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1. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

The objective of this guideline is to define the procedures and principles for witness assessments through which the Halal Accreditation Agency (HAK) basically observes the halal conformity assessment and other related activities of the Halal Conformity Assessment Body (HCAB).

HAK's witness assessments, performed during HCAB's audits toward third parties requesting halal certification, cover the following topics:

- 1) Verification of effective and impartial implementation of HCAB's conformity assessment scheme(s) and procedures
- 2) Confirmation of HCAB's conformity assessment services toward third parties within the scope of HAK's accreditation in accordance with the relevant normative framework.
- 3) Observing and assessing the competence of the HCAB's auditors in the context of OIC/SMIIC Standards, conformity assessment procedures and rules defined in other relevant normative documents
- 4) Confirmation of the competence of the HCAB within the scope of HAK's accreditation

For the rules that form the basis of planning & subsequent decision-making processes for the HCABs certifying product/service/management system, see "Guideline on Witness Assessment Planning for Halal Conformity Assessment Bodies (AKR-Pr01-Rh-006)".

2. TERMS, DESCRIPTIONS AND DEFINITIONS

Announced Witness Assessment: Observation of conformity assessment carried out by the HCAB within its scope of accreditation in the premises of third party, with prior notice.

Assessor: Person assigned by HAK to perform, alone or as a part of an assessment team, an assessment of a HCAB


Audit: Systematic procedure performed by the HCAB to verify that the manufacturer/service provider requesting a halal conformity certificate acts in accordance with the relevant normative framework

Auditor: Competent person assigned by the HCAB to perform, alone or as part of a team, to conduct a certification audit to third parties.

Halal Accreditation Assessment: The process starting with the establishment of the assessment team, document review, pre-assessment if necessary, office visit, witness assessment and final reporting of the findings of these activities.

Halal Conformity Assessment Body (HCAB): An organization that performs halal conformity assessment activities according to the relevant normative framework

Lead Assessor: The assessor who is responsible for the whole functioning of halal accreditation assessment and for the entire HAK assessment team to which he/she is assigned.

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Office Visit: An assessment activity aiming to determine whether the management system and technical competence of the HCAB meet the requirements of both the international standards and the complementary criteria (e.g., national legislation, HAK Guidelines) as well as to test the sustainability of the management system, for the requested scope of halal accreditation

Project Coordinator: The technical staff working in HAK and assigned by Department of Halal Accreditation, who is responsible for any technical and administrative contact, coordination and secretariat procedures with the body accredited (or applied for halal accreditation) at every stage of the halal accreditation activities

Surveillance: A series of assessment activities to regularly monitor the accredited HCAB for continuous conformity with the accreditation requirements

Third Party: Produce, service provider or person certified by the HCAB

Unannounced Witness Assessment: Planning, organizing and observing the conformity assessment activities carried out by the HCAB within its scope of accreditation in the premises of third party, without prior notice

Witness Assessment: HAK's observation of halal conformity assessment activities carried out by the HCAB within the scope of accreditation in the premises of third party.

IMPLEMENTATION

2.1.General Rules

In principle, witness assessment is conducted in the fields/premises of the third party to which the HCAB provides conformity assessment services (e.g. certification). If the third party is a person, the field here refers to the examination place.

While witnessing the audit, HAK does not intervene to or direct in any way that may impact the audit of HCAB.


Two possible options are available to conduct witness assessment; announced -with prior notification to HCAB-, and unannounced -without prior notification to HCAB.

Announced witness assessment is conducted pursuant to the rules described in this guideline for each requested/accredited scope/scheme in initial, scope extension and renewal assessments, as well as surveillance.

Unannounced witness assessment, which means observing the audit/exam chosen by HAK without joint planning with the HCAB, can in principle be performed for all other assessment processes except initial accreditation assessment.

When deciding which audits of HCAB shall be witnessed, HAK considers the following issues:

- a) Process complexity that may affect the ability of the management system of halal certified third parties to meet the targeted results

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- b) Legislations applicable to halal certified third party
- c) Audit/exam methods applicable to halal certified third party (e.g., combined, integrated, multisite etc.)
- d) Complaints and feedbacks of interested parties and regulators about the halal certified third party
- e) Complaints and feedbacks about the HCAB
- f) Outputs from the HCAB's internal audits/management review
- g) Changes in HCAB's business process, scope and scale of its activities (e.g., extension of field of activities, premises, recruitment etc.)
- h) Number of third parties HCAB certified in each accredited scope
- i) Results of previously conducted office visits, witness assessments and follow-up assessments
- j) Number of documents issued by HCAB within the scope of accreditation
- k) Number and qualifications of the HCAB's auditors/examiners (including internal and external staff)
- l) Countries, regions, and cities where HCAB conducts the audits/exams to its third parties
- m) HCAB's experience from other accreditations
- n) HAK's previous evaluations on the competence of HCAB to manage its operations

