



IRCA

INTERNATIONAL
REGISTER OF
CERTIFICATED
AUDITORS



Certification as a

Social Systems Auditor



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Background to the Social Systems Auditor Programme

The information detailed within this document was correct at time of publication. For more details about this programme and other services we provide, we advise you to see the IRCA website at www.irca.org.

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1.

General Information about IRCA and the Social Systems Programme

IRCA and Auditor Certification

History:

The International Register of Certificated Auditors (IRCA) began certifying auditors in 1984. It was set up as part of an initiative by the UK government to make business and industry more competitive. The aim of this initiative was to achieve efficiencies by reducing the costs of supplier audits by replacing them with a fewer number of third party audits. Each third party audit of a supplier would then be accepted and recognized by all customers of that supplier.

In addition to IRCA, the other bodies involved in this new structure included an accreditation body (now UKAS), a national standards making body (BSI Standards) and a number of certification bodies. The quality management standard used was the British standard BS 5750, which later became ISO 9001.

This quality infrastructure proved to be extremely successful and is now recognized worldwide to be the most effective and most commonly used method for assuring the quality of supplier organizations. This same structure is now used in other contexts, e.g. to assure the compliance of organizations' management systems to occupational health & safety, food safety and environmental requirements. But whatever the context, because the structure relies heavily on competent auditors and consultants, the role played by IRCA has been essential to its success.

During the years since its establishment, IRCA has earned a reputation for integrity and for adding value. The evaluation and certification methods developed and used by IRCA have been adopted by most other auditor certification bodies. Although most countries now offer alternatives to IRCA through their own national auditor certification programmes, IRCA certification remains internationally as popular as ever. Around 35,000 auditors have been awarded certification since 1984, and over 150 countries are currently represented on the IRCA register. IRCA is the only auditor certification body that has international recognition and remains the certification that supplier organizations, certification bodies and auditors value most.

IRCA Training:

IRCA certification of auditor training courses is recognized and valued internationally. Although developed originally to support auditor certification, IRCA has evolved certification of training to become an independent activity, successful in its own right. Originally designed for auditors wishing to become certified, the courses proved very popular with students who were seeking information on quality, environmental and health & safety management for a variety of reasons. Now only a small minority of students attending these courses are auditors. Training organizations in many parts of the world regard IRCA certification as an essential requirement for trading. The number of courses IRCA offers has increased to cover a wide range of applications and continues to expand as training organizations demand certification for an increasing range of course types. Around 55,000 students a year attend IRCA certified training in all parts of the world.

Links with the CQI:

IRCA is the Chartered Quality Institute's (CQI) personnel certification body. The CQI in its own right is recognized worldwide as one of the international champions of quality. Together, in their respective roles, IRCA and the CQI provide a successful contribution to business and industry based on integrity, absolute impartiality and adding value to the business process.



The Social Systems Auditor Programme

To be effective, the assessment and assurance of an organization's conformance with social and labour specifications requires auditors who understand social responsibility issues and are properly competent to audit such systems.

The purpose of our Social Systems Auditor Programme (the SS Programme) is to provide confidence that auditors certified to this programme are competent to audit for a variety of stakeholders:

- purchasing organizations
- regulatory authorities
- accreditation bodies
- certification bodies
- business and industry

The Social Systems Auditor Programme is based on the following key standard:

- ISO 19011:2002, *Guidelines on Quality and/or Environmental Management Systems Auditing*

and the relevant UN Conventions:

- *Universal Declaration of Human Rights - adopted and proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in resolution 217A (iii) 1948*
- *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child - 1924/1959 & 1989*
- *UN Convention on all forms of Discrimination against Women - 1979*
- *ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles Concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy - 2000*
- The Core ILO Conventions
- *ILO Conventions 29 & 105 & Recommendation 35 (Forced and Bonded Labour)*
- *ILO Convention 87 (Freedom of Association)*
- *ILO Convention 98 (Rights to Organise and Collective Bargaining)*
- *ILO Conventions 100 & 111 & Recommendations 90 & 111 (Equal Remuneration for Male and Female workers for Equal Value; Discrimination in Employment and Occupation)*
- *ILO Convention 138 & Recommendation 146 (Minimum Age)*
- *ILO Convention 135 & Recommendation 143 (Workers' Representatives)*
- *ILO Convention 155 & Recommendation 164 (Occupational Safety and Health)*

- *ILO Convention 159 & Recommendation 168 (Vocation Rehabilitation & Employment of Disabled Persons)*
- *ILO Convention 177 & Recommendation 184 (Home working)*
- *ILO Convention 170 (Safe Use of Chemicals)*
- *ILO Convention 110 (includes reference to Provision of Housing for migrant workers).*

This Programme is intended for:

- auditors, e.g. those employed by purchasing organizations to conduct supply chain audits and those employed by third party certification bodies/registrars
- practitioners, e.g. consultants, managers and other personnel involved in developing, implementing and auditing social systems
- employees conducting social systems audits within their own organization, i.e. internal audits.

