



COOPERATION WITH BELAC ASSESSORS AND EXPERTS: REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURE FOR QUALIFICATION, RIGHTS AND DUTIES

Whenever it is relevant to a particular conformity assessment activity, the general principles described in this procedure are supplemented with specific provisions in a document from the series BELAC 2-405.

The only valid versions of the documents of the BELAC management system are those available from the website (www.belac.be).

English translation for information only.

French and Dutch version remain the authoritative documents.

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HISTORY OF THE DOCUMENT

Revision/ Date of approval	Reason for the revision	Scope of the revision
0 CC 05.06.2003	Replaces documents OBE A022, BELTEST P06 and P07, BELCERT BCT-P08, P17 and P22	Full revision following merger of documents but without significant amendment of basic principles
1 Secr 31.01.2004	Update of format and lay-out	Full document
2 CC 18.05.2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Revision following implementation of the BELAC R.D <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Update of layout o Responsibilities for the management of assessors and experts - Reference to experience gained as expert - Concept of qualification of experts 	Full revision Point 4.3 Point 5.3.1 Point 5.5
3 CC 14.05.2009	Full revision including significant amendments with respect to the following issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organisation of the training on the basis of modules - Possibility to limit the training based on the professional experience - Introduction of the concept of junior assessor - Revision of mechanisms and provisions for refreshing training - Clarification of confidentiality obligations 	Full document Points 5.3.1, 5.3.2 Point 5.3.1.1 Point 5.5 Point 5.6.1 Points 6.1.1, 6.2.2
4 Secretariat 07.02.2011	Full revision without significant amendments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Replacement of 'certification schemes' by 'conformity assessment schemes' - Experience QMS - Deletion of the quiz - Evaluation period becomes 3 years instead of 2 years 	Point 5.2.1.1 Point 5.2.2.3 Point 5.6.1 Point 5.6.2

<p>5 CC 12.05.2011</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Update of the responsibilities with respect to qualification of assessors and experts. - Revision of the competence criteria - Organisation of the theoretical training - Specific training for the lead assessors - Suppression of the obligation for assessors to accept appointments for assessments except with due motivation - Formal acceptance of an assessment task 	<p>Point 4.2</p> <p>Points 5.2.1, 5.2.2</p> <p>Point 5.3.1.1</p> <p>Point 5.3.1.2</p> <p>Point 6.4</p> <p>Points 7.3.2, 7.4</p>
<p>6 Secretariat 30.01.2012</p>	<p>Competence criteria for assessors and experts for the accreditation of EMAS environmental verifiers</p>	<p>Point 5.2.2.4</p>
<p>7 Secretariat 29.10.2012</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reference to the existence of the documents of the series BELAC 2-405 in case of specific accreditation requirements for a specific conformity assessment activity - Extension of the scope of the document to the accreditation of validation and verification bodies 	<p>Cover page</p> <p>Point 5.2.2.2</p>
<p>8 CC 22.01.2015</p> <p>Secretariat 11.03.2015</p>	<p>Full editorial revision with the following significant amendments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Priority recourse to assessors instead of experts - The requirement for 4 years of full time professional experience for assessors is cancelled - More detailed description of the situations where the theoretical training for assessor may not be required - attendance certificates - Evaluation after the theoretical part of the training - More detailed description of the functions monitoring of assessors and supervision of experts - Circulation of the information related to consultancy activities of assessors - Obligations of assessors: consideration of information provided and update of documents, attendance in training sessions - Competence criteria for the function of supervisor and of monitoring of experts - Editorial amendments 	<p>Full document</p> <p>Point 4.1</p> <p>Point 5.2.1.1</p> <p>Point 5.3.1.1</p> <p>Points 5.3.1.2, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6.2, 5.7</p> <p>Points 6.1.1 and 6.2.1</p> <p>Point 6.4</p> <p>Points 5.1.3 and 5.1.4</p> <p>Points 5.3.1.1, 5.3.1.2, 5.6, 5.7, 6.5, 7.2</p>

