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## Joint Industry Committee

### Framework of Standards for Certification and Quality Assurance

Document: JIC-002-3.2

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### Preface

The Joint Industry Committee (JIC) is comprised of the Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board, Saskatchewan Labour Occupational Health and Safety Division and voluntary safety leaders representing a variety of industry rate codes. Through this committee various industries voluntarily promote effective health and safety programs and certification standards, with the expectation of increased industry and employer participation in these fields. Such increased industry and employer participation will lead to significant and sustained injury reduction for Saskatchewan employers and employees.

This document broadly describes the agreed-upon elements and sub-elements of effective health and safety program certification and quality assurance processes. While health and safety programs are legislated in most industries in Saskatchewan, the intent of the following information is to outline a best practice approach to issuing health and safety program certification as agreed to by the members of the JIC.

The purpose of this document is to serve industries as they develop or refine certification and quality assurance programming specific to their industry needs. It provides the framework of standards for certification programs.

#### NOTE:

- Supporting background information about safety programs can be referenced in documents JIC-002-1.1, JIC-002-1.2, JIC-002-1.3.
- Supporting background information about safety program audits can be referenced in documents JIC-002-2.1, JIC-002-2.2, JIC-002-2.3.
- Supporting background information about safety program certification and quality assurance can be referenced in document JIC-002-3.1.
- Detailed explanations with supporting information can be referenced in document JIC-002-3.2.
- Employers and employees should be aware of pertinent health and safety legislation. For example, a provincially regulated Saskatchewan employer should refer to the *Saskatchewan Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993, Section 13* and the *Saskatchewan Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 1996, Section 22*.

## Elements of Effective Certification Quality Assurance Programs

1. Objectives and Scope
2. Auditor Skill Requirement
3. Auditor Non-Conformity
4. Auditee Non-Conformity
5. Audit Document Selection
6. Process Control for Audits
7. Audit Score
8. Audit Approvals
9. Audit and Certification Review Process
10. Certification Length
11. Temporary Certification
12. Equivalency and Reciprocity
13. Certification Maintenance
14. Change Management
15. System Complaints
16. Certifying Agency Process

Agencies issuing certification against the JIC's Framework of Standards will establish and maintain a certification quality assurance program of the above elements.

## 1 Objectives and Scope

### Introduction:

By first outlining the *Objectives and Scope* of the certification and quality assurance process, certifying agencies can openly and transparently express the guidelines from which they objectively offer, issue, and revoke certifications as well as administer and manage the certification process. In doing so, certifying agencies are also clearly outlining what is expected for companies seeking certification.

### Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *Objectives and Scope*.

The element of *Objectives and Scope* of the certification and quality assurance program will outline:

1. The policy of the certifying agency, outlining that the certification program abides within the JIC framework of standards for programs, audits and certifications;
2. The commonly used terms contained within the certification and quality assurance program of the certifying agency; and
3. A defined method of administering the quality assurance program, including items such as audit reviews and use of audit protocol.

## Auditor Skill Requirement

2

### Introduction:

A value-added certification for the health and safety management program hinges on the objective findings of the audit. The quality assurance program will, therefore, need to outline the skill requirements of those conducting audits on behalf of the certifying agency.

### Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *Auditor Skill Requirement*.

The element of *Auditor Skill Requirement* within the certification and quality assurance program will outline:

1. The training, certification, testing and selection of auditors and includes:
  - a. the industry accepted training to meet the knowledge requirements of the certifying agency including the requirement for practical demonstration of acquired knowledge; and
  - b. the selection and certification of auditors including training and other industry specific requirements;
2. The minimum requirement for audit knowledge related to audit standards, protocol, and the industry in which the audit will be conducted, including but not limited to report writing and interviewing skills, basic knowledge of industry practices and procedures, observation and analytical skills; and
3. The minimum requirement for experience, including any combination of practical and/or theoretical requirements determined by the certifying agency.

## Auditor Non-Conformity

3

### Introduction:

As discussed previously, the certification will hinge on the objective findings of the audit. Because of the importance of objective audits, the certification and quality assurance programs need to outline how to effectively and objectively address issues of *Auditor Non-Conformity*.

### Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *Auditor Non-Conformity*.

The element of *Auditor Non-Conformity* within the certification and quality assurance program will outline:

1. The position of the certifying agency relating to conflict of interest on the part of the auditor, including, but not limited to:
  - a. auditor inability to gain financially according to the audit findings;
  - b. auditor inability to audit programs they have developed; and
  - c. the confidentiality of audit findings;
2. The code of ethics for auditors that establishes a baseline for objectivity, fairness, and sound judgment of auditors;
3. The process used by the certifying agency to effectively address breaches of ethics including:

- a. the requirements for reporting breaches of ethics including the requirements for reports in writing, supported by documentation and within an established time frame;
  - b. the investigation process used by the certifying agency that is based on potential severity;
  - c. the disciplinary actions used by the certifying agency; and
  - d. the follow up and notification to affected parties;
4. The process used by the certifying agency to effectively address appeals including items such as:
    - a. the prescribed method and the parties to receive an appeal;
    - b. the time frame of appeals for which auditors may file and/or respond;
    - c. the third party that will hear and review the appeal;
    - d. the notification to affected parties that an appeal has been filed; and
    - e. the notification to affected parties of the appeal results.

## Auditee Non-Conformity

4

### Introduction:

The auditee refers to the organization seeking certification. As an organization seeks to obtain and maintain certification, there will be a number of requirements the certifying agency will have in place. By the certifying agency clearly outlining the expectations up front, all can benefit.

### Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *Auditee Non-Conformity*.

The element of *Auditee Non-Conformity* within the certification and quality assurance program will outline:

1. The process that will initiate the review of the health and safety program;
2. The scope of the review including items such as:
  - a. the review for quality assurance of completed audits; and
  - b. the defined administrative process; and
3. The minimum requirements for acceptance of audits.

## Audit Document Selection

5

### Introduction:

While there are a variety of audit tools and criteria available, each audit tool is designed for a specific purpose, industry, or standard. The element of *Audit Document Selection* will enable the certifying agency to outline the audit tool(s) that are acceptable to the certifying agency for certification purposes.

### Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *Audit Document Selection*.

The element of *Audit Document Selection* within the certification and quality assurance program will outline:

1. The requirement for the audit document to meet the Joint Industry Committee's framework of standards for safety programs and audits; and
2. The requirement of the audit document to be recognized by the specific industry in which the certification is sought.

## Process Control for Audits

6

### Introduction:

Clear communication between the certifying agency and the organization seeking certification is an important aspect of any quality assurance program. When we understand the requirements for certification in advance, we are more likely to be able to meet those requirements.

### Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *Process Control for Audits*.

The *Process Control for Audits* of the certification and quality assurance program will outline:

1. The certifying agency's process to determine companies eligible for certification;
2. The pre-requisites for certifying audits including the requirement to complete and pass a self-assessment;
3. The certifying agency's process to accept and schedule requests for audits;
4. The selection of auditors, based on *Auditor Skill Requirement*;
5. The charges for audits as determined by the certifying agency;
6. The post-audit follow up including timelines and;
  - a. the process used for review that addresses both passed and failed audits;
  - b. the process used for contacting the auditee; and
  - c. the process used for following up with companies where there has been regulatory issues resulting in workplace injury and illness.

## Audit Score

7

### Introduction:

Certification of health and safety programs seeks a quantified measurement of the health and safety program implementation and essentially assigns value. It is with this value that an organization can determine areas of priority for program improvements. When developing and using certification programs, certifying agencies will need to establish the requirements for *Audit Score*. The scoring can assist with a balanced approach to the evaluation. The element of *Audit Score* will ensure that all certification programs are using similar criteria.

### Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *Audit Score*.

The element of *Audit Score* within the certification and quality assurance program will outline:

1. The minimum overall audit score as 80%;
2. The minimum score by element as 50%;
3. The minimum technique weighting as:
  - a. 20% of total score for verification through documentation review;
  - b. 20% of total score for verification through observation; and
  - c. 20% of total score for verification through interview; and
4. The processes of the certifying agency for certification audits that do not meet standards including, but not limited to, audit protocols, guidelines, and representative samples.

