AS ISO/IEC 17040—2005

Australian Standard™

Conformity assessment—General requirements for peer assessment of conformity assessment bodies and accreditation bodies



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Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (Commonwealth)
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PREFACE

This Standard was prepared by the Australian members of the Joint Standards Australia/Standards New Zealand Committee QR-010, Conformity Assessment. After consultation with stakeholders in both countries, Standards Australia and Standards New Zealand decided to develop this Standard as an Australian Standard rather than an Australian/New Zealand Standard.

This Standard is identical with, and has been reproduced from ISO/IEC 17040:2005, *Conformity assessment—General requirements for peer assessment of conformity assessment bodies and accreditation bodies*.

The objective of this Standard is to specify the general requirements for the peer assessment process to be carried out by agreement groups of accreditation bodies or conformity assessment bodies.

As this Standard is reproduced from an international standard, the following applies:

(a) Its number appears on the cover and title page while the international standard number appears only on the cover.

(b) In the source text 'this International Standard' should read 'AS ISO/IEC 17040'.

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References to International Standards should be replaced by references to Australian or Australian/New Zealand Standards as follows:

Reference to International Standard		*Australian Standard*	
ISO/IEC		AS ISO/IEC	
17000	Conformity assessment—Vocabulary and general principles	17000	Conformity assessment—Vocabulary and general principles

The terms 'normative' and 'informative' have been used in this Standard to define the application of the annex to which they apply. A 'normative' annex is an integral part of a Standard, whereas an 'informative' annex is only for information and guidance.

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INTRODUCTION

Peer assessment has been used for many years as a means of deciding upon whom to admit to a particular group of equals or peers. Membership of a professional institution, for example, can be decided by using a process that the existing members have established, involving the setting of requirements for membership and the assessment of candidates for conformity with those requirements. In the field of conformity assessment, groups of bodies conducting the same type of work, for example testing or accreditation, have used peer assessment in order that the work of each body can be assessed and found acceptable to all the other bodies.

The global economy has accelerated the need for mutual recognition amongst accreditation and conformity assessment bodies. Each group has developed a form of peer assessment appropriate to its activities. It became apparent when reviewing the methods used by the different groups that there were many aspects in common. It was felt that there would be benefits in creating an International Standard that gave generic requirements for an effective peer assessment process, while leaving it open to individual groups to adopt specific measures appropriate to their individual fields of activities.

This International Standard is intended to be used by groups of peers performing any conformity assessment activity (e.g. conformity assessment bodies, accreditation bodies). Such groups of peers have been described in various ways, and are called agreement groups in ISO/IEC Guide 68. That is not to say that other groups in different fields of work cannot use the peer assessment process. However, such groups would need to adopt suitable organizational and managerial arrangements to provide the right conditions for the peer assessment process to be carried out to the best effect. As a result, each group can achieve its desired outcomes with the expenditure of less resources.

This International Standard is also intended to enhance the confidence of those who use or depend upon the results of conformity assessment that the work is being conducted in a competent and proper manner.

In this International Standard a generic peer assessment process is illustrated in Figure 1.

The model shown in Figure 1 separates aspects of the peer assessment process that are covered in this International Standard. It starts with the presumption that there is a prospective applicant to join an agreement group. It is assumed that an agreement group exists, and that this group has some criteria or requirements that have to be met in order for a body to join. These aspects are not covered by this International Standard but are for the specific agreement group to decide for themselves, as are the decision on membership of the group and any appeal on that decision. The bulk of this International Standard focuses on the steps to be used within the peer assessment process, and only makes non-process requirements where absolutely necessary. It can be used in conjunction with ISO/IEC Guide 68, and for the peer assessment process that may be required in either regulatory or voluntary fields of conformity assessment.

The nature of a peer assessment is determined by the goal of the agreement group and the use to which the outcome of the peer assessment process will be applied. The goal of the agreement group could be one or more of the following:

a) conformity of bodies with specified requirements;

b) equivalence of results among bodies;

c) acceptance of results from one body by other bodies for use in their conformity assessment activities.