9 CC 03.05.2016	Assessors and experts are not allowed to consult with bodies that they have assessed at least for 2 years after the assessment.	Point 6.1.1
10 CC 20.04.2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Documentation of the competence criteria applicable to assessors/experts for the accreditation of Proficiency testing Providers and Reference Materials Producers - New provisions with respect to the code of professional conduct of assessors and experts 	<p>Point 5.2.2.1</p> <p>Point 6.1</p>
11 CC 20.10.2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction of the possibility for technical assessors to perform the evaluation of the management system. - Training as an assessor - Clarification conflict of interest 	<p>Points 4.1 and 5.2.1.3</p> <p>Point 5.3</p> <p>Point 6.2.2</p>
12 CC 10.01.2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adaptation of the competence criteria for assessors and experts for the accreditation for validation and verification bodies - Adaptation of the competence criteria for assessors and experts for the accreditation of management systems 	<p>Point 5.2.2.2 and 5.2.2.6</p> <p>Point 5.2.2.3</p>
13 Secretariaat 29.03.2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better description of the requirements with regard to competence, education and professional experience of technical assessors and experts in laboratories, PTPs and RMPs - Actualisation of references - Lay-out optimisation 	<p>Punt 5.2.2.1</p> <p>Point 5.2.2.6</p> <p>Full document</p>
14 CC 26.04.2022	<p>Full revision in which the following changes are considered significant, in addition to improved descriptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Redefining the criteria for the supervisor and the person who assists the experts - The obligation to transmit the list of consultancy activities to BELAC - Adaptation of the time periods to be respected to avoid consultancy 	<p>Full document</p> <p>Points 5.1.3 and 5.1.4</p> <p>Point 6.2.1</p> <p>Point 6.2.2</p>
15 CC 27.06.2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adding the possibility for an expert to participate to an assessment as a apprentice - Adding risk-based approach in determining frequency for monitoring 	<p>Point 5.4</p> <p>Point 5.7</p>

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COOPERATION WITH BELAC ASSESSORS AND EXPERTS: REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURE FOR QUALIFICATION RIGHTS AND DUTIES

1 OBJECTIVES AND NORMATIVE REFERENCES

This document aims to specify the requirements and procedures for qualifying the BELAC assessors and experts. It also specifies their rights and duties.

This document makes reference to and complies with the relevant sections of the standard EN ISO/IEC 17011 and the legal stipulations with regard to accreditation.

2 RECIPIENTS

- Members of the Coordination Commission
- Members of the Accreditation Board
- Accreditation secretariat
- Assessors

3 DEFINITIONS – REFERENCE BELAC 3-11

Definitions related to the different functions within an assessment team can be retrieved from point 1.3 of the BELAC document 3-11: “The accreditation procedure: general provision for the implementation”.

4 INTRODUCTION

4.1 General framework

This document presents:

- the procedure for the selection of assessors and experts, the formal qualification of assessors as well as ways for monitoring them with a view to ensure that they continue to meet the hereafter described requirements;
- rights and duties of assessors and experts, including deontological aspects.

The accreditation procedure has to be carried out according to documented instructions and requires the intervention of:

- an assessor to evaluate the management system (termed lead assessor);
- one or more assessors to evaluate the technical aspects (termed technical assessors); and/or
- one or more technical experts.

The distinction made between lead assessor and technical assessor essentially relates to their respective roles during the assessment.

The lead assessor will evaluate the management system, will lead the assessment and will coordinate the drafting the assessment report.

Technical assessors must be experts in the field for which they were appointed, but will also have a thorough grounding in the field of assessment methods and accreditation. They are therefore charged with the evaluation of the technical aspects.

The technical assessor may also be asked to evaluate (parts of) the management system but without taking on the role of the lead assessor with regard to the leadership of the assessment team and the coordination of the drafting of the assessment report.

The assessment team may have to be complemented with one or more experts. When a technical assessor is available to perform the assessment, he/she will be preferred to an expert because the expert has not taken part in an assessor training.

In order to make BELAC assessments both effective and standardised, the assessors and experts working as part of the accreditation system shall meet the relevant criteria specified in this document.

4.2 Responsibilities

The accreditation secretariat is responsible for the daily management of qualification and monitoring of assessors and experts.

The technical managers are responsible, each for their accreditation sector(s), for:

- the initial and periodic review of the information submitted by the assessors and experts (form BELAC 6-210) and for the assignment of the technical sectors of competence (see under 5.2.2);
- the review of the relevant information and the decision on initial qualification, maintenance of the qualification and monitoring (see under 5.6 and 5.7).

5 REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURE FOR QUALIFICATION OF ASSESSORS AND EXPERTS

5.1 General provisions

5.1.1 Assessor

The status of BELAC assessor may be granted to all persons who:

- have the necessary professional experience to perform evaluation of conformity to accreditation criteria that are applicable to one or more types of conformity assessment bodies – see under 5.2);
- have received a specific training in relation with the tasks of an assessor;
- have been recognised by BELAC as being apt for performing an assessment (see under 5.6).

