



IRCA

INTERNATIONAL
REGISTER OF
CERTIFICATED
AUDITORS



Certification as a

Food Safety Auditor



Contents

1. General Information about IRCA and the Food Safety programme
2. Part 1 Certification Grades, Requirements for Certification, How to Regrade & Renewal of certification

Part 1 (A) Specific to those auditors who audit against the current ISO 22000 requirements

Part II (B) As part I, but including additional requirements based on ISO/TS 22003, for auditors who only carry out third party certification audits

3. How to Apply
4. Fees
5. Other Information

Appendix I

Food Chain Categories and Definitions

Appendix II

Guidance on Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Appendix III

Definitions

Appendix IV

Code of Conduct

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.

Copyright IRCA - 2008

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means - electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise - without prior permission of the International Register of Certificated Auditors (IRCA).

1. General Information about IRCA and the Food Safety 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 world-wide 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 a division of the Chartered Quality Institute (CQI). 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 Food Safety Programme

To be effective, the regulation of food safety needs auditors who understand and are properly competent in the management systems approach. The purpose of the IRCA Food Safety management Systems Auditor Certification programme (the Food Safety Programme) is to provide confidence to the regulatory authorities, accreditation bodies, certification bodies, business and industry as well as directly to the public at large that auditors certified to this programme are competent.

As part of the certification process we will evaluate you, the food safety auditor, against the requirements which reflect the key skills, knowledge and experience that define the competence you need to demonstrate during an audit.

The Food Safety Programme is based on the standards:

- ISO TS 22003:2007, *Food Safety Management Systems – Requirements for Bodies providing Audit and Certification of Food Safety Management Systems*
- ISO 22000:2005, *Food Safety Management Systems – Requirements for any Organization in the Food Chain*
- HACCP, *Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point*

and the auditing guidance standard:

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

Our award of certification means we have recognized that you understand and are competent (depending on the grade awarded) to:

- Uphold the principles of proper ethical conduct, fair presentation and due professional care
- Communicate clearly orally and in writing with personnel at all levels of an organization
- Plan and organize an audit of a Food Safety management system
- Identify and understand relevant business processes
- Evaluate objective evidence and determine the effectiveness of a food safety management system with particular reference to:
 - The effectiveness of the organization's management of risk through its risk assessment programme
 - The capability of an organization to maintain compliance with legislative requirements
 - The adequacy of the organization's

emergency procedures and responses

- The implementation of the risk control and improvements programmes
- The continuous improvement of food safety performance
- Report accurately audit findings and conclusions
- Lead the audit team and manage the audit process
- Audit a management process
- Provide consultancy advice that contributes real value.

The details of all certified auditors are included within a register which is publicly available.

The programme is intended for:

- environmental health officers
- quality, environmental or health and safety management systems auditors who possess a considerable understanding and knowledge of food safety issues and who are able to demonstrate competence to participate in food safety or integrated management system audits
- food safety auditors who wish to have their auditing competence recognized.

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 Food Safety programme is available, without restriction, to all individuals worldwide who satisfy the certification requirements.

The terms used in these criteria (Audit, Third Part Audit, etc.) are as defined in the relevant ISO/IEC standards.

2. Part I

Certification Grades

The Food Safety Programme is separated into two parts. There are six certification grades for Part I:

- ➔ Food Safety Provisional Internal Auditor
- ➔ Food Safety Internal Auditor
- ➔ Food Safety Provisional Auditor
- ➔ Food Safety Auditor
- ➔ Food Safety Lead Auditor
- ➔ Food Safety Principal Auditor

To assist you in determining which grade is right for you, we have listed below the descriptions of the characteristics of each grade and a brief summary of the certification requirements, followed by a more comprehensive description of these in the next section 'Requirements of Certification'.

Food Safety Provisional Internal Auditor

Who is suited to this grade?

You should consider this if you intend to perform internal FSMS audits. The grade recognizes you to have the appropriate personal attributes, educational, professional and technical competencies but have not yet had sufficient opportunity to meet the auditing experience requirements necessary for certification to the internal auditor grades. Most internal auditors start at this grade and it is seen as the first step.

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
- One year of food safety work experience

Auditor Training

- An IRCA certified Food Safety Foundation course or acceptable alternative
- An IRCA certified Internal Food Safety Auditor course or acceptable alternative

Auditing Experience

- None.

