

## **General Rules of Procedure for the Certification of Systems by the BNQ**

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## CONTENTS

	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>FOREWORD.....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>DEFINITIONS .....</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>1 CERTIFICATION PROCEDURE.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 APPLICATION FOR INITIAL CERTIFICATION.....	1
1.2 PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT .....	2
1.3 CERTIFICATION AUDIT .....	2
1.4 CORRECTIVE ACTION REQUESTS .....	2
1.5 CERTIFICATION DECISION .....	2
1.6 MAINTENANCE AND RECERTIFICATION AUDITS.....	3
<b>2 PROVISIONS IN THE EVENT OF MODIFICATIONS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1 MODIFICATIONS MADE TO THE SCOPE OF CERTIFICATION.....	3
2.2 MODIFICATIONS MADE TO THE CLIENT'S LEGAL STATUS OR LEGAL NAME .....	3
<b>3 SUSPENSION AND WITHDRAWAL OF A CERTIFICATE .....</b>	<b>4</b>
3.1 GENERALITIES .....	4
3.2 SUSPENSION PROCESS.....	4
3.3 WITHDRAWAL PROCESS.....	4
<b>4 TREATMENT OF COMPLAINTS .....</b>	<b>5</b>
4.1 GENERAL .....	5
4.2 TERMS AND STEPS IN THE TREATMENT OF A COMPLAINT .....	5
<b>5 TREATMENT OF CERTIFICATION DECISION APPEALS.....</b>	<b>6</b>
5.1 GENERAL .....	6
5.2 TERMS AND STEPS IN THE TREATMENT OF A CERTIFICATION DECISION APPEAL .....	6
 <b>ANNEX A: GENERAL REQUIREMENTS GOVERNING THE USE OF THE BNQ CERTIFICATE AND CERTIFICATION MARK</b>	

## **FOREWORD**

This document presents the general rules of procedure of the BNQ applicable to system certification programs.

This document specifies:

- steps in the certification process of a system leading to the issuing of a certificate;
- provisions foreseen to:
  - deal with situations that might have impacts on the certification issued;
  - manage situations that might lead to the suspension or withdrawal of a certificate;
  - ensure follow-up of complaints and appeals submitted to the BNQ.
- provisions relative to the use of the BNQ certificate and certification mark.

## **DEFINITIONS**

**audit**, n. Systematic, independent and documented process for obtaining audit evidence and evaluating it objectively to determine the extent to which audit criteria are fulfilled. (Reference: ISO 9000 and ISO/IEC 17000)

### **NOTES —**

- 1 Internal audits, sometimes called first-party audits, are conducted by, or on behalf of, the organization itself for management review and other internal purposes, and may form the basis for an organization's declaration of conformity. In many cases, particularly in smaller organizations, independence can be demonstrated by the freedom from responsibility for the activity being audited.
- 2 External audits include those generally termed second- and third-party audits. Second-party audits are conducted by parties having an interest in the organization, such as customers, or by other persons on their behalf. Third-party audits are conducted by external, independent auditing organizations, such as those providing certification/registration of conformity to ISO 9001 or ISO 14001.
- 3 When two or more management systems are audited together, this is termed a combined audit.
- 4 When two or more auditing organizations cooperate to audit a single auditee, this is termed a joint audit.

**audit team**, n. Team responsible for performing the audit made up of an audit team leader, lead auditors, team member auditors and, when applicable, auditors-in-training and technical experts.

**audit team leader**, n. Person with the necessary competence to act in the capacity of individual responsible for performing an audit with a team under his responsibility.

**auditor**, n. Person who performs an audit. (Reference: ISO/IEC 17021-1)

**certification**, n. Third party attestation related to products, processes, systems or persons. (Reference: ISO 9000 and ISO/IEC 17000)

### **NOTES —**

- 1 Certification of a management system is sometimes also called registration.
- 2 Certification is applicable to all objects of conformity assessment except for conformity assessment bodies themselves, to which accreditation is applicable.