5.1.2 Expert

The status of BELAC expert may be granted to all persons who:

- have the necessary professional experience to take part in the evaluation of conformity to accreditation criteria that are applicable – to one or more types of conformity assessment bodies - see under 5.2);
- have been recognised by BELAC as being apt for performing an assessment as an expert.

5.1.3 Supervisor

The supervisor is in charge of the monitoring of assessors as part of the process of initial qualification of assessors and its maintenance. The role of supervisor may be assigned to a member of the Accreditation Board or of the BELAC secretariat who can be demonstrated to have the relevant knowledge of the accreditation conditions as well as assessment techniques and procedures.

The supervisor shall meet the following conditions for the concerned accreditation field:

- he/she is a qualified assessor and/or:
- he/she has been employed for at least 1 year as a case manager, technical manager or management staff at BELAC and/or;
- he/she has been able to demonstrate this knowledge in another way (e.g. having followed a training course on the accreditation standard and relevant BELAC documentation in combination with demonstrable experience in the accreditation and assessment process).

5.1.4 Assistant to the expert

The assistant is in charge of assisting the expert during the assessment. Ideally, this person is also present during the assessment to assist the expert on site, but the guidance can also take place in other ways (before the assessment, by telephone or remotely,...). The role of assistant to the expert can be assigned to a person who can be demonstrated to have the appropriate knowledge of the accreditation conditions, assessment techniques and procedures. For the accreditation domain concerned, the assistant is:

- a qualified assessor and/or:
- has been employed for at least 1 year as a case manager, technical manager or management staff at BELAC and/or;
- has been able to demonstrate this knowledge in another way (e.g. having followed a training course on the accreditation standard and relevant BELAC documentation in combination with demonstrable experience in the accreditation and assessment process).

5.2 Competence criteria

5.2.1 General requirements on competence, education and professional experience

5.2.1.1 All assessors and experts

Assessors and experts will be able to prove that they have at least obtained a university degree or equivalent, in a discipline relating to the field covered by one of the accreditation sectors.

When a candidate assessor/expert has demonstrable professional experience, BELAC can decide, with motivation, that this experience replaces this diploma requirement.

Assessors and experts may be asked to demonstrate that they have sufficient language skills, both in speech and in writing, to be able to communicate efficiently with the organization that will be assessed.

Where relevant, BELAC takes into account the specific requirements on accreditation assessors prescribed by regulatory provisions or conformity assessment schemes.

5.2.1.2 Lead assessors

Lead assessors must have gained at least two years professional experience during the past 5 years in activities relating to management systems. This period can be deviated from by a reasoned decision.

By "experience in implementation of management systems" is meant experience in development, implementation or evaluation of management systems according to accreditation or certification standards.

A general knowledge or experience in one or more technical sectors can be a plus.

Lead assessors shall be able to ensure the effective leadership of an assessment team and to formulate assessment conclusions.

5.2.1.3 Technical assessors and experts

Technical assessors and experts must have gained at least two years' professional experience during the past 5 years in the sector of activities where they will have to assess.

In case the technical assessor is asked to take care of the evaluation of (part of) the management system, the technical assessor must also have the necessary experience with management systems.

Considering that experts are usually called for very specific assessment tasks, case to case derogations with respect to the requirements on education and type/length of professional experience may be necessary.

5.2.2 Specific requirements on competence, education and professional experience

Specific requirements with regard to competence, education and professional experience of technical assessors and experts for each specific accreditation field are detailed hereafter. These requirements are complementary to those documented under 5.2.1.

5.2.2.1 Accreditation of testing, calibration and medical laboratories

For the accreditation of laboratories, professional experience means the necessary experience and knowledge of:

- the operation of a laboratory, in the technical field in which the assessor or expert will be assessing;
- the general principles relating to the management and technology implemented by a laboratory;
- the standards and regulations relating to the fields in question;
- metrological aspects, more particularly in the field in which he is asked to assess.
- the aspects of statistical processing of data if required by the type of assessment.

5.2.2.2 Accreditation of Proficiency Testing Providers and Reference Materials Producers

For the accreditation of proficiency testing providers and producers of reference materials, assessors and experts are expected to demonstrate competence through direct professional experience with these activities, preferably including practical experience with statistical procedures used in the assessment of homogeneity and stability as well as in the characterization of PT items or (certified) reference materials.

For these activities, direct professional experience may be replaced by training on respectively ISO/IEC 17043 or EN ISO 17034 provided by BELAC (or an equivalent NAB) provided that the candidate can demonstrate at least appropriate professional experience in the laboratory sector for the technical domain in which he is asked to perform.