This document provides you (new applicants and existing IRCA certified auditors) with information and instructions on:

- the certification process and how to apply
- the requirements for initial certification
- the requirements for renewal of certification, including CPD requirements
- the types of audits acceptable for certification
- fees
- the Code of Conduct.

Certification within the Social Systems Programme is available, without restriction, to all individuals worldwide who satisfy the certification requirements.

2.

Certification Grades

The SS Auditor Programme has five grades of certification:

- ➔ Social Systems Provisional Internal Auditor
- ➔ Social Systems Internal Auditor
- ➔ Social Systems Provisional Auditor
- ➔ Social Systems Auditor
- ➔ Social Systems Lead Auditor
- ➔ Social Systems Principal Auditor

To assist you in determining which grade is right for you, we have listed below descriptions of the characteristics of each grade and a brief summary of the certification requirements. You will find further clarification of these in the next section; 'Requirements for Initial Certification'.

Social Systems Provisional Internal Auditor

Who is suited to this grade?

This is an entry or training grade for internal auditors who do not yet have the necessary internal auditing experience required for certification to the Internal Auditor grade.

Many internal auditors start at this grade after initial training as the first step.

Summary of certification requirements for this grade:

Education

- At least secondary education

Work Experience

- Three years, or 2 years with a degree or near degree

Auditor Training

- An IRCA certified Internal Social Systems Auditor course or accepted alternative

or

- An IRCA certified Social Systems Auditor/Lead Auditor course or accepted alternative

Auditing Experience

- None.

Social Systems Internal Auditor

Who is suited to this grade?

You should consider this grade if you conduct internal audits of your organization's compliance with defined social requirements. Usually you will not be a full-time auditor, and you probably only audit a few times a year, but you will have a good understanding of social systems and their benefit to your own organization.

Certification to this grade is valuable to you because it recognizes your competence. It is valued by your employer because it indicates your competence and also because it supports your organization's social system.

Because internal auditing is only part of your work, we do not require the same level of qualification and experience as for the other grades.

This grade is a natural progression from the provisional grade for internal auditors and you should apply for regrade (from provisional) as soon as you have completed the internal auditing experience.

Summary of certification requirements for this grade:

Education

- At least secondary education

Work Experience

- Three years, or 2 years with a degree or near degree

Auditor Training

- An IRCA certified Internal Social Systems Auditor course or accepted alternative

or

- An IRCA certified Social Systems Auditor/Lead Auditor course or accepted alternative

Auditing Experience

- Five audits, totalling at least 15 hours duration based on acceptable audit criteria.

Social Systems Provisional Auditor

Who is suited to this grade?

This is the entry or training grade for external auditors who do not yet have the auditing experience necessary for certification to the other grades, and you should consider this if you intend to make auditing your career. Most career auditors start at this grade and it is seen as the first step.

This grade is also used by experienced auditors who are taking a temporary break from auditing or have moved from auditing to management, but who see value in maintaining IRCA certification.

Summary of certification requirements for this grade:

Education

- At least secondary education

Work Experience

- Five years, or 4 years with a degree or near degree

Auditor Training

- An IRCA certified Social Systems Auditor/Lead Auditor course or accepted alternative

Auditing Experience

- None

Social Systems Auditor

Who is suited to this grade?

This grade recognizes you as a competent auditor, contributing as an effective member of an audit team.

This grade is a natural progression from the provisional grade for auditors who have completed the Social Systems Auditor/Lead Auditor course and you should apply for regrade (from provisional) as soon as you have completed the auditing experience. It is regarded as the next step in the career ladder and most auditors who hold this grade intend to move onto the lead auditor grade.

Summary of certification requirements for this grade:

Education

- At least secondary education

Work Experience

- Five years, or four years with a degree or near degree

Auditor Training

- An IRCA certified Social Systems Auditor/Lead Auditor course or accepted alternative

Auditing Experience

- Four audits as an auditor-in-training totalling 20 days, 10 days minimum on-site against acceptable audit criteria.

Social Systems Lead Auditor

Who is suited to this grade?

This grade is reserved for auditors experienced and competent at managing audits and leading teams. Most auditors working for certification bodies or performing supplier audits for large organizations are lead auditors.