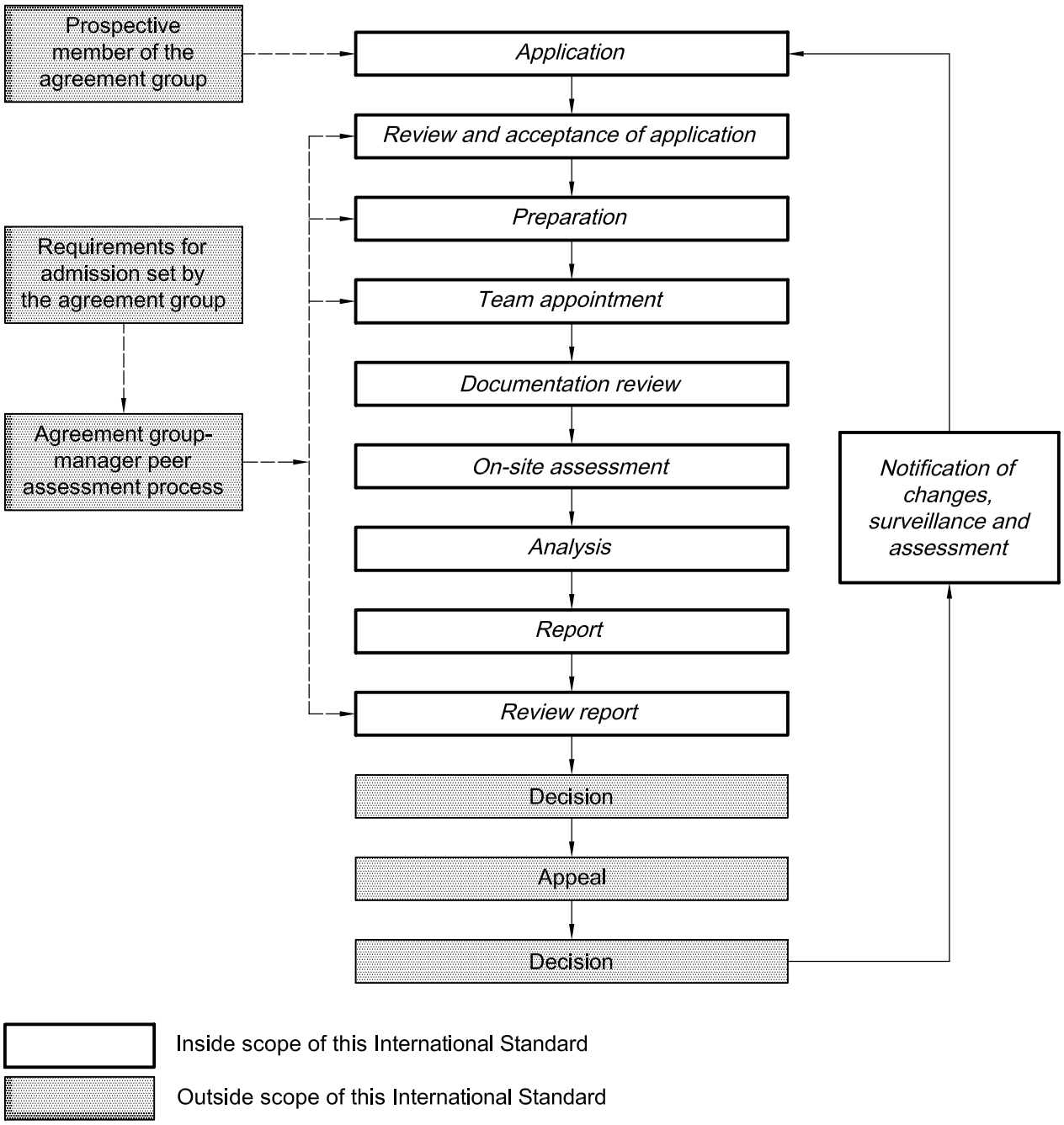


Figure 1 — Generic peer assessment process

NOTES

AUSTRALIAN STANDARD

Conformity assessment — General requirements for peer assessment of conformity assessment bodies and accreditation bodies

1 Scope

1.1 This International Standard specifies the general requirements for the peer assessment process to be carried out by agreement groups of accreditation bodies or conformity assessment bodies. It addresses the structure and operation of the agreement group only insofar as they relate to the peer assessment process.

1.2 This International Standard is not concerned with the wider issues of the arrangements for the formation, organization and management of the agreement group, and does not cover how the group will use peer assessment in deciding membership of the group. Such matters, which could for example include a procedure for applicants to appeal against decisions of the agreement group, are outside the scope of this International Standard.

NOTE 1 Further information on the wider issues is contained in ISO/IEC Guide 68.

1.3 This International Standard is applicable to peer assessment of conformity assessment bodies performing activities such as

a) testing,

b) product certification,

c) inspection,

d) management system certification (sometimes also called registration), and

e) personnel certification.

More than one type of activity can be included in a peer assessment process. This can be considered particularly appropriate when the body under assessment conducts combined assessments of multiple conformity assessment activities.

This International Standard is also applicable to peer assessment amongst accreditation bodies, which is also known as peer evaluation.

NOTE 2 Bodies that are members of an agreement group might wish to rely on the soundness of the peer assessment process for evaluating the competence of a peer body as a potential subcontractor.

2 Normative references

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO/IEC 17000:2004, *Conformity assessment — Vocabulary and general principles*

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