



**International
Standard**

ISO/IEC 17020

**Conformity assessment —
Requirements for bodies
performing inspection**

*Évaluation de la conformité — Exigences pour les organismes
effectuant des inspections*

**Third edition
2026-03**

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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.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of document should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives or www.iec.ch/members_experts/refdocs).

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For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html. In the IEC, see www.iec.ch/understanding-standards.

This document was prepared by the ISO Committee on Conformity Assessment (CASCO), in collaboration with the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) Technical Committee CEN/CLC/JTC 1, *Criteria for conformity assessment bodies*, in accordance with the Agreement on technical cooperation between ISO and CEN (Vienna Agreement).

This third edition cancels and replaces the second edition (ISO/IEC 17020:2012), which has been technically revised.

The main changes are as follows:

- the categorization of the inspection body's independence type has been changed to type A and type non-A;
- a definition of "item" and a definition of "client" have been included;
- a new subclause on the control of data and information and actions to address risks and opportunities has been added;
- the common elements in CASCO standards have been incorporated;
- the risk-based thinking applied in this edition has enabled some reduction in prescriptive requirements and their replacement by performance-based requirements;
- there is greater flexibility than in the previous edition in the requirements for processes, procedures, documented information and organizational responsibilities.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html and www.iec.ch/national-committees.

Introduction

This document was developed to promote confidence in bodies performing inspection.

Inspection bodies perform inspection activities on behalf of private clients, their parent organizations, regulatory authorities, or others, 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 conformity of inspected item(s) with specified requirements (e.g. safety compliance of installations or systems in operation). This document provides requirements for the competence, impartiality and consistent operation of inspection bodies as a basis to promote confidence about and acceptance of inspection results by clients, regulatory authorities and others.

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

The requirements of this document can be interpreted when applied to particular sectors.

Inspection can be an activity embedded in a larger process. For example, inspection can be specified as a surveillance activity in a product certification scheme. Likewise, results of other conformity assessment activities can be used as an input when performing inspection activities. Inspection can be an activity that precedes maintenance or simply provides information about the inspected item with no determination of conformity with requirements.

The categorization of inspection bodies as type A and type non-A reflects the level of their independence. The impartiality requirements are equally applicable to both type A and type non-A inspection bodies.

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Conformity assessment — Requirements for bodies performing inspection

1 Scope

This document contains requirements for the competence and impartiality of bodies performing inspection, and for the consistent operation of their inspection activities.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements 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 17000:2020, *Conformity assessment — Vocabulary and general principles*

3 Terms and definitions

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

ISO and IEC maintain terminology databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

— ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>

— IEC Electropedia: available at <https://www.electropedia.org/>

3.1 inspection

examination of an *item* (3.8) and determination of its conformity with detailed requirements or, on the basis of professional judgement, with general requirements

Note 1 to entry: Examination can include direct or indirect observations, which can include measurements or the output of instruments.

Note 2 to entry: Inspection results normally include a statement of conformity regarding the item. However, schemes or contracts can specify inspection as examination only.

[SOURCE: ISO/IEC 17000:2020, 6.3, modified — In the definition, "object of conformity assessment" has been replaced by "item"; the original Notes 2 and 3 to entry have been removed; a new Note 2 to entry has been added.]

3.2 inspection body

body that performs *inspection* (3.1)

3.3 inspection scheme

inspection programme

set of rules and procedures that describes the *item* (3.8), identifies the specified requirements and provides the methodology for performing *inspection* (3.1)

Note 1 to entry: Inspection schemes can be operated at the international, regional, national, sub-national or industry sector level.

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Note 2 to entry: A scheme that includes inspection can provide methodology for activities in either all or only in some of the conformity assessment functions (see ISO/IEC 17000:2020, Annex A). It can include methodology for inspection only (a determination function activity) or for other determination function activities. The scheme can include methodology for selection function activities and, in addition, it can include methodology for review, decision, attestation function activities

Note 3 to entry: The inspection scheme can specify independence requirements.