Knowledge of the competence requirements of testing and calibration laboratories as specified in ISO/IEC 17025 or ISO 15189 can also be considered as an asset in these sectors, given the importance of testing and/or calibration activities in supporting the

preparation and determination of characteristics of PT items and the production process of (certified) reference materials.

5.2.2.3 Accreditation of inspection bodies

Professional experience includes experience and appropriate knowledge of:

- the inspection activities in the technical field in which the assessor or expert will be assessing;
- the technical characteristics of the products, equipment, installations and processes that will be subjected to inspection;
- the standards, regulations and/or scheme requirements relating to the fields in question.

5.2.2.4 Accreditation of management systems certification bodies

A certification auditor who works for a certification body may be accepted as accreditation assessor or expert. In such cases, the applicant body will be notified that the proposed assessor is a certification auditor.

Technical assessors and experts will have to demonstrate experience and appropriate knowledge within the concerned accreditation program (ISO/IEC 17021-1) This includes knowledge of and ability to apply assessment principles, practices and techniques.

In relation to the concerned certification scheme (e.g. ISO 9001, ISO 22000,...), the technical assessor or expert will have knowledge and experience in at least one technical sector/activity. This includes:

- the technical characteristics of the products and processes;
- the processes and practices pertinent to the sector;
- the legal framework or regulations.

If there are scheme-specific competence requirements for the accreditation assessors, these must also be met.

For example, environmental assessors and experts will have experience or an appropriate knowledge of the environmental sector. This will include

- the terminology specific to the sector;
- environmental legislation in force in the sector;
- environmental aspects of products including their impact;
- environmental critical aspects linked to products and processes;
- recent environmental technologies dealing with pollution prevention.

The ability of a technical assessor or expert to perform an office and/or witness assessment in a different technical sector/activity will be reviewed by BELAC.

The assessor/expert fills in the CV form (BELAC 6-210) with justification for the indicated sectors of competence (e.g. IAF sectors).

Complementary to this and considering the required level of competence, the BELAC document 6-311 identifies clusters of activities relevant for the performance of either office or witness assessments.

An assessor/expert with demonstrated competence for at least one element of a cluster can be appointed for an assessment (office or witnessing) for all the activities covered by the concerned cluster.

5.2.2.5 Accreditation of EMAS environmental verifiers

Supplementary to the criteria for EMS (see point 5.2.2.44) assessors and experts will have knowledge of the EMAS regulation and knowledge or professional experience of EMAS verification.

5.2.2.6 Accreditation of certification bodies for products and personnel

A certification auditor who works for a certification body for products or persons may be accepted as accreditation assessor or expert. In such cases, the applicant body will be notified that the proposed assessor is a certification auditor.

Technical assessors and experts will have appropriate knowledge of:

- technical characteristics of products and processes;
- processes and practices specific to the sector;
- standards applicable to the concerned products and field;
- technologies involved in product certification such as sampling, testing and inspection;
- and/or the organisation of examinations in case of certification of personnel.

5.2.2.7 Accreditation of validation and verification bodies

Technical assessors and experts will have appropriate knowledge of the principles and processes of validation and/or verification;

Within the framework of the GHG program (EU ETS - Greenhouse Gas), they must have knowledge of the regulatory requirements and, in particular, the competence requirements of Article 59 of Regulation EU no. 2018/2067 (AVR) shall be complied with.

The technical assessor or expert will have knowledge and experience in at least one activity group as defined in Annex 1 of Regulation EU No 2018/2067. The ability of a technical assessor or expert to perform an office and/or witness assessment in a different activity group will be reviewed by BELAC.

5.3 Training as an assessor

5.3.1 General provisions

Training will aim at all assessors having adequate knowledge of the following items:

- the objectives of accreditation and the functioning of BELAC, with specific attention for the provisions of the accreditation process (training module A – common to all accreditation fields);
- the assessment methodology (training module B – common to all accreditation fields);
- the accreditation criteria (training module C – specific to a type of conformity assessment body). The training module C relates to all accreditation requirements that apply to the type of conformity assessment concerned.

5.3.1.1 Theoretical training

The theoretical training will cover at least training modules A and B and one training module C. Extensions to other group C training modules are also possible.

Candidates can be completely exempted from the theoretical training if they can show that they have attended an equivalent training organised by an accreditation body which is a member of a multilateral agreement where BELAC is also signatory. They also must have acquired an appropriate knowledge of the BELAC accreditation conditions and procedures. For this purpose, before their first participation in an assessment, the BELAC secretariat provides them with information on the BELAC specific procedures for the performance of the assessments, in particular with respect to the following aspects: specific accreditation conditions for the relevant fields, the classification and handling of non-conformities and the provisions for the presentation of the assessment reports.