**certification body**, n. Third-party conformity assessment body operating certification schemes. (Reference: ISO/IEC 17065)

**certification program**, n. Conformity assessment system applied to management systems to which are applied the same specified requirements, as well as specific procedures and rules.

**certified client**, n. Organization whose management system has been certified.  
(Reference: ISO/IEC 17021-1)

**client**, n. Organization whose management system is being audited for certification purposes.  
(Reference: ISO/IEC 17021-1)

**corrective action**, n. Action to eliminate the cause of a detected nonconformity or other undesirable situation. (Reference: ISO 9000 and ISO/IEC 17000)

NOTES —

- 1 There can be more than one cause of nonconformity.
- 2 Corrective action is taken to prevent recurrence whereas preventive action is taken to prevent occurrence.
- 3 There is a distinction between correction and corrective action.

**corrective action request**, n. (abbrev.: CAR) Request for action to eliminate the cause of a nonconformity in order to prevent its recurrence. (Reference: ISO 9000)

NOTES —

- 1 A major CAR is defined as the non-implementation or inadequate or partial implementation of one or several applicable requirements of the audit referential having a serious impact on the achievement of results anticipated.
- 2 A minor CAR is defined as the inadequate or partial implementation of one or several requirements of audit referential having little or no impact on the achievement of results anticipated.

**lead auditor**, n. Person with the necessary competence to act in the capacity of individual responsible for performing an audit.

**nonconformity**, n. Non-fulfillment of a requirement. (Reference: ISO 9000 and ISO/IEC 17000 [amended wording])

**preventive action**, n. Action to eliminate the cause of a potential nonconformity or other undesirable potential situation. (Reference: ISO 9000 and ISO/IEC 17000)

NOTES —

- 1 There can be more than one cause for a potential nonconformity.
- 2 Preventive action is taken to prevent occurrence whereas corrective action is taken to prevent recurrence.

**process**, n. Set of interrelated or interacting activities that use inputs to deliver an interested result. (Reference: ISO 9000)

NOTES —

- 1 Wether the « intended result » of a process is called output, product or service depends on the context of the reference.
- 2 Inputs to a process are generally the outputs of other processes and outputs of a process are generally the inputs to other processes.
- 3 Two or more interrelated and interacting processes in series can also be referred to as a process.
- 4 Processes in an organization are generally planned and carried out under controlled conditions to add value.
- 5 A process where the conformity of the resulting output cannot be readily or economically validated is frequently referred to as a « special process ».

**scope of certification**, n. Indication:

- of the product or products, processes, services or systems for which certification is issued;
- of the applicable certification program;
- of the standard or standards and other normative documents, including a publication date, to which the product or products, processes, services or systems are deemed to comply.

(Reference: ISO/IEC 17065 [amended wording])

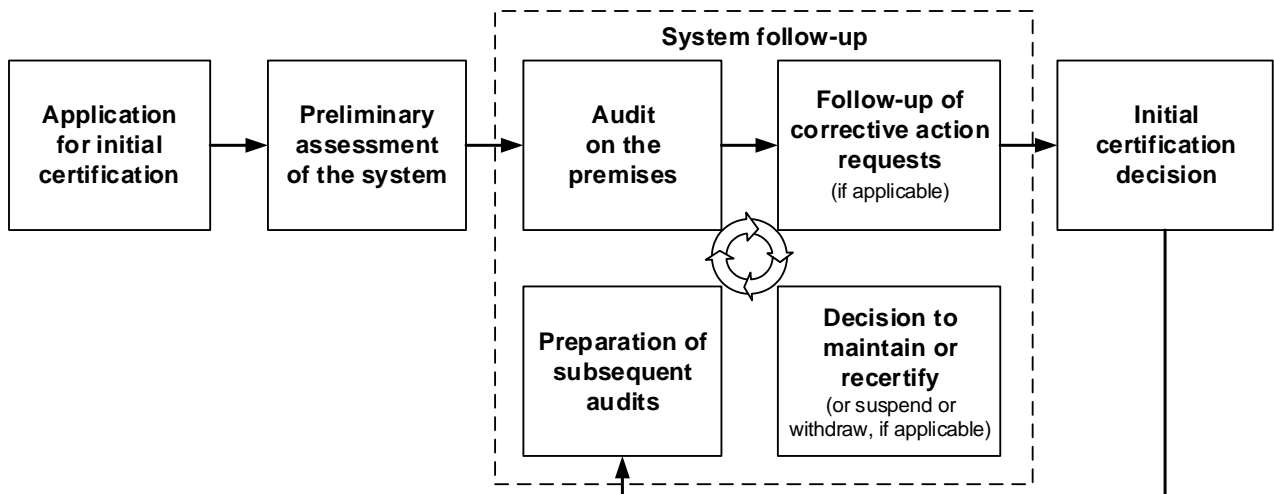
**technical expert**, n. Person who provides knowledge or specific expertise to the lead auditor and his team, if applicable.

