GUIDE FOR CLIENTS
HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR REMOTE AUDIT

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1. What is a remote audit

A remote audit is the audit of your management system by an auditor that is not at your company site(s) during the audit. The remote audit aims to assess everything that is planned for the scheduled on site audit but uses Information and communications technology (ICT) to support the Assessor.

Owing to recent government restrictions Advanced Certification will only be conducting remote audits within the UK until at the earliest the 31st May 2020.

ICT is the use of technology for gathering, storing, retrieving, processing, analysing and transmitting information. It includes software and hardware such as smartphones, handheld devices, laptop computers, desktop computers, drones, video cameras, wearable technology, artificial intelligence, and others.

Advanced Certification is obliged to complete a case-by-case risk review of each client audit to determine if a remote audit is appropriate, should your organisation wish to confirm a remote audit then we need you to complete a remote audit request form and return this to us.

Should your organisation not wish to request a remote audit then Advanced Certification may be obliged to suspend / withdraw your certification should you fall into an overdue audit state with your cycle.

2. What to expect

For Surveillance audits of less than 3 auditor days duration the remote audit will typically be the same duration as your onsite audit, although this may be spread over more days with a shorter audit time per day (for example 4 hours per day). It is important that you make sure that individual auditees are available at agreed times and will be dialled into a conference call or other communication technology for their assigned audit slots, your assigned auditor will provide a plan of when individuals will need to be available in advance for you to agree internally.

Where the surveillance audit is planned for longer than 2 auditor days, or where there are specific organisation activities that it would not be possible to audit remotely (such as construction site activities / installation activity or work being completed in AtEx areas???) then your surveillance audit will be divided into a remote partial surveillance audit with the remaining areas planned to be physically audited at a later date within the following 6 months.

For re-certification audits, it is not possible for most organisations to complete a full re-certification assessment remotely; Advanced Certification will plan to undertake a remote partial re-certification audit which, if completed successfully will enable Advanced Certification to extend your current certificate by 6 months, with the remaining auditor days to be completed as a physical audit before the expiry of the extended certificate.

Your auditor will issue you with a plan for the audit in the same way as for a physical audit, remote audits will always commence with (the usual process) an opening meeting between you and the audit team and will also conclude with a closing meeting.
3. **What you need to do to prepare**

Remote auditing relies up there being a suitable and sufficient means of sharing information and communicating, ideally remote audits are delivered using screen share technology.

Advanced Certification has requested that all our auditors become familiar with MS Teams ([https://teams.microsoft.com/downloads](https://teams.microsoft.com/downloads)) other systems (WebEx, Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, WhatsApp, Google Hangouts, etc…) are all viable alternatives and the most appropriate technical solutions for your audit should be agreed with your auditor. Advanced Certification has suggested MS Teams to all auditors to enable us to provide consistent technical support for remote audits. Screen share reduces the amount of data and information transfer between Advanced Certification and your organisation, minimising any data security concerns.

Please ensure that you are familiar with the technology that you plan to use in advance of the audit and where possible attempt a trial call with the auditor to ensure that everything works, this is especially important where your organisation has strict information security policies and procedures as you may require your IT team input to enable sharing of data.

Where screen share is not readily available, you may be asked to email documents to your auditor, or to provide specific Dropbox/OneDrive folder shares; any information you send us will be managed in accordance to our confidentiality and data privacy policies.

To enable efficient remote auditing with minimal disruption to you it is important that you have prepared the required information so that it can be easily displayed and evaluated by the auditor.

We understand this is unpresented times is a real test of your business continuity plan and we hope to support you to maintain your continued certification through this period.

4. **Minimum information that will be audited during a remote surveillance audit**

The objectives of a Remote Surveillance audit are:

- Gain confidence that the certified management system remains effective and has continued to fulfil requirements between recertification audits.
- Confirm that effective internal audits and management review has been performed to programme.
- Evaluate the actions taken to address nonconformities identified during the previous audit.
- Evaluate the treatment of complaints.
- Confirm that the certificated client is correctly publicising their certificated status (use of AC logo)

The minimum areas to be assessed during a remote surveillance (as applicable to the standard) are:

- Policies
- Updates to Context Assessment & Scope
- Updates to “Strategic” Risks and actions to address them
- Samples of documented risks assessments, aspect evaluations
- Legislation register (compliance obligations)
- Objectives
- External Communications
5. **Minimum information that will be audited during a remote partial re-certification audits**

The objectives of a remote recertification audit are to enable extension of the current (soon to expire) certificate by a further 6 months through:

Evaluation of the performance of the management system over the period of certification, and include the review of previous surveillance audit reports.

Confirm that the certificated client is correctly publicising their certificated status (use of AC logo)

Confirm that the management system has continued to be effectively implemented through the last 3-year cycle through checking of the following areas (as applicable to the standard):

- **Policy**
- **Context Assessment & Scope**
- **Top Management Interview**
- **Organisational Structure**
- "Strategic" Risks and actions to address them
- Samples of documented risks assessments, aspect evaluations
- **Legislation register (compliance obligations)**
- **Objectives**
- **External Communications**
- **Document issue (revision statuses etc...)**
- **Supplier Evaluation**
- **Records of completed jobs**
- **Performance Monitoring**
- **Compliance evaluation (with samples of evidence to support the compliance conclusions)**
- **Internal Audit**
- **Management Review**
- Details of reports and investigations of non-conformity, complaints, accidents, incidents and near misses

The following activities will be planned for the physical audit (to be completed within the 6 month certificate extension period)

- **Site Tour**
- Samples of records that are held hard copy (various)
- Sampling of equipment and infrastructure controls – including calibration (7.1)
- Competence follow ups of individuals (7.2)
- Interviews with operators (5.4/7.3)
- Document control and distribution (7.5)
o Operational Controls, including physical observations of all activities and “live” records (8)
o Emergency Response (8.2)
o “live” data monitoring (9)
o Continual improvement (10)

Following the completion of your remote partial re-certification audit the report will be submitted for independent review and once approved the extended certificate will be issued to you.

6. Audit timekeeping and ICT issues

Wherever possible the audit will be completed covering the full audit duration as per the audit plan; it may be required to terminate the audit prior to scheduled close due to an inability to maintain satisfactory connections or conditions during the scheduled time. This will be recorded in the executive summary of the audit report along with the auditor's comments on the impact of the ICT issues on the audit completion and may result in the need for a physical audit to cover areas that it was not possible to evaluate remotely.

7. Support from AC

AC understands the need to maintain certification and not unduly interrupt your certification cycle as this could adversely affect your business so by setting up remote auditing to cover this representative times, would hope to enable you to meet your business objectives for the future.