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**Conformity assessment — Requirements  
for the operation of various types of  
bodies performing inspection**

*Évaluation de la conformité — Exigences pour le fonctionnement de  
différents types d'organismes procédant à l'inspection*

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## Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) and IEC (the International Electrotechnical Commission) form the specialized system for worldwide standardization. National bodies that are members of ISO or IEC participate in the development of International Standards through technical committees established by the respective organization to deal with particular fields of technical activity. ISO and IEC technical committees collaborate in fields of mutual interest. Other international organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO and IEC, also take part in the work. In the field of conformity assessment, the ISO Committee on conformity assessment (CASCO) is responsible for the development of International Standards and Guides.

International Standards are drafted in accordance with the rules given in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2.

Draft International Standards are circulated to the national bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the national bodies casting a vote.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

ISO/IEC 17020 was prepared by the ISO Committee on conformity assessment (CASCO).

It was circulated for voting to the national bodies of both ISO and IEC, and was approved by both organizations.

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO/IEC 17020:1998), which has been technically revised.

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## Introduction

This International Standard has been drawn up with the objective of promoting confidence in bodies performing inspection.

Inspection bodies carry out assessments on behalf of private clients, their parent organizations, or authorities, with the objective of providing information about the conformity of inspected items with regulations, standards, specifications, inspection schemes or contracts. Inspection parameters include matters of quantity, quality, safety, fitness for purpose, and continued safety compliance of installations or systems in operation. The general requirements with which these bodies are required to comply in order that their services are accepted by clients and by supervisory authorities are harmonized in this International Standard.

This International Standard covers the activities of inspection bodies whose work can include the examination of materials, products, installations, plants, processes, work procedures or services, and the determination of their conformity with requirements and the subsequent reporting of results of these activities to clients and, when required, to authorities. Inspection can concern all stages during the lifetime of these items, including the design stage. Such work normally requires the exercise of professional judgement in performing inspection, in particular when assessing conformity with general requirements.

This International Standard can be used as a requirements document for accreditation or peer assessment or other assessments.

This set of requirements can be interpreted when applied to particular sectors.

Inspection activities can overlap with testing and certification activities where these activities have common characteristics. However, an important difference is that many types of inspection involve professional judgement to determine acceptability against general requirements, for which reason the inspection body needs the necessary competence to perform the task.

Inspection can be an activity embedded in a larger process. For example, inspection can be used as a surveillance activity in a product certification scheme. Inspection can be an activity that precedes maintenance or simply provides information about the inspected item with no determination of conformity with requirements. In such cases, further interpretation might be needed.

The categorization of inspection bodies as type A, B or C is essentially a measure of their independence. Demonstrable independence of an inspection body can strengthen the confidence of the inspection body's clients with respect to the body's ability to carry out inspection work with impartiality.

In this International Standard, the following verbal forms are used:

- “shall” indicates a requirement;
- “should” indicates a recommendation;
- “may” indicates a permission;
- “can” indicates a possibility or a capability.

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# Conformity assessment — Requirements for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspection

## 1 Scope

This International Standard contains requirements for the competence of bodies performing inspection and for the impartiality and consistency of their inspection activities.

It applies to inspection bodies of type A, B or C, as defined in this International Standard, and it applies to any stage of inspection.

NOTE The stages of inspection include design stage, type examination, initial inspection, in-service inspection or surveillance.

## 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, *Conformity assessment — Vocabulary and general principles*  
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## 3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO/IEC 17000 and the following apply.

### 3.1

#### inspection

examination of a **product** (3.2), **process** (3.3), **service** (3.4), or installation or their design and determination of its conformity with specific requirements or, on the basis of professional judgment, with general requirements

NOTE 1 Inspection of processes can include personnel, facilities, technology or methodology.

NOTE 2 Inspection procedures or schemes can restrict inspection to examination only.

NOTE 3 Adapted from ISO/IEC 17000:2004, definition 4.3.

NOTE 4 The term “item” is used in this International Standard to encompass product, process, service or installation, as appropriate.

### 3.2

#### product

result of a process

NOTE 1 Four generic product categories are noted in ISO 9000:2005:

- services (e.g. transport) (see definition in 3.4);
- software (e.g. computer program, dictionary);

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- hardware (e.g. engine, mechanical part);
- processed materials (e.g. lubricant).