Candidates can be partially exempted from part of the training course if

- their professional experience includes knowledge of elements of one or several training modules;
- they have gained the necessary expertise following active participation in at least 5 full appointments as an expert with a positive evaluation for all relevant parts.

A documented analysis of the extent of the exemption is performed on a case by case basis, with identification of the elements that need to be the subject of a formal training.

Training courses are organised under the responsibility of BELAC; co-operation with external persons or organisations may be sought.

The theoretical training is organised according to one of the following options:

- a group training focused on a specific accreditation field (training modules A, B and C for the relevant field);
- a group or individual training for a specific training module;
- a group of individual training in order to complement the experience gained through the practice as expert.

The participants receive an attendance certificate with mention of the attended training modules.

After the theoretical training, it is checked for each participant whether the training is sufficient to be able to move on to practice.

5.3.1.2 Practical in-the-field training

After the theoretical training, the practical training needs are determined. Aspects such as the evaluation after the theoretical training and previous experience of the candidate assessor are taken into account.

The practical field training will consist of participation in an accreditation assessment in one or more of the following roles, depending on the experience, the training needs and the stage of the training process:

- In the role of trainee assessor, where 2 interpretations are possible, which are determined on a case-by-case basis:
 - o in the role of observer without active involvement in the assessment process: this stage allows the candidate to get acquainted with the work of an assessment team;
 - o in the role of assistant assessor with performance of limited assessment tasks performed under the supervision and responsibility of a qualified assessor;In both cases the candidate is presented as trainee assessor to the evaluated body and his work is not subject to invoicing
- In the role of junior assessor with full responsibility for the performance of the assessment but supervision by a specifically appointed supervisor; the junior

assessor is presented as assessor to the evaluated body and his work is subject to invoicing.

The practical field training will be repeated for each type of conformity assessment and for each position in one or more of the above roles, depending on experience, training needs and training progress.

5.3.2 Specific training to the function of lead assessor

In addition, candidates need to have specific knowledge with respect to the conduct of an assessment team and the drafting of the assessment report.

This specific knowledge may be gained:

- either in the form of a complete theoretical training programme for one accreditation standard (training modules A,B,C) leading directly to the practical field training as a lead assessor;
- or, for the technical assessors who are already qualified for one accreditation by a practical field training as a lead auditor;
- or, for the lead assessors who are already qualified for another accreditation standard, in the form of an additional training (training module C) for one or more other accreditation standards and a practical field training as a lead auditor.

5.4 Specific training for the function of expert

Experts may join assessment teams with a view to provide the team with specific knowledge and experience.

The experts are not allowed to perform assessments under their own responsibility but they have to report to the assessment team. The training is limited to a brief explanation provided by a competent member of the BELAC secretariat before the assessment, about the working methods of BELAC with regard to the performance of an assessment, in particular for the following aspects: the specific accreditation conditions for the sectors to be assessed, the classification and handling of the nonconformities and the provisions regarding the presentation of the assessment reports. If an expert wishes, he can participate in an assessment as a apprentice prior to his first assignment to observe an assessment or carry out limited assessment tasks under the supervision and responsibility of an already experienced assessor or expert.

During the assessment, the expert is supported by an assistant, specially appointed to support him (see point **Fout! Verwijzingsbron niet gevonden.**) and who is also responsible for providing an evaluation report on the performance of the expert.

5.5 Formal qualification of assessors

Unless adequate reasons are presented, candidates shall have acquired experience through a practical field training before they assume full responsibilities of an assessor (see 5.3.1.2).

Their performance will be recorded in an evaluation report written by the supervisor who attends the assessment. Knowledge of the candidate with regard to objectives, procedure, methodology of assessment and accreditation conditions is also evaluated, as well as their technical background. Moreover, the quality of reporting is evaluated by the supervisor and by the reviewers as part of the decision-making process on the accreditation case.

The candidate must have been positively evaluated both with regard to his performance during the assessment and with regard to the preparation of the assessment report, before he can be qualified as an assessor. BELAC evaluates all the available data in this regard. If BELAC is of the opinion that there are still points for improvement, the qualification can still be postponed and, depending on the needs, it will be examined whether additional training or additional assessments in one of the roles as described in point 5.3.1.2 are necessary.