Food Safety Internal Auditor

Who is suited to this grade?

You should consider this if you perform internal FSMS audits for your organization. The grade recognizes you to have the appropriate personal attributes, educational, professional, technical and auditing competencies to meet the auditing experience requirements necessary for certification to the internal auditor grades.

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
- One year of food safety work experience

Auditor Training

- An IRCA certified Food Safety Foundation course or acceptable alternative
- An IRCA certified Internal Food Safety Auditor course or acceptable alternative

Auditing Experience

- Five audits totalling at least 15 hours.

Food Safety Provisional Auditor

Who is suited to this grade?

This is the entry or training grade, and you should consider this if you intend to make auditing your career. The grade recognizes you to have the appropriate personal attributes, educational, professional and technical competences but have not yet had sufficient opportunity to meet the auditing experience requirements necessary for certification to the other grades. 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 and who still 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
- Two years of food safety work experience

Auditor Training

- An IRCA certified Food Safety Auditor/Lead Auditor course or acceptable alternative

Auditing Experience

- None.

Food Safety Auditor

Who is suited to this grade?

This grade is a natural progression from the provisional grade and you should apply for regrade (from provisional) as soon as you have completed the audit experience requirement. This grade recognizes you as a competent auditor, contributing as an effective member of an audit team. 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 grades.

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
- Two years of food safety work experience

Auditor Training

- An IRCA certified Food Safety Auditor/Lead Auditor course or acceptable alternative

Auditing Experience

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

Food Safety Lead Auditor

Who is suited to this grade?

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

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
- Two years of food safety work experience

Auditor Training

- An IRCA certified Food Safety Auditor/Lead Auditor course or acceptable alternative

Auditing Experience (in total, i.e. assuming you do not currently hold the Food Safety Auditor grade)

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

Food Safety 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 food safety consulting (whose key competencies are implementing food safety 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 this 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 food safety work experience

or

Team Leader route:

- Five years, or 4 years with a degree or near degree
- Two years of food safety work experience

Auditor Training

- An IRCA certified Food Safety Auditor/Lead Auditor course or acceptable alternative

Auditing Experience

Consultant route:

- Seven sole or lead audits totalling 35 days of which a minimum of 20 days must have been on-site (these numbers assume you do not currently hold the Food Safety Auditor or Food Safety 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.

Part I (a)

Requirement for Certification in association with Part I

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

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

Our award of certification means we have recognized that you are able to (depending on the grade awarded) meet the auditor competencies as referenced in ISO/TS 22003 (E), clause 7.2.4.6.2 pages 6 & 7.

Education

For all grades:

You need to have completed a minimum of secondary education. If you have a degree or near-degree¹ 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 FSMS 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:

You need to have at least 5 years relevant work experience. This is reduced to 4 years if you have a degree or near degree. 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 and customers.

FSMS Principal Auditor (consultant route):

You must have at least 6 years of work experience, all of which must be food safety work experience.

¹ We use the UK definition of a degree as the degree benchmark. But we recognize that not all degrees awarded in the UK and in other countries meet this standard. Many fall just short, either in content or in duration and we call these 'near degrees'. For the purposes of this programme we recognize a near degree as meeting the tertiary education requirement.

Food safety work experience:

For the Provisional Internal Auditor and Internal Auditor grade:

You must have completed 1 year (which may be included as part of the 4 or 5 years total work experience) within a context where food safety issues formed the major part of the job. Such experience must have provided you with the practical knowledge necessary to audit food safety management systems effectively.

For all other grades except Food Safety Principal Auditor (consultant route):

You must also have completed 2 years (which may be included as part of the total work experience requirement) in a job that contributes to the knowledge and skills that you will need as an auditor.

Examples of acceptable work experience include:

- full-time role as manager, supervisor, engineer or technician involved in technical aspects of facility operation in compliance with food safety regulations
- implementation and maintenance of food safety or integrated management systems involving health and safety compliance management
- monitoring compliance with health and safety law and regulation on behalf of a regulating body
- auditing food safety management systems on behalf of an accredited certification body
- assessment of supplier probity against an acceptable food safety management system standard on behalf of an employing organization
- provision of appropriate consultancy services involving food safety
- full time role relating to the performance of food safety risk assessment and management of safety audits of all types (not necessarily systems audits)

Irrespective of the nature of your job, a key requirement is that you have acquired and can demonstrate knowledge and understanding of risk assessment and risk mitigation. This requirement applies to all grades of food safety auditor.