Detailed rules by which certification exams will be witnessed for personnel certification bodies demanding halal accreditation against OIC/SMIIC 34:2020 Standard are specified in the "Guideline on Halal Accreditation of Personnel Certification Bodies (AKR-Rh-006)".


In the same halal accreditation cycle, a second witness assessment is not conducted to a third party that had previously been witnessed, unless deemed necessary. However, HAK is authorized to take the final decision on this issue¹.

In principle, it is necessary not to witness to the activities of an audit team members/examines who were previously observed in the same scope/category. However, HAK is authorized to take the final decision for exceptions, when necessary.

HAK provides the witness assessment details in its assessment schedules and plans for each halal accreditation cycle of the HCAB. During a routine halal accreditation cycle, witness assessments are performed yearly at least one (1) announced witness assessment and unannounced witness assessment when necessary. The circumstances which may pose exceptions to this rule are summarized below.

Witness assessment may not be conducted in cases of disasters of at a level such as severe accident, epidemic disease, fire, earthquake and flood that prevent the organization of HCAB's witness assessment or in cases of force majeure beyond the control/will of the HCAB. This situation is only valid for surveillance of accredited HCABs. On the other hand, witness

¹ An exception may be possible when the standard, audit team and/or product group are different. Thus, a second witness assessment may be performed. Likewise, another exception can be possible for a HCAB (demanding accreditation/accredited) with a very limited number of third parties.

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assessment, including initial halal accreditation assessment, can be performed by remote methods under the above-mentioned conditions. However, after the force majeure situation is disappeared, HAK is authorized to carry out on-site witness assessments during the consequent surveillance activities to compensate the witness assessments that did not take place or conducted remotely.

HAK Assessment Team can have access to documents and records of the audited third party via HCAB's auditors, if deemed necessary.

In principle, halal product/service/management system certifiers must be able to organize at least one (1) stage-1 audit for witnessing² in initial accreditation assessment. The decision regarding the sub-scope for which the stage-1 audit is selected shall be made by the Project Coordinator and the Lead Assessor, taking into account the assessment plan of the HCAB. It is up to HAK Assessment Team to decide that HCAB does/does not need to perform stage-1 assessment for *all subcategories* halal accreditation is requested for.

HAK is authorized to make the decision on whether to select a stage-1 audit for witnessing in halal accreditation renewal assessment or not.

2.2.Responsibilities of HCABs

HCABs, to be accredited for the first time, must submit the list of planned and confirmed audits/exams for the following four (4) months (date, type and scope of audit, sites, members of audit team etc.) together with the personnel list including their title and the process to be responsible for etc. to HAK during the "Document Control and Review" stage.


Halal accreditation applications of those who fail to convey the list of audits/exam list before initial accreditation assessment shall be rejected since a witness assessment cannot be conducted.

HAK Project Coordinator and the Lead Assessor select the audits/exam list to be witnessed from the list in collaboration with the HCAB, taking heed of the risks associated.

HCABs already accredited by HAK must submit the list of planned and confirmed audits/exam list and updated personnel list to the HAK within a minimum of four (4) months during renewal and extension applications.

Had it been demanded prior to the surveillance planning, accredited HCABs must submit the list of planned and confirmed audits/exam list of the following one (1) month together with current personnel list to HAK.

² It is required that the Stage-1 and Stage-2 of initial certification audit to be witnessed should be performed toward the same third party. In cases where this is not possible with a reasonable justification, it may be accepted to be performed toward different third parties.

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Since assessments for renewal and scope extension cannot be conducted to HCABs who fail to submit their list of audits/exams, actions such as suspension or rejection of scope extension may be taken by HAK.

HCAB shall fully submit the following documents and records of producer/service provider that will be audited, to the Project Coordinator at least one (1) week prior to assessment. HAK may request translation from HCAB if these documents are in a language other than Turkish or English.

- Manual of the third party (quality, environment, information security and/or other management system, if available),
- Main procedures related to the third party's management system,
- Current audit plan and (if available) previous audit reports of the third party,
- Records demonstrating the competence of HCAB's audit team,
- Records regarding the calculation of audit time and other documents and records deemed necessary.

