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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This document defines the procedures to be followed by National Accreditation Board for Education and Training (as per the requirements of ISO/ IEC 17011) for Accreditation of Conformity Assessment Bodies (CBs) based on the requirements of ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015 operating for certification of Educational organizations as per requirements of ISO 21001:2018: Educational Organizations – Management Systems for Educational Organizations – Requirements with guidance for use.
- 1.2. NABET will be accrediting those organizations, based on the assessment results, which demonstrate competence and are impartial for the services to be rendered for which the accreditation has been sought for.
- 1.3. Assessment for accreditation plays a central part in providing the evidence on which the certificates of accreditation are awarded.

## 2. Reference

- 2.1. ISO 19011: Guidelines for Auditing Management Systems
- 2.2. ISO17000:Conformity Assessment – Vocabulary and general principles
- 2.3. ISO17011: Conformity Assessment- General Requirements For Accreditation Bodies Accrediting Conformity Assessment Bodies
- 2.4. ISO17021-1:2015: Conformity Assessment – Requirements for Bodies providing Audit and Certification of Management Systems
- 2.5. ISO 9001: Quality Management System – Fundamentals and vocabulary
- 2.6. ISO 21001:2018:- Educational Organizations – Management Systems for Educational Organizations – Requirements with guidance for use
- 2.7 IAF ID 1:2014, issue 2

### 3. Definitions and Acronyms

#### 3.1. Definitions

- 3.1.1 ACCREDITATION: Third party attestation related to conformity assessment body conveying formal demonstration of its competence to carry out specific conformity assessment task
- 3.1.2 ACCREDITATION BODY: Authoritative body that performs accreditation.
- 3.1.3 ACCREDITATION BODY LOGO: Logo used by NABET to identify itself.
- 3.1.4 ACCREDITATION CERTIFICATE: Formal document or a set of documents, stating that accreditation has been granted for the defined scope.
- 3.1.5 APPEAL: Request by a Certification Body for reconsideration of any adverse decision made by the accreditation body related to its desired accreditation status.
- 3.1.6 ASSESSMENT: Process undertaken by an accreditation body to assess the competence of CB, based on particular standard(s) and/or other normative documents and for a defined scope of accreditation.
- 3.1.7 ASSESSOR: A person assigned by NABET to perform, alone or as part of an assessment team, an assessment of a CB.
- 3.1.8 AUDITOR: person who conducts an audit on behalf of CB
- 3.1.9 CERTIFIED CLIENT: Organization whose management system has been certified
- 3.1.10 CERTIFICATION AUDIT : Audit carried out by an auditing organization independent of the client and the parties that rely on certification, for the purpose of certifying the client's management system
- 3.1.11 CERTIFICATION SCHEME: Conformity assessment system related to management systems to which the same specified requirements, specific rules and procedures apply
- 3.1.12 CLIENT: Organization whose management system is being audited for certification purposes
- 3.1.13 COMPLAINT: Expression of dissatisfaction, other than appeal, by any person or organization, to NABET, relating to the activities of NABET or of an accredited CB, where response is expected.
- 3.1.14 CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT BODY (CB): Body that performs conformity assessment services and that can be the object of accreditation.

- 3.1.15 CONSULTANCY: Participation in any of the activities of CB subject to accreditation
- 3.1.16 EXPERT: Person assigned by an accreditation body to provide specific knowledge or expertise with respect to the scope of accreditation to be assessed
- 3.1.17 EXTENDING OF ACCREDITATION: Adding conformity assessment activities to the scope of accreditation
- 3.1.18 IMPARTIALITY: Presence of objectivity
- 3.1.18.1 Note 1 to entry: Objectivity means that conflicts of interest do not exist, or are resolved so as not to adversely influence subsequent activities of the certification body.
- 3.1.18.2 Note 2 to entry: Other terms that are useful in conveying the element of impartiality include “independence”, “freedom from conflict of interests”, “freedom from bias”, “lack of prejudice”, “neutrality”, “fairness”, “open-mindedness”, “even-handedness”, “detachment”, “balance”.
- 3.1.19 INTERESTED PARTIES: Persons or organizations with direct or indirect interest in accreditation.
- 3.1.20 ISO/IEC 17011: Conformity Assessment-General requirements for Accreditation Bodies accrediting Conformity Assessment Bodies
- 3.1.21 ISO17021-1:2015: Conformity Assessment – Requirements for Bodies providing Audit and Certification of Management Systems
- 3.1.22 ISO 21001:2018: Educational Organisations – Management Systems for Educational Organisations – Requirements with guidance for use
- 3.1.23 LEAD ASSESSOR/TEAM LEADER: Assessor who is given the overall responsibility for specified assessment activities
- 3.1.24 NABET ACCREDITATION SYMBOL / ACCREDITATION SYMBOL: Symbol issued by NABET to be used by accredited CBs to indicate their accredited status.
- 3.1.25 PACIFIC ACCREDITATION COOPERATION (PAC): The Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (PAC) is an association of accreditation bodies and other interested parties whose objective is to facilitate trade and commerce among economies in the Asia Pacific region.
- 3.1.26 REDUCING ACCREDITATION: Process of cancelling accreditation for part of the scope of accreditation