Summary of certification requirements for this grade:

Education

- At least secondary education

Work Experience

- Five years, or 4 years with a degree or near degree

Auditor Training

- An IRCA certified Social Systems Auditor/Lead Auditor course or accepted alternative

Auditing Experience

- Four audits as an auditor-in-training totalling 20 days, 10 days minimum on-site using acceptable audit criteria
- Three audits as a lead auditor-in-training totalling 15 days, 10 days minimum on-site using acceptable audit criteria.

Social Systems Principal Auditor

Who is suited to this grade?

This grade is designed as an alternative to the Lead Auditor grade and is intended to recognize the considerable experience and competence of two categories of auditors who operate on their own (i.e. as a team of one, performing sole audits);

- Auditors with a background in Social Systems consulting (whose key competencies are implementing Social Systems management systems and performing all aspects of the audit process without assistance)

- Auditors with a background in leading audit teams (as lead auditors) but who now audit on their own (whose key competences are audit management team leadership).

We consider the Principal Auditor and Lead Auditor grades as being, on balance, of an equivalent standard and we do not intend that auditors hold the Principal Auditor and Lead Auditor grade, or any other grade, at the same time.

Summary of certification requirements for this grade:

Education

Consultant route:

- A degree or near degree

or

Team Leader route:

- At least secondary education

Work Experience

Consultant route:

- Six years of Social Systems work experience

or

Team Leader route:

- Five years, or 4 years with a degree or near degree

Auditor Training

- An IRCA Certified Social Systems Auditor/Lead Auditor course or accepted alternative

Auditing Experience

Consultant route:

- Seven sole or lead audits totalling 35 days of which a minimum of 20 days must have been acquired on-site (these numbers assume you do not currently hold the Social Systems Auditor or Social Systems Lead Auditor grade)

or

Team Leader route:

- Six years certified to the Lead auditor grade
- Three sole audits where you were required to demonstrate effective audit management skills within complex and demanding situations.

3.

Initial Certification

We will evaluate your application based on your demonstration of the competences¹ needed for effective audit of quality management systems. You can demonstrate these competences through a combination of education, work experience, auditor training and audit experience.

Competences

Generic Auditing Competences

- Auditing principles, procedures and techniques that enable you to conduct audits in a consistent and systematic manner
- Relevant reference documents that enable you to define the scope of an audit and apply audit criteria
- Organizational situations that enable you to comprehend an organization's operational and industry context
- Applicable laws, regulations and other requirements relevant to the discipline that enable you to work within, and be aware of the requirements that apply to the organization being audited.

Social Systems Auditing Competences

As a Social Systems auditor you have an understanding of:

- Internationally accepted human rights norms, laws and regulations relating to labour and social issues
- Relevant industry codes of practice, legal requirements, guidelines and standards relating to labour, welfare and health & safety issues
- Relevant international, national and local judicial systems and legislative frameworks
- Relevant social responsibility & labour culture, trade unions, NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) and other interested parties within the country or area of operation.

As a Social Systems auditor you have the ability to:

- Plan, conduct and report a social management systems audit
- Lead an audit team and manage the audit process
- Communicate responsibly and clearly, orally and in writing with personnel at all levels of an organization, including workers
- Apply methods and techniques to gather and evaluate objective evidence (including payroll) and determine the conformance of a social system
- Generate accurate, appropriate and responsible audit findings and conclusions
- Uphold the principles of proper ethical conduct, fair presentation and due professional care.

Unless otherwise indicated, we will accept a less comprehensive coverage of the scope and depth of competences for the Social Systems Internal Auditor grades.

The scope of certification is general, i.e. it does not include or require any industry sector specific competences. You may select from a list up to 6 standard industry sectors within which you have acquired work experience. These details, although included within the register, are self-declarations and are outside the scope of certification.

The details of all certified auditors are included within a register which is publicly available on the IRCA website (www.irca.org).

¹ You will find a more complete listing of the competences in ISO 19011:2002, section 7.3.

Education

For all grades except Social Systems Principal Auditor (consultant route):

You need to have completed a minimum of secondary education. If you have a degree or near-degree² level qualification, we will reduce the requirement for work experience.

Acceptable qualifications include those awarded by an institution, recognized by a national governmental body or accredited by a national professional body.

For Social Systems Principal Auditor grade (consultant route):

You need a degree, near degree or acceptable equivalent.

All post graduate diplomas, undergraduate and post graduate degrees awarded in a relevant subject will normally be accepted.

Work Experience

For all grades:

We consider relevant work experience to be a technical, managerial or professional position where you are required to exercise judgement, solve problems and communicate with other managers, employees, customers and stakeholders.