Many products comprise elements belonging to different generic product categories. Whether the product is then called service, software, hardware or processed material depends on the dominant element.

NOTE 2 Products include results of natural processes, such as growth of plants and formation of other natural resources.

NOTE 3 Adapted from ISO/IEC 17000:2004, definition 3.3.

### 3.3 process

set of interrelated or interacting activities which transforms inputs into outputs

NOTE Adapted from ISO 9000:2005, definition 3.4.1.

### 3.4 service

result of at least one activity necessarily performed at the interface between the supplier and the customer, which is generally intangible

NOTE 1 Provision of a service can involve, for example, the following:

- an activity performed on a customer-supplied tangible product (e.g. automobile to be repaired);
- an activity performed on a customer-supplied intangible product (e.g. the income statement needed to prepare a tax return);
- the delivery of an intangible product (e.g. the delivery of information in the context of knowledge transmission);
- the creation of ambience for the customer (e.g. in hotels and restaurants).

NOTE 2 Adapted from ISO 9000:2005, definition 3.4.2, Note 2.

### 3.5 inspection body

body that performs **inspection** (3.1)

NOTE An inspection body can be an organization, or part of an organization.

### 3.6 inspection system

rules, procedures, and management for carrying out inspection

NOTE 1 An inspection system can be operated at international, regional, national or sub-national level.

NOTE 2 Adapted from ISO/IEC 17000:2004, definition 2.7.

### 3.7 inspection scheme

**inspection system** (3.6) to which the same specified requirements, specific rules and procedures apply

NOTE 1 Inspection schemes can be operated at international, regional, national or sub-national level.

NOTE 2 Schemes are sometimes also referred to as “programmes”.

NOTE 3 Adapted from ISO/IEC 17000:2004, definition 2.8.



**3.8****impartiality**

presence of objectivity

NOTE 1 Objectivity means that conflicts of interest do not exist or are resolved so as not to adversely influence subsequent activities of the inspection body.

NOTE 2 Other terms that are useful in conveying the element of impartiality are: independence, freedom from conflict of interests, freedom from bias, lack of prejudice, neutrality, fairness, open-mindedness, even-handedness, detachment, balance.

**3.9****appeal**

request by the provider of the item of inspection to the inspection body for reconsideration by that body of a decision it has made relating to that item

NOTE Adapted from ISO/IEC 17000:2004, definition 6.4.

**3.10****complaint**

expression of dissatisfaction, other than appeal, by any person or organization to an inspection body, relating to the activities of that body, where a response is expected

NOTE Adapted from ISO/IEC 17000:2004, definition 6.5.

**4 General requirements**

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**4.1 Impartiality and independence**

**4.1.1** Inspection activities shall be undertaken impartially.  
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**4.1.2** The inspection body shall be responsible for the impartiality of its inspection activities and shall not allow commercial, financial or other pressures to compromise impartiality.  
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**4.1.3** The inspection body shall identify risks to its impartiality on an ongoing basis. This shall include those risks that arise from its activities, or from its relationships, or from the relationships of its personnel. However, such relationships do not necessarily present an inspection body with a risk to impartiality.

NOTE A relationship that threatens the impartiality of the inspection body can be based on ownership, governance, management, personnel, shared resources, finances, contracts, marketing (including branding), and payment of a sales commission or other inducement for the referral of new clients, etc.

**4.1.4** If a risk to impartiality is identified, the inspection body shall be able to demonstrate how it eliminates or minimizes such risk.

**4.1.5** The inspection body shall have top management commitment to impartiality.

**4.1.6** The inspection body shall be independent to the extent that is required with regard to the conditions under which it performs its services. Depending on these conditions, it shall meet the minimum requirements stipulated in Annex A, as outlined below.

- a) An inspection body providing third party inspections shall meet the type A requirements of Clause A.1 (third party inspection body).
- b) An inspection body providing first party inspections, second party inspections, or both, which forms a separate and identifiable part of an organization involved in the design, manufacture, supply, installation, use or maintenance of the items it inspects and which supplies inspection services only to its parent organization (in-house inspection body) shall meet the type B requirements of Clause A.2.

