

In December, ADIPS and RKMS Ltd announced a partnership to deliver audits for inspection bodies UK-wide.

At ADIPS conference in October, RKMS Ltd CEO John Keen introduced ISO 17020, the conformity assessment standard - requirements for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspection. Even if you have no intention of becoming ISO 17020 accredited, information on the standard's requirements gives us a good framework for how we operate our IBs. Here we give the lowdown from John on ISO 17020.

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### **1 Who can accredit inspection bodies to ISO 17020:2012?**

Various authorities can accredit IBs to ISO 17020:2012, including UKAS, International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and ANSI National Accreditation Board (ANAB).

### **2 What is the scope of ISO 17020?**

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.

### **3 The standard's general requirements**

- Impartiality and independence
- Inspection activities shall be undertaken impartially.
- 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.
- 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.

### **4 What do we mean by impartiality and independence?**

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.

If a risk to impartiality is identified, the inspection body shall be able to demonstrate how it eliminates or minimises such risk. The inspection body shall have top management commitment to impartiality. And the IB shall be independent to the extent that is required with regard to the conditions under which it performs its services.

## **5 Structural requirements of an IB under the standard**

- 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.
- An inspection body that is part of a legal entity involved in activities other than inspection shall be identifiable within that entity.
- The inspection body shall have documentation which describes the activities for which it is competent.
- The inspection body shall have adequate provision (e.g. insurance or reserves) to cover liabilities arising from its operations.
- 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.

## **6 How an IB should be organised and managed, according to ISO 17020**

- The IB shall be structured and managed so as to safeguard impartiality.
- Organised 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.
- The IB shall define and document the responsibilities and reporting structure of the organization.
- 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.
- The IB 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.
- The IB shall have one or more named person(s) who will deputise in the absence of any technical manager responsible for ongoing inspection activities.

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

## **7 How an IB should be resourced in order to comply with ISO 17020**

- 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.
- 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.
- The IB shall make clear to each person their duties, responsibilities and authorities.
- The inspection body shall have documented procedures for selecting, training, formally authorising, and monitoring inspectors and other personnel involved in inspection activities.
- The documented procedures for training shall address the following stages:
  - a) an induction period;
  - b) a mentored working period with experienced inspectors;
  - c) continuing training to keep pace with developing technology and inspection methods.
- The training required shall depend upon the ability, qualifications and experience of each inspector and other personnel involved in inspection activities, and upon the results of monitoring.
- Personnel familiar with the inspection methods and procedures shall monitor all inspectors and other personnel involved in inspection activities for satisfactory performance.
- Results of monitoring shall be used as a means of identifying training needs (see 6.1.7). NOTE Monitoring can include a combination of techniques, such as on-site observations, report reviews, interviews, simulated inspections and other techniques to assess performance, and will depend on the nature of inspection activities.

- Each inspector shall be observed on-site, unless there is sufficient supporting evidence that the inspector is continuing to perform competently. NOTE It is expected that on-site observations are performed in a way that minimises the disturbance of the inspections, especially from the client's viewpoint.
- The inspection body shall maintain records of monitoring, education, training, technical knowledge, skills, experience and authorisation of each member of its personnel involved in inspection activities.
- The personnel involved in inspection activities shall not be remunerated in a way that influences the results of inspections.
- All personnel of the inspection body, either internal or external, that could influence the inspection activities shall act impartially.
- All personnel of the inspection body, including sub-contractors, personnel of external bodies, and individuals acting on the inspection body's behalf, shall keep confidential all information obtained or created during the performance of the inspection activities, except as required by law.

## **8 What are the process requirements?**

- Handling inspection items and samples (written procedures/work instructions)
- Inspection records ( authorised, retention period, storage)
- Inspection reports and inspection certificates
- Corrections or additions to certificates or reports (records)
- Optional elements of inspection reports and certificates

## **Complaints and appeals**

- Appropriateness of the corrective actions (Root cause analysis, Records, reviewed at management review)
- 7.6 Complaints and appeals process (written procedure)
- Independence of the process (persons appointed to deal with a complaint/ appeals must be impartial and trained)
- (complaints register, records of acknowledgement with complainant)
- (reviewed at management review meetings)

## **9 Management system requirements**

- General - The inspection body shall establish and maintain a management system that is capable of achieving the consistent fulfilment of the requirements of this International Standard in accordance with either Option "A" or Option "B".

- Option “A” - An inspection body providing third party inspections shall meet the type A requirements of Clause A.1 (third party inspection body).
- Option “B” - An inspection body providing first party inspections, second party inspections, or both.

### **Option A**

The management system of the inspection body shall address the following:

- Management system documentation (e.g. manual, policies, definition of responsibilities)
- Control of documents
- Control of records
- Management review
- Internal audit
- Corrective actions
- Preventive actions
- Complaints and appeals

### **Option B**

- An IB that has established and maintains a management system, in accordance with the requirements of ISO 9001, and that is capable of supporting and demonstrating the consistent fulfilment of the requirements of this International Standard, fulfils the management system clause requirements.
- Effectively Option A!

For more information about ISO 17020:2012 and how to become UKAS accredited, contact the RKMS team [here](#).