Auditor Training

For Social Systems Provisional Internal Auditor or Social Systems Internal Auditor grades:

You must have successfully completed either an IRCA certified Social Systems Internal Auditor course (or an acceptable alternative)

or

The training requirement specified for any of the other grades.

For all other grades:

You must have successfully completed an IRCA certified Social Systems Auditor/Lead Auditor course (or an acceptable alternative)

or

An IRCA certified *generic* Auditor/Lead Auditor course (or an acceptable alternative) and an IRCA

certified Social Systems Auditor Conversion course (or an acceptable alternative).

If you are already certified as an auditor on one of our generic programmes we will only require you to have completed the shorter IRCA certified Social Systems Auditor Conversion course or accepted alternative.

There are IRCA certified auditor training courses available. However, we will accept alternatives to IRCA certified training. Acceptable alternatives include some Social Systems auditor courses approved by other training approval bodies, e.g. we accept some (but not all) courses approved by SAI. Exceptionally, we will consider accepting training completed in other ways, but the obligation will be on you to satisfy us that this training at least meets our requirements.

We advise you to refer to the IRCA website www.irca.org for a current listing of all IRCA certified training organizations offering IRCA certified Social Systems auditor training courses.

Auditing Experience

For Social Systems Provisional Auditor grade and Social Systems Provisional Internal Auditor grade:

No auditing experience is required for certification to this grade.

For Social Systems Internal Auditor grade:

You need to have performed at least 5 internal audits, each of which must have been of at least 3 hours duration and must have included all elements of the audit cycle; audit planning, document review, auditing, interviewing, audit reporting and must not have involved areas or activities that you yourself perform. (However, we will accept audits of activities for which you are directly or indirectly responsible, e.g. as a line manager).

For Social Systems Auditor grade:

You need to have performed at least 4 complete audits. Auditing activity must include document review, preparation and performance of on-site audit activities and audit reporting.

The duration of these audits must not be less than 20 days, 10 days of which must have been acquired on-site.

Although we recommend you should complete all of the audits under the direction and guidance³ of an auditor competent as a team leader (currently certified as a lead auditor or who has equivalent

³ Direction and guidance does not mean you must be under constant supervision, nor does it mean someone needs to be assigned solely to perform this task.

competence), we acknowledge that for many auditors this will be very difficult and costly to arrange. Consequently, we will accept a minimum of 1 audit under these conditions. We may require this team leader to attest to your competence to audit as a team member.

For Social Systems Lead Auditor grade:

In addition to the audit requirement for the Social Systems Auditor grade listed above, you must have completed 3 acceptable audits as the leader of an audit team, which included at least one other auditor.

The duration of the 3 lead audits must not be less than 15 days, 10 days of which must have been acquired on-site.

Although we recommend you should complete all of the audits under the direction and guidance³ of an auditor competent as a team leader (currently certified as a lead auditor or who has equivalent competence), we acknowledge that for many auditors this will be very difficult and costly to arrange. Consequently, we will accept a minimum of 1 lead audit under these conditions. We may require this team leader to attest to your competence to lead an audit team.

For Social Systems Principal Auditor grade:

For the consultant route, you must have completed a minimum of 7 acceptable sole or lead audits totalling 35 days, 20 days of which must have been acquired on-site.

If you are already certified to the Social Systems Auditor grade you need only perform 3 sole or lead audits of a duration not less than 15 days, 10 days of which must have been acquired on-site.

For the team leader route, you must have acquired a minimum of 6 years of experience as a certified lead auditor (exceptionally, we will consider accepting less than 6 years as a certified lead auditor if you are able to demonstrate a very considerable and comprehensive experience in leading teams within a shorter period) and conducted 3 sole audits, where you were required to demonstrate effective audit management skills in complex and demanding situations. As guidance, we anticipate these to be initial audits of more than 1 day's duration performed within a complex organization.

General Guidance on Acceptance of Audits:

What audit criteria do we accept?

We will accept audits which are based on the **Core ILO Conventions**, defined in section 1, and which contain the **core management principles** as follows:

- The requirement for management commitment, including establishing policies relating to social and labour issues and appointing a member of management to be responsible for its implementation
- The requirement for defined operational controls to address the audit criteria and relevant industry and legislative requirements
- The requirement for effective organization controls, definition of responsibilities, training, communications, documentation, operational controls and crisis management
- The requirement for monitoring and measurement, audits, corrective and preventive action and management review
- The requirement for improvement based on monitoring and review activities
- The requirement for record keeping to demonstrate that audit criteria are being met.