[SOURCE: ISO/IEC 17000:2020, 4.9, modified — In the preferred term and the admitted term, "conformity assessment" has been replaced by "inspection"; in the definition, "objects of conformity assessment" has been replaced by "item"; "conformity assessment" has been replaced by "inspection"; the original three Notes to entry have been replaced by three new ones.]

3.4

impartiality

objectivity with regard to the outcome of an *inspection* (3.1)

Note 1 to entry: Objectivity means that conflicts of interest do not exist or are resolved so as not to adversely influence activities of the *inspection body* (3.2).

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

[SOURCE: ISO/IEC 17000:2020, 5.3, modified — In the definition, "conformity assessment activity" has been replaced by "inspection"; Note 1 to entry has been changed and Note 2 to entry has been added.]

3.5

appeal

request by the *client* (3.7) to an *inspection body* (3.2) for reconsideration by that body of a decision it has made relating to the conformity of the *item* (3.8) inspected

Note 1 to entry: An appeal is only possible if a statement of conformity has been issued.

[SOURCE: ISO/IEC 17000:2020, 8.6, modified — In the definition, "person or organization that provides, or that is, the object of conformity assessment to a conformity assessment body or an accreditation body" has been replaced by "client to an inspection body"; "that object" has been replaced by "the conformity of the item inspected"; Note 1 to entry has been added.]

3.6

complaint

expression of dissatisfaction, other than *appeal* (3.5), by any person or organization to an *inspection body* (3.2), relating to the activities of that body, where a response is expected

[SOURCE: ISO/IEC 17000:2020, 8.7, modified — In the definition, "a conformity assessment body or an accreditation body" has been replaced by "an inspection body".]

3.7

client

person or organization requesting *inspection* (3.1) of an *item* (3.8)

Note 1 to entry: The client can be different from the provider of the item.

3.8

item

object of *inspection* (3.1) to which the specified requirements for the inspection apply

Note 1 to entry: The term "item" is used in this document to encompass product, process, service, material, location, facility, premises, installation, or parts of thereof, or their design, as appropriate.

Note 2 to entry: The object of inspection can be a group of objects or a single object.

Note 3 to entry: An item can be inspected at any stages, e.g. design stage, type examination, initial inspection, in-service inspection or under surveillance.

Note 4 to entry: Inspection of processes can include personnel, facilities, technology or methodology.

4 General requirements

4.1 Impartiality

4.1.1 Inspection activities shall be undertaken impartially.

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 its impartiality.

4.1.3 The inspection body shall monitor its activities and its relationships to identify threats to its impartiality on an ongoing basis. This monitoring shall include the relationships of its personnel.

NOTE A relationship can be based on ownership, governance, management, personnel, shared resources, finances, contracts or marketing (including branding and sponsoring) and the payment of sales commissions or other inducements for the referral of new clients. Such relationships do not necessarily present a body with a threat to impartiality.

4.1.4 If a threat to impartiality is identified, its effect shall be eliminated or minimized so that the impartiality is not compromised. The inspection body shall demonstrate how it eliminates or minimizes such threats.

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

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

4.1.7 All personnel of the inspection body, either internal or external, that could influence the inspection activities shall act impartially. In particular, personnel involved in inspection activities shall not be remunerated in a way that influences the results of inspections.

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, all other information is considered proprietary information and shall be regarded as confidential.

NOTE Legally enforceable commitments can be, for example, contractual arrangements or commitments related to confidentiality policy published on the inspection body's website or in the inspection body's documentation.

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

4.2.3 Information about the client obtained from sources other than the client (e.g. complainant, regulatory authorities) shall be treated as confidential, unless agreed by the source.

4.2.4 Personnel, including any committee members, contractors, personnel of external bodies, or persons acting on the inspection body's behalf, shall keep confidential all information obtained or created during the performance of the body's inspection activities.