 19011 audit guidance, where useful for audit planning and audit conduct.
- Legal, regulatory, accreditation or sector-specific requirements applicable to the certification scope, where relevant.

5.0 Audit Program Principles

For each client, SNS Certification establishes an audit program considering the requested scope, site structure, process complexity, number of personnel, shifts, risk profile, sector requirements, previous audit results, complaints, significant changes, outsourcing, integrated management systems and any applicable scheme rules. The audit program is revised when major changes occur or when audit results indicate that additional review is required.

6.0 Three-Year Certification Cycle

| Cycle activity | Purpose / output |
|---|---|
| Application, scope review and contract review | Confirm requested scope, sites, standard, exclusions, risks, competence needs and audit duration basis. |
| Document / adequacy review | Evaluate whether documented information is sufficient to support audit planning and readiness assessment. |
| Stage 1 audit | Assess readiness, client understanding, site conditions, internal audit and management review status, statutory/regulatory considerations, and planning concerns. |
| Stage 2 audit | Evaluate implementation, process effectiveness, conformity to criteria, evidence of control, and readiness for certification decision. |
| Certification decision | Independent review of audit package, NC status, scope, recommendation and evidence before certificate issue. |
| Surveillance Year 1 | Confirm ongoing conformity, continued effectiveness, use of |



| Cycle activity | Purpose / output |
|---------------------|--|
| Surveillance Year 2 | certification and significant changes. |
| Recertification | Confirm continued conformity and readiness for cycle renewal. Complete renewal assessment and decision before certificate expiry when client continues certification. |

7.0 Audit Planning and Team Selection

- Audit duration and audit objectives are determined based on scope, size, complexity, risk and applicable scheme rules.
- The audit team is selected based on competence, sector knowledge, standard knowledge, language and location needs, and absence of conflict of interest.
- A technical expert may be assigned when specific sector competence is required and is not fully covered by the auditor team.
- Audit plans include audit criteria, scope, objectives, sites, processes, schedule, audit team members, reporting expectations and meeting arrangements.
- SNS Certification normally communicates the audit plan sufficiently in advance of the audit. For planned audits, the target communication period is at least seven days before audit unless urgency or client circumstances require otherwise.

8.0 Stage 1 Audit

Stage 1 audit evaluates the client's preparedness for Stage 2 and supports effective audit planning. It may include review of documented information, management system scope, statutory and regulatory requirements, site-specific conditions, process interactions, internal audit status, management review status, objectives, policy, risk controls, shift arrangements, exclusions or non-applicable requirements, and resources needed for Stage 2.

9.0 Stage 2 Audit

Stage 2 audit evaluates implementation and effectiveness of the management system. The audit includes opening meeting, confirmation of scope and audit plan, process-wise assessment, interviews, review of records, observation of operational controls, evaluation of compliance obligations, verification of corrective action processes, review of monitoring and performance data, audit team deliberation and closing meeting. Audit conclusions are recorded in the audit report and supported by objective evidence.

10.0 Nonconformity and Follow-up

- Findings are graded according to their significance and effect on conformity and system effectiveness.
- For minor nonconformities, the client is normally required to submit correction, root cause analysis and corrective action evidence within 30 calendar days unless a different scheme/client agreement requirement applies.
- For major nonconformities, closure normally requires stronger evidence and may require follow-up audit or limited verification. Target closure is normally within 90 calendar days; for recertification, closure must be verified before certificate expiry.
- SNS Certification informs the client whether closure will be accepted by document review, limited remote/on-site verification, full follow-up audit, or verification during the next scheduled audit.
- Certification cannot be granted, continued or renewed until required nonconformity actions have been accepted according to SNS Certification controls.

11.0 Surveillance and Recertification

Surveillance audits are planned to maintain confidence in continued conformity during the certification cycle. Surveillance review considers process performance, internal audits, management review, complaint status, significant changes, use of marks, previous findings and continuing control of the certified scope. Recertification is planned before certificate expiry and includes review of system performance across the cycle, effectiveness of corrective action, changes and continued suitability of scope.

12.0 Records and Communication

| Record / communication | Purpose |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Application and contract review | Confirms scope, standard, sites, audit feasibility and competence needs. |
| Audit program | Controls cycle planning and surveillance/recertification timing. |



| Record / communication | Purpose |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Audit plan | Communicates schedule, audit objectives, criteria, team and arrangements. |
| Audit report and evidence summary | Records audit outcomes, conformity, nonconformities and recommendation. |
| CAR / NC closure records | Controls client correction, root cause, corrective action and verification. |
| Certification decision record | Shows independent review and decision outcome. |
| Client communication | Confirms acceptance/non-acceptance of findings, certificate status and next steps. |

Document Approval

| Prepared by | Reviewed by | Approved by | Effective date |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| SNS Certification Management | Technical / Process Owner | Authorized Management | 24.05.2026 |

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