المركز السعودي للاعتماد
Saudi Accreditation Center

Guidelines for Alternative Methods of Conducting Comparison Programs for Inspection Bodies

G-I-04-01

1445 هـ - 2023 م

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1. Purpose

This document describes the necessary steps in the situation that the inspection body does not perform an inter-comparison between the laboratories / inspection bodies and the practices that provide methods for monitoring the inspectors and ensuring the results of the inspection.

2. Scope

This document is applied to inspection bodies requesting accreditation and accredited by the Saudi Accreditation Center.

3. Normative References

- Conformity assessment- Requirements for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspection ISO/IEC 17020:2012.
- The ILAC P15:05/2020 Policy - Application of ISO/IEC 17020:2012 for the Accreditation of Inspection Bodies.
- ILAC P9 06/2014 ILAC Policy for Participation in Proficiency Testing Activities
- A-03-06 SAAC Policy for Participation in Proficiency Tests and inter-Comparison Programs

4. Terms and Definitions

- **Proficiency tests**: evaluates the performance of the participants based on predetermined criteria through Inter-comparisons.
- **Inter-Comparison programs:** are the organization, performance, and evaluation of measurements or tests on the same purpose that is calibrated or tested or similar by two or more laboratories\ inspection bodies according to predetermined conditions.

5. Monitoring Inspectors and Ensuring the Quality of Inspection Process

ISO/IEC 17020:2012 introduces a requirement for "monitoring" of inspectors in clauses 6.1.8 and 6.1.9. Supervision and monitoring assist in assuring the quality of inspections and thus perform the role fulfilled by proficiency testing and quality control in the context of laboratories.

5.1 Implications for Inspection Bodies

A. Inspection bodies are required to participate in appropriate quality assurance activities as a condition of accreditation.

B. Inspection bodies should identify their approach to assuring the quality of inspection services, by including a statement, policy or procedure in their management system.

C. Where possible, an inspection body should have a plan on their intended participation in relevant proficiency testing activities, to cover the major technical areas included in its scope of accreditation.

D. At assessment these matters will be discussed and comments recorded as findings (conditions/observations as relevant) under clause 6.1.9 of ISO/IEC 17020:2012.

5.2 Proficiency Testing and Inspection Bodies

ILAC P9 states that:

Proficiency testing may be used in some types of inspection where available and justified by the inclusion of testing activities that directly affect and determine the inspection result or when required by law or by regulators.

And SAAC's A-03 Proficiency Testing Policy states that:

- SAAC requires applicant (including inspection bodies if relevant) to formulate PT participation plans covering their activities.
- Where credible and relevant proficiency testing programs are available it is a requirement of accreditation that applicant and SAAC-accredited inspection bodies will participate.

In the situation that the requirements mentioned in the above clause are not available, the inspection bodies accredited by the Saudi Accreditation Center must implement the requirements necessary to monitor the inspectors based on ISO / IEC 17020: 2012, and provide the options described in clause 5.3 of this guide, for example, but not limited to monitor inspectors and ensure the quality of inspections.

5.3 Quality Assurance Activities for Inspection Bodies

The quality of the results of inspection activities can be monitored in a number of ways, including but not limited to:

a. Comparison of Findings

Several inspectors (selected from one or more inspection bodies) check an item (either concurrently or over a period of time so that the stability of the item being checked is ensured) and the results are compared. Provided that the comparisons are either numerical or qualitative, and accordingly the statistical analysis of the results shows whether the results reached by each inspector are satisfactory. The results of the comparison are agreed upon by the consensus of the group.

b. Measurement Audits

Inspectors performance can be evaluated by comparing the extent of discrepancy between the inspectors results and the reference value/quality.

c. Field Observation

The inspector monitors another inspector during the inspection process, to ensure the extent of application and coverage of the inspection process and the ability to issue reliable and quality professional judgments. This method is frequently used as a measure of training effectiveness. ISO/IEC 17020:2012 (6.1.9) requires that "monitoring the performance of inspections include witnessing on-site inspections by technically competent personnel and covering a sample of inspections".

d. Known Value Schemes

These schemes involve the preparation of items with known issues, such as a standard set of data for analysis. Known value schemes are commonly used as checks on the validity of calculating systems such as spreadsheets and finite element analysis programs.

e. Partial-process Schemes

These schemes involve the evaluation of the ability to perform parts of the overall process. Examples may include:

- Calculating from a given set of data (rather than conducting the actual inspection);
- Performing an inspection in a controlled environment rather than at client premises;
- Repeat inspections performed by another inspector (either concurrently or over a time interval such that the stability of the inspected item is assured).

f. Reviewing of Records and Supporting Materials

In some cases, inspection records are sufficient to establish whether an inspection was carried out correctly, so it is possible to achieve a high degree of certainty by reviewing a comprehensive set of records. For example, it may include inspections of structure and condition when supported by extensive photographic records, notes, drawings, etc.

g. Contact with Client

Customer interaction is often a key component of the inspection process. Communication with clients can provide information about the inspector (the methods used, his behavior and performance and even his coverage of the inspection items).

h. Review Reports

Reviewing reports depends mainly on ensuring that all sections of the report form are complete and the extent to which they cover the inspection process. During the review of the reports special attention should be given to the specifications of the inspection, the identification of work not done and the limits of the inspection, changes in the customer's order, links to supporting information (test results and photographs) and the final results of the inspection (declaration of conformity and recommendations).

6. Related Documents

- Accreditation Process Procedure P-01