

## AC 12.0 Suspension, Reinstatement, Reduction, Withdrawal & Expiry of Accreditation

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### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to provide guidelines and criteria to decide in which circumstances the accreditation of a conformity assessment body (CAB) shall be suspended, reinstated, withdrawn or reduced when an accredited CAB fails to meet the requirements of accreditation or to abide by the rules for accreditation or has voluntarily requested a suspension, reduction or withdrawal.

When an accreditation is suspended or reduced or withdrawn, the organisation can no longer provide accredited services in relation to the affected scopes and must inform its existing and prospective customers of this status.

Existing issued certificates and reports will remain unaffected as they were issued before the suspension or withdrawal of accreditation, unless it transpires that they were issued incorrectly. In such cases it is the responsibility of the CAB to inform the affected clients to withdraw the certificate or report.

Where a certificate requires routine visits to be maintained (e.g. ISO 9001 certification may require annual audit the CAB needs to make sure that the certificates issued under the accreditation are kept in conformity).

### 2. Scope

These below procedures apply to the accreditation suspension, reduction, accreditation withdrawal and reinstatement of accreditation.

GAC will publish on its website the status of every accreditation, including whether a particular accreditation has been withdrawn or suspended, either in full or in part. In the event that accreditation is reinstated, similar information will be published in the same media or status is updated to as “active”.

### 3. Responsibilities

A CAB is required to advise GAC of any event or situation that causes it to cease, in whole or in part, to comply with the GAC requirements for accreditation.

The Accreditation Decision Manager (ADM) is responsible for the decision to suspend or withdraw accreditation, reduce and reinstatement of accreditation. The CAB has the right of appeal as outlined in AC 14.0 procedure.

### 4. Procedures

#### 4.1 Suspension of Accreditation

Suspension of accreditation is usually a temporary measure from which the CAB is expected to regain accreditation within a short period usually within 6-months as per GAC’s decision, CAB’s failure to reinstate its accreditation within the stipulated time-line shall lead to withdrawal of accreditation.

It is on discretion of ASM or GAC’s Director General only to allow any extra time where customer requests for and willing to revive its accreditation or when the time is needed as the corrective actions were in process following the reinstatement assessment.

The suspension may apply to only part of the scope of the CAB or specific location or it may apply to the full scope case by case.

Following the decision to suspend accreditation, GAC advises the CAB to this effect as soon as possible stating to the reason(s) for suspension and proposed timeline within which corrective action is to be taken.

Accreditation will be restored when GAC is satisfied that all necessary corrective actions have been taken and the CAB is now in compliance with requirements.

**Note:** In case the duration of suspension exceeds renewal timeline GAC may suspend accreditation for that remaining period or can determine to withdraw CAB’s accreditation or GAC can also decide to extend the validity of accreditation.

## AC 12.0 Suspension, Reinstatement, Reduction, Withdrawal & Expiry of Accreditation

---

### 4.1.1 Voluntary Suspension of Accreditation

The accredited CAB can themselves request for voluntary suspension of their accreditation due to whatsoever reason however informing GAC about it, examples of such situations are loss of key personnel, damage to essential equipment, serious damage to CAB facilities or relocation, temporary inability to meet the requirements of the standard. The period requested for voluntary suspension of accreditation is normally be up to 6-months, if no progress made by the CAB on for reinstatement of accreditation then GAC can decided to proceed for withdrawal of accreditation.

It is also on discretion of ASM or GAC's Director General only to allow any extra time on suspension period following the seriousness from CAB or the matter that is genuine to be considered.

### 4.1.2 Forced Suspension of Accreditation

GAC enforces the suspension of accreditation as a result that the CAB is not conforming to accreditation requirements or failure to abide by the rules of accreditation, the CAB's non-compliance with the requirements of the accreditation can be determined during the assessment or even without an assessment e.g. random reviews, complaints, source information – which shall be verified prior to enforcement of suspension.

It's not that every non-conformity detected would lead to suspension of accreditation, the assessment team can determine their recommendation on suspension following the impact of the non-conforming activity and time required to address the problem, when the team leader adjudges that the rapid resolution of the problem is unlikely it can recommend to the Accreditation Decision Manager that the CAB's accreditation be suspended in whole or in part.

GAC may also enforce suspension of an accreditation when a CAB fails to close out the non-conformities within the stipulated timeframe.

GAC can also enforce suspension of accreditation in case of CAB's failure to undertake the due regular assessment or a non-regular assessment that has been decided on GAC's discretion. (a non-regular assessment e.g. follow-up visit, additional surveillance, special assessment, could be decided as a result of complaint or accreditation decision).

Accreditation of a CAB can also be suspended in case of relocation of the CAB's premises where the scope activities are affected.

GAC can also suspend an accreditation of the CAB for any outstanding financial dues & fees, breach of accreditation agreement, misuse of accreditation symbol, continued rejection of nominated assessment team.

GAC shall suspend the accreditation of any CAB if found to be providing certification services to any standard used by GAC as a basis for accrediting organizations (e.g. ISO/IEC 17025, 17020, 17065, 17043, ISO 15189) when those services may affect the impartiality of either party.

(NOTE: It is recognized that an organization may have to evaluate subcontractors/external resources to confirm that they meet the organization's requirements, which may include accreditation standards such as ISO/IEC 17025. If any documentation of such work is issued to subcontractors/external resources as a result of a successful evaluation/assessment or audit, it shall clearly state that this is not certification or accreditation in accordance with ISO/IEC 17011).