- 3.1.27 SCOPE OF ACCREDITATION: Specific conformity assessment activities for which accreditation is sought or has been granted.
- 3.1.28 SURVEILLANCE: Set of activities, except reassessment, to monitor the continued fulfilment by accredited CBs of requirements for accreditation
- 3.1.29 SUSPENDING ACCREDITATION: Process of putting temporary restrictions in place for all or part of the scope of accreditation
- 3.1.30 TECHNICAL AREA: Area characterized by commonalities of processes relevant to a specific type of management system and its intended results
- 3.1.31 WITHDRAWING ACCREDITATION: Process of cancelling accreditation for the full scope of accreditation.

### 3.2. Acronyms

- A. CB: Conformity Assessment Body
- B. IAF: International Accreditation Forum (IAF)
- C. IEC: International Electro-technical Commission
- D. ISO: International Organization for Standardization
- E. NABET: National Accreditation Board for Education and Training
- F. QCI: Quality Council of India

## 4. Eligibility for Accreditation

- 4.1. NABET Board shall provide accreditation services to Conformity Assessment Bodies (CBs) in India /other nations which meet the following eligibility criteria:
- 4.2. The CB shall be a Legal entity or a defined part of legal entity, such that it can be held legally responsible for its certification activities. CB which are part of government, or are government departments will be deemed to be legal entities on the basis of their governmental status. Such bodies' status and structure shall be formally documented and the bodies shall comply with all the requirements of ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015.

- 4.3. The applicant CB should be able to demonstrate at least one audit programme and certification process including the decision making process as per requirements of ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015. This is necessary to assess the ability of CB to carry out the certification process as per its documented system.
- 4.4. The applicant CB must have carried out minimum one internal audit against the applicable scheme of accreditation and one management review for the documented quality system prepared as per ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015.
- 4.5. All the other requirements for the accreditation of CB must comply with the requirements specified in ISO/IEC17021-1:2015, "General Requirements for Bodies providing Audit and Certification of Management Systems
- 4.6. Any exception regarding legal status would be made only on a specific decision of NABET keeping in view the legal provisions in the economy in which the Certification Body is established as a legal entity.
- 4.7. Locations outside India would be included in the accreditation process depending upon the nature of activities carried out in those locations.
- 4.8. NABET shall reserve the right to take the assistance of local IAF MLA members for assessments at foreign locations. The fee for such assessments shall depend on the fee structure of the local accreditation body. The applicant CB shall have the normal right to appeal against a specific assessor for reasons of conflict of interest. If the applicant CB/accredited CB does not prefer to involve such local accreditation body, then the reasons for the same would have to be clearly indicated in writing. NABET reserves the right to share such information with the concerned accreditation body / IAF.
- 4.9. NABET will accredit CBs in line with IAF ID 1:2014, issue 2. The CBs would be accredited for offering ISO/IEC 21001:2018 certification to Educational Organizations for their management systems.