NOTE — The knowledge or specific expertise is related to the organization, the process or the activity to audit, or it consists of linguistic or cultural assistance. Within the audit team, the technical expert does not act in the capacity of auditor.

## 1 CERTIFICATION PROCEDURE

The certification process and auditing procedure of the BNQ comply with the latest versions in force of international accreditation requirements applicable to bodies that perform audits and certify systems.

The diagram below illustrates the main steps of the process leading to the initial certification of a system, as well as its maintenance and recertification. A certification cycle generally extends over a three-year period during which maintenance audits shall be performed at twelve-month intervals. The purpose of certification and recertification audits is to assess the conformity and effectiveness of a CLIENT's system and cover all requirements of the audit referential. The purpose of maintenance audits is to confirm the maintenance of the system and partially cover the requirements of the audit referential.



### 1.1 APPLICATION FOR INITIAL CERTIFICATION

- 1.1.1 Applicants who wish to obtain certification of their system by the BNQ may apply by telephone at 1-844-474-6367, by email at [bnqes@bnq.qc.ca](mailto:bnqes@bnq.qc.ca) or electronically to the person identified to the certification program on the BNQ website at [www.bnq.qc.ca](http://www.bnq.qc.ca).
- 1.1.2 Following receipt of an application, a BNQ employee contacts the applicant to answer his questions, inform him of the steps to follow and conditions to meet, and collect information needed to send him a service contract.
- 1.1.3 In accepting the BNQ service contract, the CLIENT agrees to comply with the rules of system certification.
- 1.1.4 Following receipt of the BNQ service contract signed by the CLIENT accompanied, when appropriate, with the funds required to start the certification process, the BNQ assigns an auditor or auditors and informs the CLIENT of their name(s).

- 1.1.5** When an applicant already certified with another certification body recognized by an accredited body member of the *International Accreditation Forum* (IAF) wishes to transfer his file to the BNQ, the BNQ may agree, under certain conditions, to pursue the certification cycle already begun.

### **1.2 PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT**

- 1.2.1** Prior to the certification audit on-site, the lead auditor shall carry out preparatory activities such as the review of system documentation, information regarding the scope of application of this system, the CLIENT's processes and facilities, and corresponding legal requirements to which the system shall conform. This auditor shall also assess the CLIENT's level of preparation for the audit. He provides a written report on the results of the preliminary assessment.

- 1.2.2** Prior to conducting the on-site audit, the lead auditor prepares an audit plan and sends it to the CLIENT.

### **1.3 CERTIFICATION AUDIT**

- 1.3.1** During an opening meeting with the CLIENT's senior management, the lead auditor briefly presents the way in which audit activities are carried out, confirms the audit plan and offers the CLIENT the opportunity to obtain clarifications with respect to the audit process.

- 1.3.2** During the audit, the lead auditor or the audit team gathers pertinent information related to the objectives, scope of the audit and requirements of the audit referential, and verifies them. This information is gathered through interviews, observation of activities and the work environment, and by means of a document review.

- 1.3.3** During a closing meeting, the lead auditor presents the conclusions of his audit. If corrective action requests (CAR) are made, the auditor ensures that they are understood and establishes the follow-up deadline with the CLIENT.

- 1.3.4** The lead auditor sends the CLIENT a written report summarizing his conclusions.