- c) An inspection body providing first party inspections, second party inspections, or both, which forms an identifiable but not necessarily a separate part of an organization involved in the design, manufacture, supply, installation, use or maintenance of the items it inspects and which supplies inspection services to its parent organization or to other parties, or to both, shall meet the type C requirements of Clause A.3.

## 4.2 Confidentiality

**4.2.1** The inspection body shall be responsible, through legally enforceable commitments, for the management of all information obtained or created during the performance of inspection activities. The inspection body shall inform the client, in advance, of the information it intends to place in the public domain. Except for information that the client makes publicly available, or when agreed between the inspection body and the client (e.g. for the purpose of responding to complaints), all other information is considered proprietary information and shall be regarded as confidential.

NOTE Legally enforceable commitments can be, for example, contractual agreements.

**4.2.2** When the inspection body is required by law or authorized by contractual commitments to release confidential information, the client or individual concerned shall, unless prohibited by law, be notified of the information provided.

**4.2.3** Information about the client obtained from sources other than the client (e.g. complainant, regulators) shall be treated as confidential.

## 5 Structural requirements

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### 5.1 Administrative requirements (standards.iteh.ai)

**5.1.1** The inspection body shall be a legal entity, or a defined part of a legal entity, such that it can be held legally responsible for all its inspection activities.

NOTE A governmental inspection body is deemed to be a legal entity on the basis of its governmental status.

**5.1.2** An inspection body that is part of a legal entity involved in activities other than inspection shall be identifiable within that entity.

**5.1.3** The inspection body shall have documentation which describes the activities for which it is competent.

**5.1.4** The inspection body shall have adequate provision (e.g. insurance or reserves) to cover liabilities arising from its operations.

NOTE The liability can be assumed by the State in accordance with national laws, or by the organization of which the inspection body forms a part.

**5.1.5** The inspection body shall have documentation describing the contractual conditions under which it provides the inspection, except when it provides inspection services to the legal entity of which it is a part.

### 5.2 Organization and management

**5.2.1** The inspection body shall be structured and managed so as to safeguard impartiality.

**5.2.2** The inspection body shall be organized and managed so as to enable it to maintain the capability to perform its inspection activities.

NOTE Inspection schemes can require that the inspection body participates in the exchange of technical experience with other inspection bodies in order to maintain this capability.

**5.2.3** The inspection body shall define and document the responsibilities and reporting structure of the organization.

**5.2.4** Where the inspection body forms a part of a legal entity performing other activities, the relationship between these other activities and inspection activities shall be defined.

**5.2.5** The inspection body shall have available one or more person(s) as technical manager(s) who have overall responsibility to ensure that the inspection activities are carried out in accordance with this International Standard.

NOTE This person fulfilling this function does not always have the title of technical manager.

The person(s) fulfilling this function shall be technically competent and experienced in the operation of the inspection body. Where the inspection body has more than one technical manager, the specific responsibilities of each manager shall be defined and documented.

**5.2.6** The inspection body shall have one or more named person(s) who will deputize in the absence of any technical manager responsible for ongoing inspection activities.

**5.2.7** The inspection body shall have a job description or other documentation for each position category within its organization involved in inspection activities.

## 6 Resource requirements

### 6.1 Personnel

**6.1.1** The inspection body shall define and document the competence requirements for all personnel involved in inspection activities, including requirements for education, training, technical knowledge, skills and experience.

NOTE The competence requirements can be part of the job description or other documentation mentioned in 5.2.7.

**6.1.2** The inspection body shall employ, or have contracts with, a sufficient number of persons with the required competencies, including, where needed, the ability to make professional judgements, to perform the type, range and volume of its inspection activities.

**6.1.3** The personnel responsible for inspection shall have appropriate qualifications, training, experience and a satisfactory knowledge of the requirements of the inspections to be carried out. They shall also have relevant knowledge of the following:

- the technology used for the manufacture of the products inspected, the operation of processes and the delivery of services;
- the way in which products are used, processes are operated and services are delivered;
- any defects which may occur during the use of the product, any failures in the operation of the process and any deficiencies in the delivery of services.

They shall understand the significance of deviations found with regard to the normal use of the products, the operation of the processes and the delivery of services.

**6.1.4** The inspection body shall make clear to each person their duties, responsibilities and authorities.

**6.1.5** The inspection body shall have documented procedures for selecting, training, formally authorizing, and monitoring inspectors and other personnel involved in inspection activities.