## Audit Approvals

8

### Introduction:

Establishing and clearly communicating how certifying audits are approved will enable companies seeking certification to understand the administrative nature and quality assurance processes of the certifying agency. The development of audit approval information is, therefore, a critical method for certifying agencies to objectively work with companies seeking certification.

### Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *Audit Approvals*.

The element of *Audit Approvals* within the certification and quality assurance program will outline:

1. The process of how audit submissions are to be made to the certifying agency including who, where and when audits are to be submitted;
2. The process that addresses timelines for corrective action to improve the health and safety program, and limited scope audits; and

## 9 Audit and Certification Review Process

3. The process for review of completed audits including:
  - a. conformity to audit protocol and quality assurance;
  - b. parallels between both qualitative and quantitative measures;
  - c. identification of areas for improvement; and
  - d. parallels between scoring and auditor comments.

### Introduction:

While many different mechanisms are put in place by the certifying agency to issue certification in a fair and objective manner, there can be issues around how the certification and quality assurance is administered. The certifying agency needs to have an objective way to deal with the review of audits and certifications should the need arise. By doing so, the credibility of the certification will remain intact, as there will exist transparency in the review process.

### Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *Audit and Certification Review Process*.

The element of *Audit and Certification Review Process* within the certification and quality assurance program will outline:

1. The roles and responsibilities of the members responsible for the review;
2. The selection of members responsible for the review including the third party nature of the review and will include the inability of certifying agency staff to be included when they are involved in the dispute;
3. The requirement for submissions calling for review to be in writing and supported by documentation; and
4. The process to disclose the results of findings to affected parties.

## 10 Certification Length

### Introduction:

The length of the certification will vary due to a variety of reasons including company acquisitions, mergers, and equivalencies with outside certifications. What is important to both the company seeking certification and the certifying agency is that a clearly defined process exists on the part of the certifying agency that adequately addresses the different types of issues that can exist with issuance of certification. It is equally important that companies seeking certification can readily understand the standards set forth by the certifying agency. The element of *Certification Length* is then an important aspect of the certification and quality assurance program.

### Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *Certification Length*.

The element of *Certification Length* within the certification and quality assurance program will outline:

## 11 Temporary Certification

### Introduction:

For some industries the ability to access work will be dependant on a company's ability to demonstrate certification. For companies with certification from another jurisdiction or certifying agency, their ability to gain access to work will be an important consideration for the certifying agency as certification should not unduly affect a company's ability to bid work. It is important, therefore, that the certifying agency clearly outlines their process for issuance of *Temporary Certification*.

### Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *Temporary Certification*.

The element of *Temporary Certification* within the certification and quality assurance program will outline:

1. The process used by the certifying agency to receive requests for *Temporary Certification*, including the specific information requirements of the certifying agency;
2. The process used by the certifying agency to review the information received from the company seeking *Temporary Certification*;
3. A determined length for validity of *Temporary Certification* as determined by the industry;
4. The process for issuance of *Temporary Certification* considering issues such as required elements and compliance with provincial legislation;
5. The process for revoking *Temporary Certification*; and
6. The circumstances under which extensions to temporary certifications are issued.

## 12 Equivalency and Reciprocity

### Introduction:

Of equal importance to the ability to access work is the ability to keep or maintain it. In terms of certification, this may require a company's certification to be recognized by an outside agency. The element of *Equivalency and Reciprocity* recognizes the certification issued by other agencies while maintaining credibility within the certifying agency's programs.

### Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *Equivalency and Reciprocity*.

The element of *Equivalency and Reciprocity* within the certification and quality assurance program will outline:

1. The organizations from which certifying agencies will accept requests and a determination of who the requests are to be made to;
2. The process used to review other program certifications for such purpose;
3. A defined schedule to review and respond to organizations seeking this type of certification; and
4. The provision for written notification by the certifying agency.