## 5. Accreditation Information

5.1. NABET shall make publically available and update at adequate intervals, the following information with respect to accreditation:

- a) Detailed information about NABET's accreditation schemes, assessment process, accreditation process, including arrangements for granting, maintaining, extending, reducing, suspending and withdrawing accreditation.
- b) Eligibility criteria
- c) General information about fees relating to accreditation
- d) Information regarding status of Accredited CBs
- e) Description of the rights and obligations of CBs
- f) Information on procedures for lodging and handling complaints and appeals
- g) Information about the authority under which NABET operates.
- h) Description of the rights and duties of NABET
- i) General information about the means by which NABET obtains financial support
- j) Information about NABET activities, other than accreditation
- k) Information about the related bodies of NABET
- l) Information about International recognition arrangements in which NABET is involved
- m) Information on the use of accreditation symbol or other claims of accreditation

## 6. Application for Accreditation

6.1 Certification Body willing to be accredited must first complete the NABET Application for Accreditation. NABET Secretariat will check for the completeness of application. The Secretariat will inform the CB with respect to the following –

- a) Acceptance of application or if applicable rejection of application with the reasons for rejection;
- b) Provide further information and advice to the CB with regards to the Accreditation process if required

6.2 If required, other additional information may be sought from the CB in support of the application.

6.3 Application for accreditation should be complete in all respects. An incomplete Application would result in delay of processing of application. The completed application for accreditation has to be duly signed by the authorized representative(s) of the CB seeking accreditation and forwarded to NABET along with the prevailing application fee.

6.4 NABET reserves the right to seek information on the antecedents of the owners / those managing certification activities before deciding to accept the application for further processing. Adverse decision of NABET would be communicated with reasons for rejecting the application. The applicant can appeal to NABET against such decision. The application fee is non-refundable in any case. Normally the acknowledgment of the application would be communicated within 15 days from the receipt of the application.

6.5 The application should include the following documents/information:

- a) Copy of document demonstrating legal status.
- b) Details of Human and technical resources.
- c) General information concerning CB such as its activity, its relationship to larger legal entity if any, address of all the physical location(s) and, information on activities conducted at all locations including virtual site(s) relevant to the applied scope of accreditation.
- d) Clearly defined requested scope of accreditation including limits of capability where applicable
- e) Description of the conformity assessment activities that CB undertakes.
- f) List of standards, methods and procedures for which the CB seeks accreditation



- g) Quality Manual (QM) -including all documents relating to the requirements of ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015 and certification activities
- h) Master list (s) of all quality documents (including version and / or expiration date)
- i) Organization structure of the certification body
- j) Sample - Certificate / copy of original certificate for each certification program
- k) List of approved Auditors/technical experts classified by skills and certification programs
- l) List of certified Clients (Educational organizations)
- m) An agreement to fulfil the requirements for accreditation and other obligations of CB, as described in clause 4.2 in ISO/IEC 17011

Note: The CB should preferably submit the above documents as soft copies.

6.6 NABET shall review the application for adequacy of the information submitted by the CB.

6.7 The application is reviewed by the NABET secretariat for completeness, clarity of accreditation requirements and the capability of NABET to provide the services. In case of any discrepancy and/or inadequate information, clarification is sought from the applicant and the outcome of the review is communicated to the applicant regarding acceptance of the application for further processing, or to complete any further requirements identified during the review.

6.8 As a general rule, an application for accreditation shall remain valid for a period of one year. Some flexibility may be permitted on this policy, provided the applicant is able to justify the delay in application process to the NABET Secretariat.

## 7. Assessment

7.1. The assessment shall be for competence of the CB, operating a certification system as per ISO 17021-1:2015.

### 7.2. Preparation for the Assessment

7.2.1 The NABET Secretariat prepares a draft assessment program as mentioned below.

a) Review and analysis of Documented Information,

b) Assessment of the central office

c) Witnessing of on-site audits being carried out by the applicant CB of Educational Organizations. This will be based on the scope of the accreditation applied for, the sites to be covered, size of CB's client and the scale of the operation of the certification body.

7.2.2 The assessment program shall be prepared in stages depending on the information provided by CB. The assessment program shall be discussed with authorized personnel of the CB to ensure an effective assessment programme at each stage.

7.2.3 A preliminary visit may be conducted with the agreement of the CB. The visit may result in identification of deficiencies in the system of the applicant CB or its competencies. In any case no specific solutions shall be provided to CB regarding deficiencies identified during assessment. The fee for the pre-assessment will be charged according to the scope applied and prevailing fee structure.

7.2.4 The CB has to provide 6 months schedule of the Audits being planned for Educational organizations. NABET will plan the assessment of CB's regional offices/other offices and Educational Organisation(s) at its own discretion.