If you submit food safety work experience that is not included in the examples above, you will need to provide us with evidence that supports your claim that your work experience is acceptable.

For all grades:

Periods of training cannot be included in this work experience requirement.

Auditor Training

For all grades, except the Provisional Internal Auditor and Internal Auditor grades:

You must have successfully completed either an IRCA certified *Food Safety 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 *Food Safety 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 *Food Safety Auditor Conversion* course or accepted alternative.

For the Provisional Internal Auditor and Internal Auditor grades:

You must have successfully completed either an IRCA certified *FSMS Auditor/Lead Auditor* course (or an acceptable alternative)

or

an IRCA certified *FSMS Foundation* course (or an acceptable alternative) and an IRCA certified *FSMS Internal Auditor* course (or an acceptable alternative).

Acceptable alternatives include some food safety courses approved by other training approval bodies. Exceptionally, we will consider accepting training completed through other ways, but the onus will be on you to satisfy us that this training at least meets our requirements.

You should normally have successfully completed auditor training within the 3 year period immediately prior to application for certification. We may accept training completed prior to this period if you provide evidence of recent, relevant work experience, and currency of your auditing skills.

We advise you to refer to the IRCA website www.irca.org for a current listing of all

IRCA approved training organizations offering IRCA certified food safety auditor training courses.

Audit Experience

For Food Safety Provisional Internal Auditor grade:

No auditing experience is required for certification to this grade.

For Food Safety 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 Food Safety Provisional Auditor grade:

No auditing experience is required for certification to this grade.

For Food Safety 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 guidance² 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 audit under these conditions. We may require this team leader to attest to your competence to audit as a team member.

For Food Safety Lead Auditor grade:

In addition to the audit requirement for the Food Safety 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 guidance² of an auditor competent as a team leader (currently certified as a lead auditor or who has equivalent competence), we acknowledge that for many

² 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.

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 FSMS 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 QMS 2000 Auditor grade, you need only perform 3 sole or lead audits of a duration of not less than 15 days, 20 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 or more than 1 day's duration performed within a complex organization.

General Guidance on Acceptance of Auditing

What audits do we accept?

For all grades except Food Safety Lead Auditor:

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

For Food Safety 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 only accept audits that have been performed in accordance with the auditing guidance standard, ISO 19011:2002 and against ISO 22000:2005, ISO/TS 22003:2007(E) or an alternative standard we accept as being equivalent. Audits performed against alternative national, international or company standards may be acceptable.

If you are already certified as an Auditor, Lead Auditor or Principal Auditor on one of our *generic* programmes, we will accept audits against ISO9001:2000, OH&S 18001, ISO 27001, ISO 20000, SA8000, ISO 14001 or acceptable alternatives where these do not exceed 25% of the food safety audit experience requirement.

We will accept supplier audits (also known as *second party* audits), and certification audits (also known as *third party* audits, see below) 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 Food Safety 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 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 food safety management system prior to the audit
- you had no part in setting up the food safety management 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 food safety management system.

We will also accept pre-assessment audits performed by you on a food safety management 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 Food Safety 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 food safety management system audit,

Part I (a) How to Regrade

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 food safety audit) if you provide us with evidence that supports your claim.

Audits we do not accept:

We do not accept:

- audits of the same food safety management system that are repeated more frequently than once every 12 months.
- audits of less than one day (6 hours of on-site audit activity exclusive of breaks) duration, except for Food Safety 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.

You can apply to be regarded to another grade at any time. When we offer you your initial certification we will indicate the audit experience and competencies 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 regarded as part of the (3 year) renewal of certification process.

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

Part I (a)

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 expired 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 Food Safety Provisional Internal and Internal Auditor grades:

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 II for guidance.)

For the Food Safety Provisional Internal and 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.

Food Safety Provisional Internal Auditor grade:

There is no requirement to perform audits.

For Food Safety Internal Auditor grade:

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

For Food Safety Provisional Auditor grade:

There is no requirement to perform audits.

For Food Safety Auditor grade:

You need to have completed at least 5 acceptable audits.

For Food Safety 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 FSMS 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.

