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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 ‘certification’ and other related activities of the Halal Conformity Assessment Body (HCAB) within the scope of its halal accreditation.

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

- Verification of effective and impartial implementation of HCAB’s conformity assessment program(s) and procedures
- Confirmation of HCAB’s conformity assessment services toward third parties within the scope of HAK’s accreditation
- 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 documents
- Confirmation of the competence of the HCAB within the scope of HAK’s accreditation

2. TERMS, DESCRIPTIONS AND DEFINITIONS

Accreditation Assessment: Determination of whether the activities, systems, and personnel of a HCAB comply with national and internationally accepted technical criteria, standards and related legislation.

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


Announced Witness Assessment: Observation of conformity assessment activities carried out by HCAB within its scope of accreditation in the field of HCAB’s client organization by HAK with prior notice to HCAB.

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

Halal Conformity Assessment Body (HCAB): Body that performs halal conformity assessment activities according to the national and internationally accepted technical criteria

Office Visit: An assessment activity aiming to determine whether the management system of the HCAB meets the requirements of both the international standards as a basis for accreditation (e.g., OIC/SMIIC Standards) and the complementary criteria (e.g., national legislation, HAK Guidelines) within the requested scope of accreditation

Project Coordinator: The technical staff working in HAK and assigned by HADB, 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.

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Surveillance: A series of assessment activities including monitoring of the accredited HCAB to see if it continues to meet the accreditation requirements.

Team Leader: Assessor who is given overall responsibility for assigned halal accreditation assessment activities and assessment team.

Third Party: Client firm (organization) certified by HCAB.

Unannounced Witness Assessment: Observation of conformity assessment activities carried out by HCAB within its scope of accreditation in the field of HCAB's client organization by HAK without prior notice to HCAB.

Witness Assessment: Observation of conformity assessment activities carried out by HCAB within its scope of accreditation in the field of HCAB's client organization by HAK

3. IMPLEMENTATION

3.1. General Rules

Witness assessment is conducted in the fields/premises of the third party to which the HCAB provides conformity assessment services.

In principle, HAK does not intervene or recommend to HCAB's audit team while witnessing to the audit.

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 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 is based on witnessing the certification audits toward third parties to be chosen by HAK, without joint planning with HCAB. This type of witness assessment can be performed for all assessment process except initial accreditation.

HAK provides the witness assessment details in its assessment schedules and plans for each halal accreditation cycle of the HCAB. In general, during a routine halal accreditation cycle, witness assessments are performed as follows:

- Yearly, at least one (1) announced witness assessment,
- Biyearly, at least one (1) unannounced witness assessment,

While selecting the audits to be witnessed, HAK considers the following:

- a) Complexity of the processes which have prospective effects on the halal certified third party's management system to meet the targets
- b) Legislations applicable to halal certified third party
- c) Audit methods applicable to halal certified third party (e.g., combined, integrated, multisite etc.)

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- 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
- 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 and qualifications of the HCAB's auditors (including internal and external staff)
- k) Countries, regions, and cities where HCAB conducts the audits to its third parties
- l) HCAB's experience from other accreditations
- m) HAK's previous evaluations on the competence of HCAB to manage its operations

In the same cycle, a second witness assessment is not conducted to a third party that previously had another witness assessment, 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 who were observed in same scope/category previously. However, HAK is authorized to take the final decision for exceptions, when necessary.

HAK assessment team can have access to documents and records of the audited third party via HCAB's audit team, if deemed necessary.

3.2.Responsibilities of HCABs


HCABs, to be accredited for the first time, must submit the list of planned and confirmed audits for the following one (1) month (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 before initial accreditation assessment shall be rejected since a witness assessment cannot be conducted.

After the submission of the list, HAK Project Coordinator and the Team Leader select the audits to be witnessed from the list, in collaboration with the HCAB.

Prior to the assessments for their renewal and scope extension applications, accredited HCABs submit the list of planned and confirmed audits of the following one (1) month together with up to date personnel list to HAK. Same rule applies for the surveillances.

¹ An exception may be possible when the standard and the audit team of the management system to be witnessed are different. Thus, a second witness assessment may be performed. Likewise, another exception can be possible for a HCAB (requesting accreditation/accredited) with a very limited number of 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, actions (such as suspension or rejection of scope extension) may be taken by HAK.

HCAB shall fully submit the following documents and records to the Project Coordinator at least one (1) week prior to assessment:

- Manual of the third party (For quality, environment, information security and/or other management system, if available)
- Main procedures related to the third party's management system
- Previous audit reports of the third party (if available)
- Records of internal audits and management review meetings of the third party (if available)
- Supportive documents/records for the competency of the HCAB's audit team to audit the third party
- Records on the HCAB's calculation of the audit time (length) and other necessary documents

Prior to the opening meeting of the audit, HAK assessment team and HCAB audit team shall hold a short meeting to confirm the scope of the witness assessment.

3.3.Responsibilities & Rights of HAK Assessment Team


HAK assessment team informs the representative of the third party about the authority and objective for their presence and ensures the representative that their presence shall not affect the process and the outputs of the audit in any way possible.

HAK assessment team participates to the HCAB's audit to observe the whole process (from opening meeting to closing meeting).

When there are specific issues that HAK assessment team request to witness, HCAB's lead auditor informs the representative of the third party about them before the audit begins.

In general, witness assessments are planned to enable one (1) HAK assessor to observe a three-person (3) audit team (including HCAB's technical expert) at most. However, if the number of the people in audit team 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, information security and/or other management systems of the third party. However, HAK assessment team can exchange information and ask questions about the witnessed audit during the audit breaks or in meetings with the HCAB.

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HAK assessment team can acquire the audit report of HCAB 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 HCAB during the witness assessment, HAK can decide to perform a new witness assessment depending on the aspect of the determined non-conformity.

If the aspect of the determined non-conformity is related to

- Technical field: then a witness assessment can be performed in the same sectoral scope regardless of the management system
- Competency of the HCAB to perform audits: then a witness assessment can be performed for the same management system regardless of the sectoral scope
- Competency of the HCAB's audit team; then a witness assessment can be performed to observe the same team. In this case, decision related to the observation of management system and the sectoral scope depends on whether the relevant competency is personal or professional.

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

Following the closing meeting of the audit, HAK assessors convey 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, 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.

When deemed necessary, HAK assessment team can request the replacement of an audit team member who had been previously witnessed (*i.e. a person participated as an audit team member 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 such cases, travel, and accommodation expenses of HAK observers must be covered by the HCAB.


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TABLE: TYPES & SCOPE OF WITNESS ASSESSMENTS

<i>TYPE OF WITNESS ASSESSMENT</i>	<i>APPLICABLE FOR</i>
Announced	Initial Accreditation Process
	Surveillance
	Scope Extension Process
	Renewal Process
Unannounced	Renewal Process
	Surveillance
	Scope Extension Process