7.2.5 NABET shall communicate the date and schedule for assessment to the CB. The CB will be given time to raise objections, if any. NABET will review the objections and decide whether to make any changes in the assessment schedule or not.

### 7.3. Appointment of the Assessment Team

7.3.1 The assessment team, consisting of a team leader and the members, is identified by the NABET from the pool of assessors and experts.

- 7.3.2 NABET shall ensure that the assessment team is provided with appropriate criteria documents, previous assessment records (if any) and relevant documents and records of the CB whose assessment is to be conducted.
- 7.3.3 The details of the members of NABET assessment team, shall be communicated to the CB, giving them a time of 3 working days to raise objections, if any, from the date of communication. Any objection raised by the applicant CB/accredited CB against any of the team members must be accompanied in writing with adequate grounds for the objection. NABET will evaluate the objection and decide whether to change the team member or to overrule the objection raised by the applicant CB.
- 7.3.4 The decision of NABET on the composition and strength of the assessment team for witness assessment will be final.
- 7.3.5 The assessment team shall inform NABET, prior to the assessment, about any existing, former or envisaged link or conflict of interest between themselves or their organization and the CB to be assessed. The assessment team will be asked to commit that they do not have direct/ indirect relation with the applicant CB/Accredited CB or competitive position between themselves or their organization and the applicant CB/Accredited CB to be assessed that can affect the objectivity of the assessment. The assessment team is then formally constituted and appointed.
- 7.3.6 Efforts are made to ensure that the team is kept intact throughout the initial assessment process. If there is any change in the composition of the team members, the same shall be communicated to the CB for their acceptance.
- 7.3.7 The assessment team is required to maintain confidentiality of the sensitive information about the operation of the applicant obtained as part of the assessment process.

#### 7.4. Assessment Process

- 7.4.1 The initial assessment shall be carried out in three stages as per the assessment plan. Coverage of scope sought for accreditation, shall be ensured during initial assessment process.

Stage I : Document Review and Analysis

Stage II : Central Office Assessment and Assessment of Regional offices/other offices / Branch Offices and any other key location of CB

Stage III : Witness Assessment (Witnessing audit of CB's client Educational Organizations)

#### **7.4.2 Stage I: Documentation review and analysis**

7.4.2.1 NABET shall evaluate CB's documented system, including but not limited to:

- a. Documents related to legal status
- b. Documents to ensure impartiality
- c. Audited accounts statements for last 3 years.
- d. Previous Internal audit reports
- e. Quality Manual in accordance with ISO / IEC 17021-1:2015
- f. Management review related to internal audits.
- g. The audit process covering the time schedule for the various activities, and all the related activities pertaining to audit of educational organizations in line with ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015
- h. The audit formats, audit records, policy and procedures for re-assessment, procedures used to assure the quality of assessments.
- i. Statistical reports related to Certifications.
- j. The criteria for selecting all CB personnel including assessors/experts, documented initial(prior to individual taking on responsibility in the CB) and on-going competence and performance evaluation criteria along with records of the same in line with Annex A,B and C of ISO 17021-1:2015, records and documented procedure of monitoring competence of CB personnel including assessors/experts ; Review of

the current list of auditors and their resumes and the Competence Matrix relevant to applied scopes for certification body personnel, auditors and technical experts.

- k. Documents pertaining to previous complaint and appeals & corrective actions taken and evidences with respect to effectiveness of corrective actions.
- l. Published documents.
- m. Administrative documents including requirements for applicants, registration forms, fee schedules, promotional material and the list of certified clients
- n. Human and technical resources
- o. Standards and procedures for which CB has sought accreditation.
- p. Any other document as an evidence required to establish implementation of ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015

7.4.2.2 After evaluation, NABET will inform the CB of all the findings. The CB shall be required to close all non-conformities before the next stage of assessment.

#### **7.4.3 Stage II: Central Office Assessment and Assessment of Regional offices/other offices / Branch Offices and any other key location of CB**

Following the acceptance of the document review and analysis report NABET shall undertake one full assessment of the central office and regional offices/other offices / Branch Offices and any other key location of CB. Assessment duration will be decided by NABET based on the scope of accreditation.

7.4.3.1 In case the CB has multiple locations, then assessment of few selected locations will be conducted by NABET ensuring that the scope of accreditation is covered. The choice of location will be at the discretion of NABET.