2. (part II)

Certification Categories & Requirements for Certification associated with Part II (b) based on requirements in ISO/TS 22003

Part II is specific to auditors carrying out third party (TPA) certification audits to ISO 22000.

The scope of the Part II certification includes the categories defined within ISO 22003 (see appendix I). We will evaluate your application and provide you with a certificate stating your competence against each of the requirements listed below;

• Education

- At least post secondary education that includes general microbiology and general chemistry
- Relevant knowledge corresponding to a post-secondary education that includes courses in the food chain industry category you are applying for;

(see Appendix 1 for courses related to each category).

• Work Experience

- A minimum of five years full-time work experience in the food-chain-related industry including at least two years working in quality assurance or food safety functions within food production, manufacturing, retailing, inspection or enforcement, or the equivalent

The number of years of total work experience may be reduced by one year if you have completed an acceptable degree relevant to food safety.

• Auditor Training

- An IRCA certified Food Safety Auditor/Lead Auditor course or acceptable alternative

• Auditing Experience

- For an initial certification to your first category you are required to submit a minimum of twelve FSMS audit days, six of which must have been completed on-site and under the direction and guidance of a lead auditor (or similarly qualified) competent to attest to your competence. The audits must have been conducted within 4 different organizations in the category you are applying for.

Once initial certification has been awarded for each additional category you wish to apply for you are required to demonstrate the following:

Auditor Training

- Relevant food-safety-related training in the new category³

Auditing Experience

- Four FSMS audits under the direction and guidance of a qualified auditor in the new category.

³ Because of the variety of courses available we do not prescribe completion of any specific course. We invite you to submit course details with an explanation of why you consider the course meets this requirement.

Part II(b)

Requirement for Certification in association with Part II

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

Our award of certification means we have recognized that you are able to meet the auditor competencies as referenced in ISO/TS 22003 (E), clause 7.2.4.6.2 pages 6 & 7.

Education

You need to have completed a minimum of post secondary education within general microbiology and general chemistry. If you have a degree or near-degree level qualification we will reduce the total requirement for work experience by one year. You are also required to be able to demonstrate knowledge corresponding to post secondary education in the category in which you are seeking certification (see Appendix 1 for courses related to each category).

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

Work Experience

You need a minimum of 5 years full-time work experience within the food-chain-related industry. 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 and customers.

Included within the five years must be at least 2 years of work within quality assurance or food safety functions within food production, manufacturing, retailing, inspection, enforcement or equivalent.

The number of years of total work experience may be reduced by one year if you have completed appropriate post-secondary education.

Periods of training cannot be included in this work experience requirement.

Auditor Training

You must have successfully completed an IRCA certified Food Safety Auditor/Lead Auditor course or acceptable alternative. Acceptable alternatives

include some food safety courses approved by other training approval bodies. Exceptionally, we will consider accepting training completed through other ways, but the onus will be on you to satisfy us that this training at least meets our requirements.

If you are already certified as an Auditor, Lead Auditor or Principal Auditor on one of our *generic* programmes, we will only require you to have successfully completed an IRCA certified Food Safety Auditor Conversion course and successfully completed a minimum one day training course that includes training in:

- HACCP principles, hazard assessment and hazard analysis, and
- Food safety management principles including relevant pre-requisite programmes (PRP's) of Codex Alimentarius.

You should normally have successfully completed auditor training within the 3 year period immediately prior to application for certification. We may accept training completed prior to this period if you provide evidence of recent, relevant work experience, and currency of your auditing skills.

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

Audit Experience

For initial certification to your first category you need to have performed a minimum of 12 FSMS audit days all under the direction and guidance of a lead auditor (or similarly qualified) competent to attest to your competence. The audits must have been conducted within 4 different organizations in the category you are applying for.

General Guidance on Acceptance of Auditing

What audits do we accept?

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

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 including the category you are auditing against and provide sufficient contact details so that we are able to perform the verification.

For Part II we will only accept **third party** audits that have been performed in accordance with the auditing guidance standard, ISO 19011:2002 and against ISO 22000:2005, ISO/TS 22003:2007(E) or an alternative standard we accept as being equivalent. Audits performed against alternative national, international or company standards may be acceptable.