## 4.2 Reinstatement of Accreditation (Lifting of Suspension)

A reinstatement of accreditation occurs before the end of the timeline of suspension, for reinstatement of accreditation GAC can, but not limited to, conduct below options:

## AC 12.0 Suspension, Reinstatement, Reduction, Withdrawal & Expiry of Accreditation

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### - **Special assessment (Reinstatement assessment)**

An onsite assessment (possibility of remote assessment) to determine the compliance of the CAB with the accreditation requirements related to reason(s) against which the accreditation was suspended, this may include witnessing of affected scope activities. The procedure AC 11.0 (assessment techniques) shall be followed with due stipulations given therein.

In some cases, such assessment can be limited only to gathering of evidence or verification of information to be reported back to GAC. e.g. to verify information, review of the new premises (relocation of CAB) where witnessing or re-witnessing is not explicitly required.

If this is a partial assessment not all the deliverables are required as per regular assessment.

At times it is possible that the next due assessment can be brought forward (e.g. surveillance and reinstatement assessment) and conducted covering the reinstatement requirements as this could save time, cost and be financially beneficial for the CAB without compromising the integrity of the GAC's accreditation process and impartiality.

### - **Document review or Review of corrective action evidences**

At times depending on nature of reason against which the accreditation is suspended it may not be necessary to conduct an assessment but can be reinstated based on documentation review and review of evidences of the corrective actions.

Decision on reinstatement of accreditation follows the procedure AC 10.0.

## 4.3 **Withdrawal or Reduction of Accreditation**

The accreditation of a CAB may be withdrawn or reduce for a number of reasons; the CAB itself may decide that accreditation is no longer required (voluntary withdrawal) or GAC may judge that the CAB no longer satisfies all or part of its requirements or no longer abides by the rules of accreditation (forced withdrawal). In either case, GAC must ensure that appropriate steps are taken to suitably identify the new status of the CAB in its public directory. Following the decision of withdrawal of accreditation, GAC advises the CAB to this effect as soon as possible stating the reason(s) for withdrawal or reduction.

### 4.3.1 **Voluntary Withdrawal or Reduction of Accreditation**

A CAB may request to withdraw or reduce its accreditation with GAC at any time however the CAB is required to inform GAC about their intent to withdraw or reduce accreditation at least 3 months before the next due assessment, failure to do so, the CAB will need to pay the cost incurred by GAC in relation to initiation of assessment preparations (such as flights, accommodation, contracts with experts, logistical preparations, time spend on assessment preparations etc.)

Some of the reasons for voluntary withdrawal or reduction can be for example due to loss of key personnel, damage to essential equipment, serious damage to CAB facilities or relocation, inability to meet the requirements of the accreditation etc.

### 4.3.2 **Forced Withdrawal or Reduction of Accreditation**

GAC forces the withdrawal or reduction of accreditation as a result of that the CAB is not conforming to accreditation requirements or is not abiding by the rules of accreditation or for the reasons as stated in section 4.1.2 above and when the assessment team or GAC office determines that the CAB is not able to resolve the problem within stipulated time-line.

## AC 12.0 Suspension, Reinstatement, Reduction, Withdrawal & Expiry of Accreditation

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In addition to withdrawal or reduction of accreditation GAC may take legal action(s) against the CAB for example in case of misuse of accreditation symbol or non-payment of the fee.

Accreditation can also be withdrawn or reduced if the suspended CAB fails to address the issues which resulted in suspension of its accreditation adequately or in a timely manner.

Where there is proven evidence of fraudulent behaviour, or when the CAB intentionally provides false information or conceals information, or if its deliberately violates accreditation rules GAC will initiate its process for withdrawal of accreditation as stated above.

### 4.4 Expiration of Accreditation

The expiry date is the end of the current cycle date in case the accreditation is not renewed, expiry dates are tracked in the AC 1.1 schedule of assessment document for each scheme.

Even though GAC no longer provides the expiration date in the accreditation certificates (except for halal accreditation certificates or as decided based on risk or reasons or requirements),

Accreditation will automatically expire if the following conditions are met:

- The CAB requested not to renew its accreditation,
- The period between the last assessment and the end of cycle is less than two years

**Example:** if the last assessment (e.g., surveillance) was conducted at 12th month from the date of accreditation and renewal assessment not undertaken within the following 24 months, then 36-months are left in the 4-years cycle and accreditation will be forced withdrawn and will not be let to expire as the CAB will then be accredited for 4-years and not assessed for more than 2-years as required by ISO/IEC 17011.

And for example, if the last surveillance assessment was conducted 14 months before the end of the cycle and CAB doesn't want to renew its accreditation the accreditation will automatically expire at the end of the 4-year cycle.

If the renewal assessment was not undertaken due to valid reasons GAC can extend the validity of the accreditation cycle but not exceeding the 5-years limit.

## 5. Communication to IAF

In case of situation mentioned under 4.1.2 (last para) where suspension of accreditation is enforced when a CAB (*normally those Conformity Assessment Bodies covered by IAF MLA*) is found to be providing certification services against the accreditation standards used by GAC and in case of a situation mentioned under 4.3.2 (last para) where withdrawal of accreditation is enforced when there's a proven evidence against the CAB for its fraudulent behaviour, or when the CAB intentionally provides false information or conceals information, or if its deliberately violates accreditation rules, for both these situations GAC shall inform IAF once the appeal timeline is over or in case of appeal when the appeal decision is made, the information to IAF shall include GAC's decision & the reasons.

## 6. Associated forms and documents

- AC 10.0 Accreditation Decision
- AC 10.3 Notification for accreditation withdrawal, suspension, decline.
- AC 10.2 Notification letter for accreditation (covers reinstatement/reduction of accreditation)
- AC 11.0 Assessment techniques
- AC 14.0 Procedure on Appeals
- IAF MD-7 Harmonization of Sanctions to be applied to Conformity Assessment Bodies