These core management principles may be addressed in audit criteria in a variety of ways. Firstly, international standards such as SA8000 and the ISO guide (once this is published) incorporate the social issues from the ILO Conventions and management issues in an holistic way. International industry codes, such as the Electronics Industry Code of Conduct developed in 2004, can also follow this model. Secondly, sector schemes, such as the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) base code, address only the social issues in the ILO Conventions and are supplemented by contractual specification for management control in the supply chain. Thirdly, individual organizations have developed their own proprietary global sourcing code of conduct that can adopt hybrid form, incorporating elements of the first two cases.

What audits do we accept?

We will only accept audits that have been performed in accordance with the auditing guidance standard ISO 19011 and against acceptable audit criteria (see above).

For all grades except Social Systems Lead Auditor:

We will only accept audits performed during the previous 3 year period.

For Social Systems Lead Auditor grade:

You must have acquired the lead audit experience during the previous 2 years. We define 'previous period' as being that period immediately prior to the date we receive your completed application.

We must be able to verify all audit experience you submit in your log sheets. Please make sure you include detailed information of the audits you perform and provide sufficient contact details so that we are able to perform the verification.

We will accept supplier audits (also known as *second party* audits), certification audits (also known as *third party* audits) and internal audits (also known as *first party* audits). We also accept consultancy audits (see below), which can be performed as first, second or third party audits.

Internal (first party) audits:

For Social Systems Internal Auditor grade we will accept internal audits performed by you on parts of your own organization where you are independent from the operational activities you are auditing.

We will consider accepting internal audits for other grades providing that, in addition to you being independent from the operational activities you are auditing, the scope of the audit was sufficiently broad and the audit was sufficiently complex to require you to use a range of auditing skills. So that we can consider your internal audits for acceptance, we advise you to provide us with appropriate and relevant supporting information.

Consultancy Audits:

We will accept audits performed by you when acting as a consultant for a client if all of the following are satisfied:

- the client (auditee) already had a fully established social system prior to the audit
- you had no part in setting up the social system being audited (except in specific circumstances as described below)
- you were independent of the auditee
- the scope of the audit included all elements of the social system.

We will also accept pre-assessment audits performed by you on a social system that you were involved in developing if the certification body subsequently awarded certification at the first attempt.

Surveillance (partial system) audits:

We do not normally accept surveillance (partial system) audits when submitted for initial certification (except for Social Systems Internal Auditor). However, we do accept surveillance audits for renewal of certification. As a general rule we consider five surveillance audits to be equivalent to one full social management system audit, but recognize that some surveillance audits can be very extensive. In such instances, we will accept fewer than five surveillance audits (as being equal to one full social management system audit) if you provide us with evidence that supports your claim.

Audits we do not accept:

We do not accept:

- audits of the same social system that are repeated more frequently than once every 12 months
- audits of less than 1 day (6 hours of on-site audit activity exclusive of breaks) duration, except for Social Systems Internal Auditor grade where we will accept audits of 3 hours exclusive of breaks
- gap analysis, close out or follow up visits
- audits performed before successful completion of the formal training requirement.

4.

How to Apply

What you do

Request an application pack

We will provide you with an application pack free of charge. Either contact us and we will send it to you by post, or download all the documents yourself from our website.

Tel: +44 (0)20 7245 6833

Fax: +44 (0)20 7245 6755

Email: irca@irca.org

Website: www.irca.org

Complete and submit the application form and documents

When you apply for certification, please complete the forms as instructed, enclose all the additional material requested and send to us with the application fee.

At the application stage, please send only the application fee. Do not send the annual certification fee. If your application is successful, we will write and ask you to pay the annual certification fee.

We accept applications and supporting documentation in the following languages:

- English
- Chinese
- Japanese
- Italian
- Spanish

For all the other languages we will need all correspondence in support of the application to be in the English language or to be accompanied by certified translations of the originals. This is particularly important for educational qualifications, training courses and audits.

All qualifications submitted must be supported by documentary evidence. An example of acceptable evidence would be a good quality photocopy of the original certificate indicating the awarding body, the title and date of the award and the name of the person to whom the award was made. If any of this information is not available or is not clear, we may ask you to supply us with more evidence.

The same applies if a copy of the certificate is not available, for example where it has been lost or destroyed. Acceptable evidence would include an official letter from the awarding body confirming the award.

A transcript (i.e. an official, detailed account of the course content) of an award would also be acceptable evidence if it clearly states the date and title of the award.

If no documentary evidence can be supplied by the awarding body, it is unlikely we would accept your qualification.

What we do

We usually take about four weeks to process each application. But that time may vary depending on the time required to verify the information submitted with the application. Giving us all the information we need will speed up the application process.

The process has four parts:

Administrative check

All applications are checked first by our administration staff to make sure you have included all the information we need.