### **1.4 CORRECTIVE ACTION REQUESTS**

- 1.4.1** A corrective action request (CAR) is issued for a discrepancy related to one or several requirements of the audit referential.

- 1.4.2** The deadline for closing CAR is normally 30 calendar days after the audit date.

- 1.4.3** In the event that the CAR are not resolved to the satisfaction of the BNQ within the agreed upon deadline, the BNQ will not proceed with system certification.

### **1.5 CERTIFICATION DECISION**

- 1.5.1** Following the receipt of documents related to the audit and the recommendation of the lead auditor with respect to system certification, the BNQ reviews the file to ensure that the certification process has been followed.

- 1.5.2** Thereafter, the BNQ confirms its certification decision in writing to the CLIENT. If the decision is positive, the BNQ sends the CLIENT a BNQ certificate and the certification mark that the CLIENT is authorized to use to promote his certification according to the provisions foreseen in Annex A.

## **1.6 MAINTENANCE AND RECERTIFICATION AUDITS**

- 1.6.1** The date of the first maintenance audit is set within a maximum limit of 12 months starting on the first day of the initial certification audit.
- 1.6.2** For recertification audits, and to ensure the validity of the certificate on an ongoing basis, the BNQ will send the CLIENT a service contract for a new certification cycle before the audit date planned by the BNQ.
- 1.6.3** Prior to a maintenance or recertification audit, the lead auditor reviews additions and modifications made to system documentation and inquires about important events that have taken place since the last audit that might have an impact on the operation of the CLIENT's system.
- 1.6.4** During a maintenance or recertification audit, the completion of the on-site audit and CAR follow-up, if applicable, take place as described previously and the CLIENT shall resolve the CAR issued within the agreed upon deadline in order to ensure the maintenance of certification or the recertification of his system.
- 1.6.5** When the conditions are met, the BNQ confirms to the CLIENT its certification decision in writing and, when applicable, sends the CLIENT an up-to-date certificate.

## **2 PROVISIONS IN THE EVENT OF MODIFICATIONS**

### **2.1 MODIFICATIONS MADE TO THE SCOPE OF CERTIFICATION**

- 2.1.1** When a CLIENT wants to add new activities or new sites to the scope of his certification, he shall request this of the BNQ, in writing. The BNQ examines the request, gathers necessary information and informs the CLIENT of applicable procedures to follow up on his request.
- 2.1.2** When a CLIENT provides a notice indicating that his system no longer applies to certain activities or certain sites indicated in the scope of certification, the BNQ issues an amended certificate.

### **2.2 MODIFICATIONS MADE TO THE CLIENT'S LEGAL STATUS OR LEGAL NAME**

- 2.2.1** When a modification is made to the CLIENT's status or legal name, he shall advise the BNQ in writing.

### **3      SUSPENSION AND WITHDRAWAL OF A CERTIFICATE**

#### **3.1    GENERALITIES**

- 3.1.1** Before initiating the process to suspend or withdraw a certificate, the BNQ sends a written warning to the CLIENT indicating the discrepancy noted with regard to the requirements of the audit referential or requirements of the *Rules of Procedure for the Certification of Systems by the BNQ*, as well as the deadline granted to correct the situation.
- 3.1.2** Notwithstanding the above, in exceptional situations, the BNQ nevertheless reserves the right to suspend or withdraw a certificate without first sending this written warning to the CLIENT.
- 3.1.3** The CLIENT who receives a notice of suspension or withdrawal shall, considering that the certificate is no longer valid, conform to provisions foreseen in Annex A.

#### **3.2    SUSPENSION PROCESS**

- 3.2.1** At the discretion of the BNQ, the certificate issued by the BNQ may be suspended for a limited period, when a CLIENT has failed to correct, within the stipulated deadline, a problem having justified a warning (for example, but without being limited to: non-compliance with the frequency between two audits, absence of satisfactory responses to CAR within the agreed upon deadline, a serious breach of certification requirements).
- 3.2.2** The BNQ's written notice informing the CLIENT of the suspension of the certificate will indicate the reason for this suspension and the conditions under which the suspension may be lifted.
- 3.2.3** When the conditions allowing the suspension to be lifted have been fulfilled by the CLIENT, the BNQ reactivates the certificate's validity and informs the CLIENT thereof in writing.