NOTE-Locations to be covered during assessment shall be identified by NABET on the basis of risk based approach as stated in ISO 17011.

7.4.3.2 The Assessment Team follows the following steps for conduct of assessment:

a. *Opening Meeting:*

The Lead Assessor conducts the opening meeting and would cover the following agenda as a minimum:

- i. Introduction of the assessment team members and auditee.
- ii. Objective, criteria and Scope of the assessment
- iii. Provide a short summary of the assessment process.
- iv. Establish the official communication links between the assessment team and the auditee.
- v. Confirm that the resources and facilities needed by the assessment team are available.
- vi. Confirm the date and time of the closing meeting and any interim meeting planned
- vii. Clarify any doubts about the assessment plan.

b. *Assessment:*

- i. The Assessment is carried out by the Assessment team individually/jointly as per Assessment plan. Checklists are used where applicable. The assessment is done in accordance with guidelines of ISO 19011 and accreditation criteria - ISO / IEC 17021-1:2015.
- ii. During the assessment or on demand (at any time), the applicant CB / accredited CB shall provide unrestricted access to the documents that pertain to the certification process and the scope applied for. Access shall also be provided to the records of the complaints, appeals and disputes along with corrective action and the method of verifying the effectiveness of the corrective actions.

- iii. At the closing meeting of the assessment, the report of the Non-Conformities observed during the central office assessment and regional offices/other offices / Branch Offices assessment and any other key location of CB shall be explained to the applicant CB and shall be given in NABET's designated format for subsequent corrective action by the CB.
- iv. In case information collected during the office assessment requires inclusion of other locations in the assessment program, the applicant CB shall be informed and the assessment program shall be modified to cover such locations. Subsequent monitoring at these offices/new location shall depend on the nature of activities carried out at these locations and the extent of control demonstrated by the applicant CB. Any additional charges for the assessment thus conducted shall be borne by the CB as per the prevalent fee structure.
- v. The lead assessor shall submit the assessment report to NABET after the assessment along with the closure actions taken if any by the applicant.

7.4.3.3 All the types of non-conformities need to be closed within 120 days. Any deviation from it will result in reinitiating the whole assessment of that particular stage. The fee for the same shall be charged as per the prevailing fee structure.

*c. Interim Meetings:*

The Lead Assessor may decide to have interim meetings amongst the assessors and also initiate a meeting of the assessment team and the auditee.

*d. Closing Meeting:*

The closing meeting will be chaired by the Lead Assessor of the team. The objective of the closing meeting is to:

- i. Present the findings of the assessment & non-conformities in designated format for subsequent corrective action and conclusions to the CBs Management to ensure that CB clearly understands the result of the assessment and the

perceived findings on the quality of the certification system being operated by the applicant body;

- ii. The Lead Assessor will also advise the CB of any situations encountered during the assessment that may decrease the reliance that can be placed on the assessment's conclusions.
- iii. An opportunity shall be provided to the CB to ask questions about the findings, including non-conformities, if any and their basis.
- iv. The report shall contain the following information (but not limited to);
  - a) Details of requirements fulfilled, competence and or recommendation (if any);
  - b) Details on the, major non-conformities (if any) and minor non-conformities (if any),
  - c) Evidence for identified non-conformities
  - d) Opportunities for Improvement identified (OFIs) if any
  - e) Additional document(s)/data reviewed onsite.
- v. The team may obtain any further clarification from the applicant as they may deem necessary for the finalization of the report
- vi. The CB is required to close all findings and non- conformities before the next stage of assessment

#### **7.4.4 Stage III: Witness Assessment**

7.4.4.1 NABET shall conduct witness assessment of educational organizations for verification of assessment systems, processes and procedures.



- 7.4.4.2 The choice of location of witness assessment of educational organizations will be at the discretion of NABET. Witness assessment by NABET for CB shall include the evaluation of the technical competencies of the CB auditors conducting the onsite assessments for educational organizations as per ISO/IEC 21001:2018.
- 7.4.4.3 NABET shall evaluate all aspects of the assessment conducted for conformance to the NABET accreditation scheme based on ISO 17021-1:2015 requirement.
- 7.4.4.4 The CB shall be informed of the findings and non-conformities if any in the closing meeting by the assessment team. However the final report and the recommendation will be sent after the decision of NABET.
- 7.4.4.5 In case any corrective action is required, the CB shall make the necessary corrections & improvements, and submit the appropriate documentation within a defined time schedule.
- 7.4.4.6 An additional full or partial evaluation may be done by NABET to verify the compliance of corrections.