Technical evaluation

This phase is performed by IRCA's technical experts, the Reviewing Officers. The Reviewing Officers evaluate the information submitted against the certification requirements and perform verification of some or all of this information. At the conclusion of the technical evaluation, the Reviewing Officers will make a recommendation on certification to the Certification Manager.

We consider verification to be an essential element supporting the overall credibility of the certification process. Consequently, great care is taken by the Reviewing Officers in reviewing and verifying applications against all aspects of the certification requirements. We will perform the evaluation as speedily as we can, but sometimes it is not possible to be as quick as we (or you) would like. Processing your application is likely to take longer if you have unusual educational qualifications, if your current (or former) employers are slow to provide verification information or if the auditee organizations are not helpful.

Certification

The final decision on your certification is made by the Certification Manager. The certification decision is performed independently from the technical evaluation process (detailed above).

Offer and award of certification

The Certification Manager will write formally to you with an offer of certification to the appropriate grade. We will send you this offer and ask you to pay your first annual fee.

Certification will be awarded when we receive your payment of the annual fee.

Your details are then added to our online register of certificated auditors and we will send you your certification card.

5.

Fees

Fees are set annually and apply for the calendar year (1 January - 31 December). Contact us direct or see www.irca.org for details of current fees applicable for your country.

Application Fee

We need you to pay this fee when you send in your application. Alternatively, we will invoice you on receipt of your application. This fee covers the costs of the application process and is not refunded if the application is unsuccessful.

Annual Certification Fee

This fee covers the annual cost of administering your certification. We will normally invoice you for this fee when we first offer you certification following your application, and thereafter each year one month⁴ before payment is due.

Application for Regrade Fee

This fee covers the costs of evaluating your regrade. We need you to pay this fee when you submit your request and, as with the application fee, the regrade fee is not refundable. If you are regraded during the year we will not ask you to pay any further certification fees for that current year. You may request a regrade at any stage during the certification period. There is no regrade fee if we regrade you as part of the (3 year) renewal of certification process.

⁴ Except every third year when your renewal is due. We invoice you after we have completed your renewal, on the basis that your grade (and fee) may have changed as a result of renewal.

6.

Renewal of Certification

You must renew your certification every three years, i.e. at the end of the third complete year. We will write to you two months before your certification period expires and ask you to send us your audit and CPD logs and other documents. We will evaluate these against the renewal requirements listed below and make a certification decision. We will then write to you with the results.

The renewal of certification process involves these five requirements:

- Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
- Audit experience
- Declaration of Complaints
- Compliance with the IRCA Code of Conduct
- Payment of the Annual Fee

Continuing Professional Development

For all grades except the Social Systems Provisional Internal Auditor and Internal Auditor grade:

You must have completed at least 45 hours of appropriate CPD during the 3 year period immediately prior to renewal of certification.

We need you to provide us with evidence that you have met this requirement. (See Appendix I for guidance.)

For both Social Systems internal Auditor grades:

There is no CPD requirement.

Audit Experience

We need you to record and submit your audit experience on the audit log sheets (IRCA/106) which we supply.

For Social Systems Provisional Internal Auditor grade:

There is no requirement to perform audits.

For Social Systems Internal Auditor grade:

You need to have completed a minimum of 5 audits, the total duration of which must be at least 15 hours.

For Social Systems Provisional Auditor grade:

There is no requirement to perform audits.

For Social Systems Auditor grade:

You need to have completed at least 5 acceptable audits.

For Social Systems Lead Auditor grade:

You need to have completed at least 5 acceptable audits, any 2 of which must have been as the leader of a team which included at least one other auditor.

For Social Systems Principal Auditor grade:

You need to have completed at least 5 acceptable audits, all 5 must have been either lead audits or sole audits.

You must have performed all audits within the previous three year certification period.

Declaration of Complaints

We need you to tell us about any complaints made against your professional conduct. It is important that we know of any complaints as we need to consider these as part of the renewal of certification process. We will investigate all instances of complaints. If complaints are made against your conduct and you do not declare them, the consequences will be far more serious and may result in suspension or withdrawal of your certification.

Compliance with the Code of Conduct

We need you to make a declaration that you have always acted in compliance with the Code of Conduct (see Appendix III).

Payment of the Annual Fee

And finally, we need you to pay the annual fee (please note there is no additional fee for renewal). Because the fee will be dependent on the grade we offer you after renewal, we do not ask you to pay this fee until after we have completed the renewal. We will write to you with the results of the renewal and enclose the fee invoice and your new certification card. Failure to pay your annual fee will result in your certification being withdrawn.

7.

How to Regrade

You can apply to be regraded to another grade at any time. When we offer you initial certification we will indicate the audit experience and competences you need to attain the next grade(s) of certification. To apply for regrade, you should complete IRCA/106 log sheets, enclose any additional information requested and send to us with the regrade fee.