Prior to the opening meeting of the audit/start of the exam, HAK Assessment Team and HCAB audit team/examiners can hold a short meeting to confirm the scope of the witness assessment.

2.3.Responsibilities & Rights of HAK Assessment Team


At the opening meeting of the witness assessment, HAK Assessment Team shares with the representatives of the third party before the assessment/exam begins:

- For what authority and for what purpose the team is involved in the audit/exam.
- The presence of the HAK shall not affect the HCAB's audit/exam process and outputs in any way possible.

At least two (2) members of HAK Assessment Team, provided that one of them is an Islamic Affairs Expert, participate in the audit of the HCAB to see the whole process from the opening meeting to the closing meeting, including the evaluation of the production lines by the audit team. During the monitoring of this entire process, if it is deemed appropriate, HAK Assessment Team can share the tasks. It is mandatory that the producer/service provider is audited on the days and times when it is actively working or when the routine workflow continues, within the scope of halal certification (See OIC/SMIIC 2:2019 Article 9.1.2).

Similarly, regardless of the type (written, written and oral, oral, performance-based, computer-based, etc.) of the exam to be carried out by a personnel certification body, it is essential to monitor the exam in its entirety. If deemed appropriate during the monitoring of these processes, the HAK Assessment Team may decide on a division of labor.

Likewise, where there are particular issues HAK Assessment Team demands to observe, they shall be communicated to the audit team/examiners before the onset of the audit/exam and thus necessary arrangements shall be made by the HCAB.

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In general, witness assessments are planned to enable one (1) HAK assessor to observe a three-person (3) audit team/examiner group (including HCAB's technical expert) at most. However, if the number of the people in the audit team/examiner group increases, HAK can increase the number of its assessors. The number of the HAK assessors per witness assessment may vary depending to the clauses (a)-(n) defined in 3.1.

HAK Assessment Team does not comment on the quality, environment, food and/or other management systems of the third party. Similarly, HAK Assessment Team does not make any comments regarding the performance of, or the answers given by the person whose examination is being witnessed. However, HAK Assessment Team can exchange information and ask questions about the audit/exam during the breaks or in meetings with the HCAB provided that it does not impair the integrity of the audit/exam.

HAK Assessment Team has the right to acquire the audit report and exam outcomes and review it without modification/intervention, only when an issue arises about the scope and the objective of the witness assessment.

When HAK Assessment Team determines a major non-conformity about the HCABs during their halal conformity assessment activities, HAK can decide to perform a new witness assessment depending on the non-conformity found.

If the nature of the non-conformity is related to:


- Technical field in which the audit/exam took place: then a witness assessment can be performed in the same scope.
- Competency of the HCAB's audit/exam team: then an audit/exam can be re-performed in order to observe the same team. In this case, the content of the sub-category and related international standard *-as to be same as the failed witness assessment or not-* depends on whether the relevant competency is personal or professional.

When deemed necessary, HAK can interview with the witnessed audit team/examiners as well, in order to evaluate the competency of the HCAB in specific scope.

If the HCAB has envisaged a follow-up audit toward a producer/service provider as a result of the witnessed audit, HAK may also participate in that audit. The Lead Assessor makes the decision for that matter.

During the witness assessment, HAK Assessment Team is expected to examine the following issues and to convey their observations and evaluations to the "Witness Assessment Report (AKR-Pr01-Ra-003 and AKR-Pr01-Ra-008)" including the following minimum elements:

- Competence of the personnel involved in the audit/exam witnessed (compliance with the competency criteria articulated in the HAK application document AKR-KL-001 and the relevant OIC/SMIIC Standard)
- Whether all the necessary information and documents have been provided by the HCAB to the personnel involved in the audit/exam

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- Whether or not the personnel involved in the audit/exam apply the procedures completely and correctly as defined in the HCAB's scheme and the relevant OIC/SMIIC Standard (For example, whether the personal practices that go beyond the HCAB's procedure have been performed)
- Whether all observations and nonconformities during the audit/exam have been recorded with correct references to HCAB's scheme and the relevant OIC/SMIIC Standards
- Whether the audit report(s)/exams records comply with the requirements of the HACB, the relevant OIC/SMIIC Standards and the relevant legal requirements- if available
- If available, whether the outsourcing observed during the audit/exam (such as taking samples) is appropriate.