## 13 Certification Maintenance

### Introduction:

Certification of health and safety programs can be viewed as a method to engage within continuous improvement. It is not enough to develop and implement processes that meet standards and then abandon those processes once certification is achieved. *Certification Maintenance* can become a natural by-product of a company's desire to continue doing what is working and improving what isn't. There are several *Certification Maintenance* parameters the certifying agency will need to address and openly communicate within the quality assurance program. In doing so, the certifying agency indicates requirements of continued maintenance and refinement to the health and safety program.

### Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *Certification Maintenance*.

The element of *Certification Maintenance* within the certification and quality assurance program will outline:

1. The roles and responsibilities related to the certifying agency, the auditor and the auditee;
2. The administrative process of the certifying agency for companies seeking to demonstrate the maintenance of their company's certification;
3. The defined timelines required by the certifying agency for issues such as maintenance audits, field work and reports, and the timing of submissions for companies seeking to demonstrate the maintenance of their company's certification as per element of *Certification Length*; and
4. The administrative process of the certifying agency for companies seeking to obtain certification after expiry has occurred or certification has been revoked.

## 14 Change Management

### Introduction:

The management of change can be complex without established parameters in place to effectively address a variety of issues regarding the issuance and quality of certification. Through the certifying agency identifying and communicating the processes it has to manage change, the certification program will be more accurate representing valid certification.

### Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *Change Management*.

The element of *Change Management* within the certification and quality assurance program will outline:

1. The process of the certifying agency for handling changes to:
  - a. the scope of operations for companies holding certification including, but not limited to, expanded operations, company name, management, and operating locations;
  - b. the Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board rate codes; and
  - c. the company ownership; and
2. The responsibility of the company seeking or holding certification to notify the certifying agency of change that will affect the validity of their certification.

## 15 System Complaints

### Introduction:

An open and transparent approach to the issuance, suspension, and revocation of certification is critical to building understanding and acceptance for all affected parties. Within the certification and quality assurance processes, there also needs to exist processes to effectively address concerns and handle complaints about the certification processes. There is also a need for an objective and fair means to resolve situations that impact the credibility of certification. The element of *System Complaints* can effectively address these types of issues and lead to certification programs that are valued, believable and imbedded within a continual improvement mind-set.

### Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *System Complaints*.

The element of *System Complaints* within the certification and quality assurance program will outline:

1. The process for submitting complaints including required submission of supporting documents to the certifying agency;
2. The process of the certifying agency to investigate and resolve complaints including methods to investigate based on: severity of the complaint, prioritization and timelines, and determination of persons responsible to investigate complaints;
3. The defined results of investigation findings complete with recommendations made and communicated to affected parties; and
4. The responsibility of the certifying agency to initiate the process when complaints have been received according to criteria.

### Introduction:

The Framework of Standards for Certification and Quality Assurance is a voluntary process. Members of the JIC believe that by reaching consensus on a framework of standards, different industries can tailor their standards to fit their unique needs while working within a similar intent and towards the common goal of reducing injuries and illness. The element of *Certifying Agency Process* helps to establish similar processes that will ensure agencies issuing certification are doing so with quality and objectivity as their foundation.

### Sub-element content:

The following sub-element content outlines what is anticipated to be in place for the element of *Certifying Agency Process*.

The element of *Certifying Agency Process* within the certification and quality assurance program will outline:

1. The not for profit nature of the certifying agency;
2. That the certifying agency represents an industry rate code;
3. The agreement by the certifying agency to abide within the JIC framework of standards for programs, audits, certification and quality assurance; and
4. The verification by an independent party that the policy and standards of the certifying agency abides within the JIC framework of standards for programs, audits, certification and quality assurance.

## Conclusion

Identified as the fundamental components of effective certification and quality assurance, the above information provides the foundation for validation and management of health and safety, audit and certification programs.

The next steps for the JIC will be to continually monitor, evaluate, act on and refine the framework of standards for health and safety programs, audits, certification and quality assurance. By doing so, the committee will demonstrate its leadership and commitment to the voluntary and incremental progression of health and safety programs and certification programs in Saskatchewan.

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