#### **3.3    WITHDRAWAL PROCESS**

- 3.3.1** The BNQ may withdraw a certificate when conditions allowing the suspension to be lifted have not been fulfilled by the CLIENT within stipulated deadlines or when he no longer meets the requirements described in the *Rules of Procedure for the Certification of Systems by the BNQ* or in the service contract with the BNQ.
- 3.3.2** The written notice from the BNQ informing the CLIENT of the withdrawal of the certificate indicates the reason for this withdrawal, as well as the possibility for the CLIENT to make a new application for certification at a later date.

## **4 TREATMENT OF COMPLAINTS**

### **4.1 GENERAL**

**4.1.1** Any person or CLIENT may file a complaint with the BNQ in connection with the services offered by the latter as part of its certification programs.

**4.1.2** The complaint handling process provided for in these rules complies the international accreditation requirements applying to certification bodies. Thus, the BNQ takes the necessary provisions so that complaints received are treated confidentially by a committee made up of a minimum of three persons having the necessary impartiality.

### **4.2 TERMS AND STEPS IN THE TREATMENT OF A COMPLAINT**

**4.2.1** Complaints submitted to the BNQ concerning BNQ services or a CLIENT whose system is certified by the BNQ are addressed in writing by the complainant and e-mailed to the attention of the quality manager to [direction\\_qualite@invest-quebec.com](mailto:direction_qualite@invest-quebec.com).

**4.2.2** When a complaint is received from a CLIENT and is related to services rendered to it by the BNQ (e.g., disagreement on audit conclusions, unsatisfactory conduct of an auditor, delays in processing of a file), the complainant provides a description of the problem encountered and of the settlement desired.

**4.2.3** When the complaint is received from a third party concerning the clients certified by the BNQ as part of its certification programs, additional information is requested.

**4.2.4** In the days following the receipt of the complaint, the quality manager processes the file, ensures that the subject is related to certification activities under the responsibility of the BNQ and then acknowledges receipt in writing.

**4.2.5** In any cases, the complaint is brought to the attention of a committee made up of a minimum of three persons having the necessary impartiality to rule on the admissibility of the complaint. Depending on the conclusions of the committee, the quality manager will send the complainant a written notice regarding the admissibility or otherwise of his complaint.

**4.2.6** Whether the complaint is deemed admissible or not, the complainant will only be advised of the general status of the complaint. In the case of an admissible complaint, the file will then be transferred to committee for examination, decision regarding actions to take and follow-up thereof

**4.2.7** If the complainant is not satisfied with the committee's conclusion regarding the admissibility of a complaint or the treatment of an admissible complaint, he may ask for an appeal indicating the reasons or objections, in writing, to the quality manager. On receipt of the appeal request, the quality manager submits the appeal request to a representative of Legal Affairs of Investissement Québec.

- 4.2.8** In the days following the receipt of the appeal request, the representative of Legal Affairs of Investissement Québec will acknowledge receipt and will have a certain delay to become acquainted with the file, consult the parties if need be, evaluate the treatment completed or conclusion issued, and then make a written decision regarding this appeal request.
- 4.2.9** If the decision issued by the representative of Legal Affairs of Investissement Québec is still not to the satisfaction of the complainant and that mechanisms exist to appeal a decision rendered by the BNQ, in particular under the terms of its accredited systems certification programs, the latter may apply to appeal this decision to the BNQ accreditation body, for example, the Standards Council of Canada (SCC).
- 4.2.10** The representative of Legal Affairs of Investissement Québec notifies the complainant, in writing, of the terms of appeal to the accreditation body when it renders its decision.