A successful application for regrade will not normally result in a change to your renewal of certification date.

If you decide not to apply for regrade during your certification period, we will write to you two months before your certification period expires as part of the renewal of certification process and ask you to send us your audit and CPD logs. At this point we will let you know the current regrade requirement. There is no regrade fee if you are regraded as part of the (3 year) renewal of certification process.

Please contact us if you need further advice on how to regrade.

8.

Other Information

The Certification Period

When your application is successful, we award certification for a period of 3 years, beginning in the month we award certification. This 3 year period is referred to as the certification period. At the end of each certification period we require you to renew your certification. If you are successful at renewal, we award you certification for a further 3 year certification period, and so on.

During the certification period, at the end of the first and second years, you may maintain certification by payment of the annual certification fee and by compliance with the Code of Conduct. We don't require you to submit any other documentation at the end of year 1 and year 2. At the end of the third year, all certified auditors are required to complete the renewal of certification process.

Acceptable Standards, Codes and Other Audit Criteria

We will accept audits performed against any Social Systems audit criteria, which we evaluate as being acceptable (see acceptable audit criteria above). We maintain a list of acceptable audit criteria but it is possible that you may claim audits against criteria that are not on this list. We have a procedure for evaluating new audit criteria and you are advised to contact us for advice where you consider that other criteria may be acceptable to us.

Certification Cards, Certificates and the Register

We will send you a Certification Card following initial award of certification and annually thereafter when you pay your annual fee and comply with any other applicable requirements.

This card is your primary evidence of certification and you should present this when you first begin an audit and thereafter whenever appropriate.

Although the card is issued to you, it remains our property and you must return it to us should we ask you to.

The IRCA Certificate is intended for display as a formal recognition of your certification to a specific grade. You should not use it as proof of certification. Please contact us if you wish to purchase a certificate.

You can find details of all certified auditors in each country on the 'Find an Auditor' section of the IRCA website www.irca.org.

Appeals and Complaints

You have the right to appeal against any certification decision taken by us. We operate a quality system that includes established procedures for considering appeals and complaints.

Enforcement of Certification

We enforce certification for two reasons:

1. If you fail to meet the certification criteria for the grade to which you are certified. This enforcement occurs when you apply to renew your certification. In most cases withdrawal will be preceded by an offer of an alternative grade for a period during which you have the opportunity to meet the requirements and be reinstated to the grade you originally held
2. If you breach the Code of Conduct. We reserve the right to undertake action against your certification if we find you to have acted contrary to the Code of Conduct. Options available include suspending, or in instances of serious or sustained breach, withdrawing your certification

Confidentiality

We undertake to consider as strictly confidential all information, correspondence and documentation submitted by you to us in support of your certification activities⁵.

We reserve the right to publish relevant details of each certified auditor in the register available online at www.irca.org.

Legal Status

The certification of auditors by us and all activities associated with the administration of the register is governed in accordance with English Law and is subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the English Courts.

⁵ We reserve the right to disclose details of your certification record to other auditor certification bodies and accreditation bodies. We will do so with discretion and only in instances where we consider withholding this information will compromise the integrity of certification, e.g. where we have taken action against (i.e. suspended or withdrawn) your certification and you have applied to another auditor certification body without fully disclosing your record while certified by us.

Appendix I

Guidance on Continuing Professional Development

CPD is a framework that encourages you to continuously update your professional knowledge, personal skills and competences. The purpose of CPD is to make you more effective as an auditor and to make the auditing profession more credible. The concept of CPD and the value it contributes is now recognized and accepted throughout all professional fields.

As part of the renewal of certification process, you must demonstrate to us you have completed at least 45 hours CPD within the last 3 years in subjects that are broadly related to auditing and social and ethical issues. Because there are so many topics that we recognize will enhance your auditing competence, we do not attempt to list them here. But we categorize these into 2 areas which are consistent with the 2 main areas of competence required by social systems auditors:

1. Social systems related (labour, social, legal, ethical, environmental, etc.)
2. Auditing related

We recognize that no single method for learning suits everyone. Therefore, we will accept CPD acquired in ways that range from the very informal (e.g. reading and self study) to the formal (e.g. classroom training). We recognize that some ways of acquiring CPD are more effective than others, so we apply a 'weighting' where some activities are accorded more recognition than others. The activities are divided into 3 broad categories:

a) Unstructured; where 3 hours are accepted as one CPD hour

Included in this category would be distance and open learning study which is not assessed and does not lead to a qualification, the reading of professional and technical journals, books and other publications as well as relevant aspects of on-the-job training, where specific outcomes have been planned and identified.