5.6 Keeping the competence of assessors and experts up-to-date

The following mechanisms contribute to the continuous training of assessors and experts:

- a systematic information of assessors and experts in case of revision of the accreditation conditions and/or procedures and instructions they are interested in. In case of significant modifications, an information seminar will be organised in order to ensure that assessors are kept up-to-date;
- the organisation of information meetings;
- the possibility for the assessors and experts to take part in meetings of the sector committees;
- regular contacts with the BELAC secretariat, the file manager and the coordinator during periods when no assessments take place.

5.7 Monitoring of assessors and experts

The monitoring of the performance of assessors and experts is based on an evaluation during assessments and the examination of assessment reports.

For assessors, performance monitoring is the responsibility of the supervisor and is carried out for each accreditation standard and for each function for which the assessor is qualified. During the monitoring, it is checked whether the assessor has put the assessment objectives into practice, has followed the assessment procedures, has a good assessment methodology and has carried out the evaluation taking into account all accreditation conditions. The level of technical knowledge of the assessor is evaluated as well as the assessment report that will be drawn up. For the lead assessor, the interpretation of his role in leading the assessment team and the handling of the assessment process is also considered.

In principle, monitoring is done at least once every 3 years unless there is sufficient supporting evidence that the assessor continues to comply. If the deadline is exceeded, this should be justified. In other words, the frequency of monitoring is approached on a risk-based basis. More follow-up should be organised if there is uncertainty about the assessor's performance. If there are sufficient elements confirming an assessor's competence, the period can be extended (e.g. if a lead assessor acts for several accreditation standards, the information obtained from monitoring for 1 standard can also be taken into account in the evaluation for another standard).

During examination of assessment reports, reviewers are also asked to comment on the content of reports.

The secretariat will review the qualification status of each assessor at least once every 3 years, based on, among other things:

- the monitoring reports received;
- complaints and observations that are considered justified, e.g. regarding the provisions of the Code of professional conduct (point 6.1);
- comments of the reviewers.

In case of positive evaluation, the qualification is maintained.

In case of negative evaluation, the secretariat will contact the assessor or expert to discuss the findings.

In case of repeated problems, BELAC will decide on maintaining or not co-operation with the concerned person. The decision may lead to a withdrawal of the assessor from the list of assessors or experts.

5.8 Recording and management of data concerning assessors and experts

5.8.1 Individual files.

The secretariat is responsible for maintaining a file for each assessor or expert that will contain at least:

- a curriculum vitae compiled on a standard form, with systematic update at least once every 5 years. Moreover, assessors have an obligation to keep the secretariat informed of any modifications which might occur;
- information relating to all training courses and information seminars attended by the assessor;
- the evaluation showing that the assessor/expert meets the requirements to act as assessor/expert for BELAC;
- the assignments carried out for BELAC;
- any evaluation reports on the assessor's or expert's work drafted by the supervisor or the assistant assigned to the expert and any actions resulting from them.

5.8.1.1 Lists of assessors and experts

The secretariat keeps current lists of assessors and experts.

5.8.2 List of technical sectors for qualification

The secretariat keeps a list of the competences of assessors and experts, based on keywords.

6 RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF ASSESSORS AND EXPERTS

6.1 Code of professional conduct for assessors and experts

Assessors and experts are required:

- a) To behave at any time with the required level of impartiality, objectivity, honesty, openness and integrity;
- b) To avoid any situation that may lead to (or may be perceived as) a conflict of interests that may cast doubts about their impartiality (see under 6.2);
- c) To refuse any kind of gratification, present, invitation in cash or in kind;
- d) To invoice and recover only travel and subsistence costs that can be invoiced to the accredited body in accordance with BELAC 7-06;
- e) Not to disclose to any third-party findings or information gained as part of an assessment appointment (see also 6.3);

- f) To behave with tact and respect with the persons met during assessments and to avoid any kind of intimidation, criticism or aggressiveness;
- g) To consider at all time the positions expressed by the assessed party and not to let their findings be influenced by their personal views, positions or personal experience;
- h) To avoid any behaviour that may harm the reputation or interests of BELAC and of the assessed body;
- i) To refrain, when participating in other events than those organised by BELAC, to give the impression to express themselves on behalf of BELAC;
- j) To accept only those appointments as assessor/expert when they feel to have the necessary competence and be able to make relevant judgments;
- k) To prepare thoroughly for the assessments they have been appointed to;
- l) To be willing to co-manage a trainee assessor when appointed to their assessment team;
- m) To perform the assessments thoroughly, without a priori and in compliance with the BELAC procedures valid at the moment of the assessment;
- n) To report their findings in a fair and proper manner and to relate systematically their statements of conformity to the accreditation conditions on the basis of concrete and factual evidence.