## **5 TREATMENT OF CERTIFICATION DECISION APPEALS**

### **5.1 GENERAL**

- 5.1.1** Any CLIENT of the BNQ who is not satisfied with a certification decision taken by the BNQ may appeal the decision to a committee made up of a minimum of three persons having the necessary impartiality and who did not participate in the certification decision nor in the process leading to it.
- 5.1.2** The certification decision appeal handling process provided for in these rules complies the international accreditation requirements applying to certification bodies. Thus, the BNQ takes the necessary provisions so that certification decision appeals received are treated confidentially by persons having the necessary impartiality.

### **5.2 TERMS AND STEPS IN THE TREATMENT OF A CERTIFICATION DECISION APPEAL**

- 5.2.1** Certification decision appeals submitted to the BNQ are addressed in writing by the CLIENT and e-mailed to the attention of the quality manager to [direction\\_qualite@invest-quebec.com](mailto:direction_qualite@invest-quebec.com).
- 5.2.2** In the days following the receipt of the certification decision appeal, the quality manager processes the file, ensures that the subject is related to certification activities under the responsibility of the BNQ and then acknowledges receipt in writing.
- 5.2.3** The committee will have a certain delay to become acquainted with the file, consult the parties if need be, evaluate the decision taken and render, in writing, a decision regarding this certification decision appeal.

- 5.2.4** If the processing of the request for appeal of decision by the committee is still not to the satisfaction of the CLIENT and that mechanisms exist to appeal a decision rendered by the BNQ, in particular under the terms of its accredited systems certification programs, the latter may apply to appeal this decision to the BNQ accreditation body, for example, the Standards Council of Canada (SCC).
- 5.2.5** The committee notifies the CLIENT, in writing, of the terms of appeal to the accreditation body when it renders its decision.

## **ANNEX A**

### **GENERAL REQUIREMENTS GOVERNING THE USE OF THE BNQ CERTIFICATE AND CERTIFICATION MARK**

#### **1. Copyright**

The certificate and certification mark delivered to the CLIENT are the property of the BNQ and they are protected by the *Copyright Act* and the *Trademarks Act*, in addition to specific provisions of international agreements. Consequently, the only rights of use granted to the CLIENT are those expressly stipulated in the user license provided with the BNQ service contract.

#### **2. Right of use and obligations of the CLIENT**

The BNQ grants the CLIENT a non-exclusive and non-transferable right of use with no right to sub-license the certificate and certification mark for the purpose of promoting the latter's certification. This right is applicable solely to the extent that the certificate is valid, in conformity with the *Rules of Procedure for the Certification of System by the BNQ*.

The CLIENT may use the certification mark or refer to it in administrative and commercial documents (including supporting documents), advertising material (brochures, website, ads, business cards, etc.), and on product packaging. Product packaging is defined as packaging that can be removed without damaging the product. For example, a juice container cannot bear the certification mark. However, a case of juice might bear the mark. It is important to note that labels and nameplates are considered to be part of the product. Moreover, laboratory test reports, calibration and inspection reports, and certificates are considered to be products (deliverables). Therefore, they may not bear the certification mark. In conclusion, it is the company's system that is certified. The company shall ensure that the statement of reference to certification is accurate, does not lead to confusion and that no mention implies that the product, process or service that the company delivers is certified. Where required, the certification mark shall be duplicated and printed in accordance with the BNQ specifications. The CLIENT agrees to cooperate fully and in good faith with the BNQ to guarantee or protect the rights of the BNQ regarding the certification mark.

#### **3. Restriction of right of use**

The CLIENT agrees not to use the certificate or the certification mark in a manner not authorized by the BNQ and to make no declaration regarding his certification that might be deemed abusive by a reasonable person in similar circumstances.

#### **4. Breach of requirements of the BNQ regarding the use of the certificate or mark**

Any improper reference to the certification or any abusive use of the certificate or the certification mark by the CLIENT will be subject to a request for immediate rectification, in writing, subject to the suspension of the certificate. In the event that a rectification is not made, or of a repeat offence, the BNQ reserves the right to proceed with a withdrawal of the certificate and take any other action deemed necessary.

Upon the suspension or withdrawal of certification, the CLIENT shall cease all use of the certificate or the certification mark in any way whatsoever, and return to the BNQ any certification document demanded.