Reading IRCA INform, our e-magazine available from www.irca.org, or contributing to the IRCA online discussion forum⁶, also available from our website, is also accepted.

b) Semi-structured; where 2 hours are accepted as one CPD hour

Included in this category would be non-interactive lectures, talks, etc., informal professional body meetings of a more social nature (networking opportunities), the research, preparation and first delivery of lectures/courses, publishing articles and

forms of open and distance learning that involve assessment and that result in the acquisition of a qualification.

c) Structured; where each hour is accepted as one CPD hour

Examples of this category would be interactive and highly participative training courses and seminars, professional body meetings with formal lectures, active participation in development of standards.

The range of activities that may be included within each category is extensive and the small number of examples above is intended to provide broad guidance only. Most auditors submit evidence of activities that include all 3 categories, but it is not a requirement that you do so. The only restriction we place is that unstructured CPD cannot constitute more than a third (i.e. 15 hours) of the total acceptable CPD hours.

It remains your responsibility to provide a case for acceptance of any activity you submit, and this must be supported by sufficient, appropriate evidence. This will involve you making and retaining records of your activities and having these properly verified where possible. We have developed a CPD and training log sheet (IRCA/173) for this purpose.

It is in your interest to provide us with information in a clear, logical and easily understandable format. The speed with which we are able to evaluate and renew your certification will depend on this.

⁶ A maximum of 4 hours of unstructured CPD will be accepted for contribution to the IRCA forum. Evidence must be documented and verified on IRCA/173 CPD logs.

Appendix II

Definitions

Audit

A systematic, independent and documented process for obtaining audit evidence and evaluating it objectively to determine the extent to which audit criteria are fulfilled.

Auditee

The organization being audited.

Audit Client

The person or organization requesting an audit.

Generic

Programmes where most of the initial requirements are the same: QMS, EMS, OH&S, ISMS, ITSMS, Social Systems

Audit Team

Two or more auditors performing an audit, one of whom is appointed as leader.

Lead Audit

An audit where the auditor performed the audit whilst leading a team of at least one other auditor.

Sole Audit

An audit where one auditor performed all phases of the audit.

First Party Audit

An audit performed within an organization by that organization's own auditing resource. Also referred to as an internal audit.

Second Party Audit

An audit of contractors/suppliers undertaken by, or on behalf of, a purchasing organization. This may include the audit of companies or divisions supplying goods or services to others within the same group. Also referred to as a supplier audit.

Third Party Audit

An audit of an organization performed by a body that is independent of the organization being audited, e.g. certification body or registrar.

Appendix III

Code of Conduct

It is a condition of certification that you agree to act in accordance with, and be bound by the following Code of Conduct:

1. To act in a strictly trustworthy and unbiased manner in relation to both the organization to which you are employed, contracted or otherwise formally engaged (the audit organization) and any other organization involved in an audit performed by you or by personnel under your direct control.
2. To disclose to your employer any relationships you may have with the organization to be audited before undertaking any audit function in respect of that organization.
3. Not to accept any inducement, gift, commission, discount or any other profit from the organizations audited, from their representatives, or from any other interested person nor knowingly allow personnel for whom you are responsible to do so.
4. Not to disclose the findings, or any part of them, of the audit team for which you are responsible or of which you are part, or any other information gained in the course of the audit to any third party, unless authorized in writing by both the auditee and the audit organization to do so.
5. Not to act in any way prejudicial to the reputation or interest of the audit organization.
6. Not to act in any way prejudicial to the reputation, interests or credibility of IRCA.
7. In the event of any alleged breach of this code, to co-operate fully in any formal enquiry procedure.

Appendix IV

Background to the Social Systems Auditor Programme

The United Nations **Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948** is a defining document that describes the issues of concern within a workplace.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) is the entity within the United Nations that takes the lead on social issues and has created a number of Core Conventions on human rights. In June 1998 all 174 ILO member states adopted the *ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principle and Rights at Work* contained within the **Core ILO Conventions**, which are listed in Section 1 (page 3). In an employment situation, **National Laws** support these Conventions, as does the *ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy of 2000* together with the *Guidelines for Multinational Enterprise*, which was developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

All these defining documents have created a trend towards systematic approach to the regulation of labour and social issues and there are many different codes, standards and guidance documents in use at international, sector and individual organizational levels.

Furthermore, an organization claiming to operate a social system to address the above considerations must adopt the **core management principles** in order for the initiative to be sustainable. Although IRCA will be flexible to cater for the variety of requirements in the market place, for any audit criteria to be acceptable both the Core ILO Conventions and core management principles must be included.

Notes