6.2 Impartiality

6.2.1 Consultancy

Any assessor or expert who also acts as a consultant for third parties and offers personal collaboration with a view to obtaining or maintaining accreditation, certification or recognition, is required to send to the BELAC-secretariat (via Belacdossiers@economie.fgov.be), at the latest at the end of January of every year, a list of organizations that have made use of his/her services as a consultant during the past 5 years.

The transfer of information is strictly forbidden; the confidentiality obligations as stated under point 6.3 shall be strictly respected.

Each body being the subject of a BELAC assessment is allowed to ask the secretariat if the assessors concerned also provide consultancy services. The secretariat will then transfer the available information to the body concerned.

At the request of the body, the assessor or expert is obliged to submit to the body a list of the persons or companies for whom he has performed consultancy assignments.

6.2.2 Conflicts of interest

In order to select the members of an assessment team, BELAC will mainly consider the ability of an assessor or expert to carry out the assessment that he/she would be entrusted with. The selection will be based on the data listed in the assessor's or expert's personal file and on whether the person is acceptable to the organisation to be assessed.

However, it is the responsibility of the assessor or expert to whom an assignment has been proposed to inform BELAC of any facts that might cause prejudice to the required impartiality. Failure to respect this obligation may lead to the assessor or expert being removed from the list of assessors or experts.

Particular examples of circumstances which might lead to withdraw a proposed assignment from an assessor or expert might be the following:

- The assessor or expert has or has had some moral, financial or commercial interest in the organisation to be evaluated;
- he/she was employed by or worked on behalf of the organisation during the last 5 years;
- he/she has acted as a consultant for the organisation to be evaluated in the last 5 years.

6.3 Confidentiality

6.3.1 Duties of BELAC

With the exception of the identity of the assessor or expert and the names and addresses of employers past and present as well as the fact that the assessor also provides consultancy services, the data contained in an assessor's or expert's curriculum vitae and, more generally, in a personal file may not be sent to third parties without the written consent of the concerned person.

6.3.2 Duties of assessors and experts

Assessors and experts are required to maintain the strictest confidentiality with regard to any data accessed during the evaluation to which they are assigned. This clause even relates to information regarding the fact that an organisation has submitted an application for accreditation, because BELAC may not release any information of this nature unless an accreditation certificate has actually been granted.

Assessors and experts may, in principle, only release information covered by the confidentiality clause to the BELAC secretariat and to the BELAC Accreditation Board as the sole body entitled to make decisions in function of the received information.

In case of critical situation, to be evaluated by the assessor or the expert, he/she is allowed to deviate from the above mentioned provision in case of identification of:

- a major breach to regulatory requirements of technical character related to the accredited activities;
- a situation that represents an actual and immediate risk for the safety of persons, animals, plants and the environment.

In such cases, the assessor/expert is allowed to communicate the necessary information to the relevant regulatory authorities provided BELAC is duly informed.

Assessors and experts are thus required to take all necessary practical steps to ensure that the assignment remains confidential, in particular, with regard to any relationship with an employer including the way that any post addressed to them is received. Copying and/or sending, in whole or in part, of documents relating to an evaluation (e.g. reports) or to the way in which an organisation under evaluation operates (e.g. quality manual, procedures etc) for personal use, or for that of third parties is strictly forbidden.

Assessors and experts remain bound to their obligation of confidentiality, even after the official conclusion of their assignment or in case they are no longer active as BELAC assessor or expert.

6.4 Remarks and observations concerning BELAC

Assessors and experts must ensure that the status and reputation of BELAC amongst third parties is maintained at all times.

Assessors and experts are nevertheless invited to:

- inform BELAC directly or via the coordinator or lead assessor, of any fact which might compromise the reputation of BELAC;
- send any remarks or suggestions which might help to improve the way in which BELAC operates.

6.5 Maintenance of status as assessor

A positive evaluation during monitoring of an assessor's performance is necessary to maintain the status (see under 5.7).

Maintaining the status of a BELAC assessor implies also that the individual is required to:

- respect the deontological obligations as described under points 6.1, 6.2, 6.3;
- inform BELAC of any changes to the data recorded on the assessor's identification form or to the assessor's technical expertise;
- take good notice of and implement the amendments to the accreditation conditions and/or procedures/instructions that concern him (see 6.7.1);
- attend the training or information seminars organised for assessors,
- provide BELAC with the list of consultancy activities (if applicable).