It is essential that the Witness Assessments Reports are written as:


- focusing on the essence,
- comprehensible,
- without ambiguity,
- with findings that will allow to measure the competence of the HCAB rather than of the third party.

Following the closing meeting of the audit/exam, HAK Assessment Team conveys their opinions to witnessed HCAB audit team members, *if possible*. When it is not possible, recorded findings (e.g., non-conformities, observations etc.) of the witness assessment shall be explained in the closing meeting of HAK's office visit. When the witness assessments are finalized after the office visit, HCAB shall be informed of the non-conformities recorded in those witness assessments via HAK's Accreditation Assessment Report.

For the fact that HAK should monitor different lead auditors, auditors, examiners, and technical experts in the HCAB's pool as much as possible throughout the accreditation cycle, HCABs are expected to make appropriate assignments in their audits/exams. When deemed necessary, HAK Assessment Team can request the replacement of an audit team member/examiners who had been previously witnessed either in one another HCABs witness assessment or in same HCAB's witness assessments for multiple subcategories.

HAK can assign its own personnel as an observer in its witness assessment as well.

In the initial accreditation assessment, it is mandatory for the HCAB to arrange at least one witness assessment for each sub-category it seeks halal accreditation (*as specified in the OIC/SMIIC 2:2019 Standard for product, service, and management system certifiers, and in the scheme details of the personnel certification bodies for the certification of persons*). The type of these audits (*stage-1 or stage-2*) to be witnessed the type of the exams (written, written and oral, oral, performance-based with direct observation, computer-based) in the initial assessment is determined by HAK Assessment Team according to the principles listed in this guideline. **It may be necessary to witness more than one examination under the same sub-**

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category. This situation depends on whether there are halal criteria that differ both at the technical and Islamic level in the relevant subcategory. At this point, product, service and management system certifiers should thoroughly review the "Guideline on Witness Assessment Planning for Halal Conformity Assessment Bodies (AKR-Pr01-Rh-006)".

After the halal accreditation decision is made, it is essential to witness the certification capability for all sub-categories in which the HCAB is accredited, if not for all in every surveillance but separately throughout the cycle. An illustrative example for the product/service/management system certifiers is available below:

Example: Witness Assessment Planning for Accredited Halal Certification Scope

	Accredited Scope			
	Farming of Grains and Pulses	Processing of ambient stable products	Processing of perishable plant products	Cosmetics
Initial Accreditation Assessment	X	X	X	X
First Surveillance	X			
Second Surveillance			X	
Third Surveillance				X
Fourth Surveillance		X		
Renewal	X	X	X	X

Note: For product/service/management system certifiers, surveillance planning shall be made by sub-categories defined in OIC/SMIIC 2:2019 throughout the cycle. It is essential that the "sub-categories" for which the HCAB is accredited are observed in a balanced manner, with at least one in each surveillance to be carried out throughout the cycle.

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Page #	Renewal #	Revision:
All	01	The term 'client organization' is changed to 'third party'.
03	01	Exceptions to the rule of performing witness assessments with/without notification for each year during the halal accreditation cycle are defined.
04	01	During the witness assessment, details regarding the obligation of HCABs to organize stage-1 audit are defined.
04	01	The rule regarding the time interval of the planned and confirmed audit list to be submitted is changed as 4 months.
04	01	A rule is defined that <i>translation</i> can be requested if the documents to be submitted to the HAK Assessment Team by the HCAB are in a language other than Turkish or English.
05	01	For the witness assessments of the HAK, particular elements to be observed are detailed.
06	01	The minimum elements to be included in the Witness Assessment Report to be prepared by the HAK Assessment Team are defined.
07	01	Implementation details regarding witnessing more than one audit under the same sub-category are defined.
07	01	An illustrative table is added, and the schematic display in the previous version has been removed.
All	02	References are made to the implementation guideline on planning witness assessments.
01	02	An inclusive definition is introduced so as to cover product, service, and personnel certification under the activity of 'halal conformity assessment'.
01	02	The scope of witness assessments is revised.
02	02	Definition of 'audit' is added.
06, 08	02	Under clause 3.3., binding rules for HCABs are defined that HAK Assessment Team shall observe the entire audit/exam.
07	02	Under clause 3.3., a rule for HAK's right to participate the follow-up audits of HCABs is defined.
07	02	Under clause 3.3., rules for the content of HAK's witness assessment reports are defined.
08	02	The table is revised and the rule for monitoring the accredited "sub-categories" during the cycle is simplified.