Audits we do not accept:

We do not accept:

- internal, second party or consultancy audits
- audits of the same food safety management system that are repeated more frequently than once every 12 months
- audits of less than one day (6 hours of on-site audit activity exclusive of breaks) duration 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.
- surveillance audits submitted at the time of initial application.

Part II(b)

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 expired 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

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 II for guidance.)

Audit Experience

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

For each category you are certified to;

You need to have completed at least five external audits per year, including at least at least two FSMS audits,

or

A minimum of four FSMS on-site external audits per year

or

Ten FSMS audit days per year.

All audits must be performed against the category you are certified to.

Declaration of Complaints

We need you to tell us about any complaints made against your professional conduct. It is important 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 IV).

Payment of the Annual Fee

And finally, we need you to pay the annual fee (please note there is no additional fee for renewal with the exception of Japan). 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 and certificate stating the elements and categories you comply with as associated with the requirements in ISO/TS 22003.

3.

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 an 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 other languages we will need all correspondence in support of the application to be in 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 and 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 your application. But that time may vary depending on the time needed to verify the information you submit 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 IRCA 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 (and you) would like. Processing your application is likely to take longer if you have unusual education 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 or categories you are certified to. 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 your certification card. If you are certified to a category in part II, we will send you a certification card accompanied by a certificate stating whether you meet each of the requirements for certification

Example

Education requirement – Pass

Training requirement – Pass

Work Experience - Pass

Category A - Pass

4. 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 to your country.

Application Fee

We need you to pay 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

The 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.

Regrade Fee or Extension of Category

This fee covers the costs of evaluating your regrade or category extension. We need you to pay this fee when you submit your request and, as with the application fee, this fee is not refundable. If you are regraded/extended

during the year, we will not ask you to pay any further certification fees for that current year. You may request a regrade/extension at any stage during the certification period. There is fee if you regrade/extend your category 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.

5. 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.

Food Safety Standards other than ISO 22000:2005

We will accept audits performed against standards which we evaluate as being acceptable alternatives to ISO 22000. We have a procedure for evaluating standards other than ISO 22000 and you are advised to contact us for advice where you consider an alternative standard 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. For Part II certification you will receive a certificate stating your competencies.

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.

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 (i.e. suspend or withdraw) 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

Food Chain Categories

Category codes	Categories	Examples of sectors	Education Requirement (post-secondary courses including)
A	Farming 1 (Animals)	Animals; fish; egg production; milk production; beekeeping; fishing; hunting; trapping	Animal production
B	Farming 2 (Plants)	Fruits; vegetables; grain; spices; horticultural products	Crop production
C	Processing 1 (Perishable animal products) including all activities after farming e.g. slaughtering	Meat; poultry; eggs; dairy and fish products	Food processing, food microbiology, food chemistry including analysis
D	Processing 2 (Perishable vegetal products)	Fresh fruit and fresh juices; preserved fruits; fresh vegetables; preserved vegetables	Food processing, food microbiology, food chemistry including analysis
E	Processing 3 (Products with long shelf life at ambient temperature)	Canned products; biscuits; snacks; oil; drinking water; beverages; pasta; flour; sugar; salt	Food processing, food microbiology, food chemistry including analysis
F	Feed production	Animal feed; fish feed	Food processing, food microbiology, food chemistry including analysis and animal production
G	Catering	Hotels; restaurants	Food processing, food microbiology, food chemistry including analysis
H	Distribution	Retail outlets; shops; wholesalers	Food processing, food microbiology, food chemistry including analysis
I	Services	Water supply; cleaning; sewage; waste disposal; development of product; process and equipment; veterinary services	Food engineering or food science
J	Transport and services	Transport and storage	Food engineering or food science
K	Equipment manufacturing	Process equipment; vending machines	Food engineering or food science
L	(Bio)chemical manufacturing	Additives; vitamins; pesticides; drugs; fertilizers; cleaning agents; bio cultures	Food engineering or food science
M	Packaging material manufacturing	Packaging materials	Food engineering or food science

Appendix II

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

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 food safety. 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 food safety auditors:

1. Food safety related
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 the 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 (e.g. 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 1/3 (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 interests 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 unstructured CPD will be accepted for contribution to the IRCA Forum. Evidence must be documented and verified on IRCA/173 CPD logs.

Appendix III

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.

Audit Team

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

Generic

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

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 IV

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 authorised 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.