In case these provisions are not complied with, withdrawal of the assessor status may be decided.

Any assessor may at any time request to be removed from a list (or lists) of assessors on which he is included.

6.6 Reference to the BELAC assessor status or to the BELAC expert status

Since each official assignment as an assessor or expert is strictly limited to the period of the evaluation, all references to assessor or expert status must be limited to this period and reserved for communication with the organisation to be evaluated.

Each assessor is authorised to state in his/her curriculum vitae his/her participation in the training courses organised by BELAC and the fact that he/she is officially registered on one or more of the assessor lists.

In the event of public speaking or mention in publications, any reference to assessor status which might give the impression that the presented position can be interpreted as the official opinion of BELAC, must be subject to the prior approval of this body.

Reference to BELAC assessor status for commercial ends is prohibited.

6.7 Information rules for assessors and experts

6.7.1 Access to documentation of BELAC

Assessors and experts have access, via the BELAC website, to every available document connected with the management system. These documents may also be sent to them upon request.

Furthermore, assessors and experts will receive personal notice of revision of documents that relate specifically to:

- the accreditation conditions, including those documents which fall within the sector which relates to their particular technical skills;
- the implementation of accreditation procedures;
- the criteria for qualifying as an assessor and instructions for collaboration with BELAC

6.7.2 Sector committees

Assessors with the relevant technical expertise will be invited to join in the work of the sector committee. However, for reasons of efficiency, participation may be limited to 5 persons.

7 COLLABORATION AGREEMENT BETWEEN BELAC AND ITS ASSESSORS AND EXPERTS

7.1 Status of assessors and experts

Assessors and experts operate under the status of a private person or self-employed person or in the context of assignments entrusted to them by their employer.

7.2 Scope and duration of the appointment

Any evaluation assigned to an assessor or expert will consist of carrying out either all or some of the operations required to evaluate whether a conformity assessment body complies with the accreditation conditions. Such duties will be limited to the duration of the assessment, which means from the acceptance of the appointment as assessor until notification of the decision regarding the accreditation made by the BELAC secretariat or the Accreditation Board.

7.3 Acceptance by the assessor or expert

7.3.1 Proposal

The assignment proposal is submitted to the assessor or expert by means of a document that includes:

- the name of the organisation that submitted the accreditation application or is subject to assessment with a view to maintain the accreditation;
- the type of evaluation concerned;
- the duty to be undertaken (lead assessor, technical assessor or expert);

- the duration of the assignment (including preparation phase, assessment visit and, where appropriate, drafting of report) and the quotation relating to it;
- the names of the other evaluation team members.

7.3.2 Commitment

Assessors and experts will be invited to either formally accept or reject the assignment. Through this acceptance they agree to:

- carry out the evaluation in accordance with the accreditation conditions and procedures;
- exercise maximum objectivity in all circumstances;
- treat any information supplied during the assignment with the strictest confidence and act, at all times, according to the professional code of conduct, as defined by BELAC;
- declare that they have no moral, financial or commercial ties with the organisation to be evaluated and that they are under no influence that might prejudice an objective evaluation.

If a technical assessor/expert considers that he/she does not have the professional expertise required in relation to the scope of the accreditation applied for, he/she will inform BELAC, which, if appropriate, will elect a replacement. Failure to respect this obligation may result in the assessor in question being removed from the list of assessors or experts.

7.4 Documents sent in relation to an assignment.

In view of an assignment, each assessor or expert will receive:

- the application form submitted by the organisation applying for accreditation;
- the relevant management system documentation;
- the previous assessment report and its follow-up;
- all other necessary specific information.

By accepting the assignment, the assessor or expert commits himself to respect the confidentiality rules for the documents he is provided with. At the end of his assignment, he is responsible to ensure proper destruction of these documents or mails, or to make sure that they cannot come into the possession of third parties.

7.5 Renumeration

The renumeration of assessors and experts will be calculated on the basis of:

- the number of hours listed in the assignment proposal or actually worked if it was possible to complete the assignment more quickly;
- the hourly rate set by legal provisions determining the fees payable within the context of accreditation.

Any travel expenses incurred by assessors and experts will be paid in accordance with legal provisions.

Practical information regarding the submission and payment of fees is recorded in BELAC 7-06.

7.6 Insurance civil liability and work accidents insurance

It is presumed that assessors and experts whose fees are invoiced by their employer, are covered by the insurance of the latter.

Assessors working in their own right may, if desired, take out their own insurance policy.

Neither BELAC nor the FPS Economy can be considered as liable in case of accident.