NOTE 1: Stage II and Stage III assessments may include interviews of staff including full time and/ or empaneled Assessors. During interview, relevant documents evidences of educational qualification and experiences are to be provided.

NOTE 2: Central office/Main office shall be assessed in each Initial assessment, surveillance assessment and may be assessed for special assessment.

NOTE 3: Locations to be covered during assessment shall be identified by NABET on the basis of risk based approach as stated in ISO 17011.

#### **7.4.5 Assessment Report**

- 7.4.5.1 After completion of various stages of assessments the assessment team shall prepare a report of Respective stages.
- 7.4.5.2 The assessment report is made in the following parts:

- a) The non-conformities observed during various stages of the assessment and actions taken by the CB on the non-conformities
- b) A report indicating the level of conformity of the CB's management system against the NABET accreditation requirements.
- c) Recommendations of the NABET assessment team

7.4.5.3 Wherever the assessment team cannot reach a conclusion about the finding, the team should refer back to NABET for clarification.

7.4.5.4 The NABET Secretariat shall review the report at each stage of assessment to ensure that the laid down criteria are addressed correctly and shall make changes in recommendations as needed based on the NABET accreditation criteria. Any revised report shall be sent to the applicant body along with reasons for the change.

7.4.5.5 In case the report sent to the applicant CB contains any difference from the information presented to the applicant CB by the assessment team at the closing meeting (of each stage of assessment), the same is highlighted and the explanation of the differences shall be enclosed.

7.4.5.6 The report after each stage of assessment shall be sent by the NABET secretariat within 30 working days to the applicant CB for their agreement. If no comments are received within a week then the report is considered to be acceptable to the CB and is deemed as final. NABET shall try to resolve any comments received on the report within a period of 15 working days and shall submit the report at the end of this period to the CB. NABET Secretariat would coordinate as needed.

7.4.5.7 NABET shall ensure that the response of the CB to resolve non-conformities are reviewed to see if the actions appear to be sufficient and effective. If the CB responses are found insufficient, further information shall be requested. Additionally, evidence of effective implementation of

actions taken may be requested, or a follow-up assessment may be carried out to verify effective implementation of corrective actions. The cost for the same shall be borne by the CB as per the prevailing fee structure.

7.4.5.8 After verifying the documents and records submitted by the certification body on all the non-conformities that have been closed by the applicant, the lead assessor shall prepare the final report of the assessment including the details on the corrective actions taken by the applicant body and shall include the recommendation of the team. The report shall be verified for completeness by NABET with respect to guidelines on the subject and shall be presented to the accreditation committee for its decision on accreditation with regards to the CB.

7.4.5.9 At any stage of the assessment process, where there is a need for a full or partial assessment or a written declaration of compliance in response to the non-conformities observed is adequate shall be communicated to the applicant body by NABET after obtaining the relevant supporting facts relating to assessment from the lead assessor of the assessment team.

7.4.5.10 The final report presented to the accreditation committee shall contain the following information, as a minimum:

- a) Unique identification of the CB
- b) Date(s) of the on-site assessment and Type(s) of assessment
- c) Name(s) of the assessor(s) and /or expert involved in the assessment.
- d) Unique identification of all premises assessed, with assessment dates
- e) Proposed scope of accreditation that was assessed.
- f) The assessment report.

- g) A statement on the adequacy of the internal organization and procedures adopted by the CB to give confidence in its competence, as determined through its fulfilment of the requirements for accreditation.
- h) Information on the resolution of all non-conformity(s).
- i) Any further information that may assist in determining fulfillment of requirements and the competence of CB.
- j) Where appropriate, a recommendation to grant, reduce or extend accreditation for the proposed scope.

## **8 Time Period for assessment process**

8.4 An application for accreditation shall remain valid for a period of one year. Some flexibility may be permitted on this policy, provided the applicant is able to justify the delay in application process to the NABET Secretariat.

8.5 Application for accreditation pending over 2 years from the date of acceptance of application shall be reviewed by NABET for appropriate action including closure. An extension of 6 months may be given during the accreditation process depending upon the results of past assessments and/or depending upon NABET's discretion.

8.6 In the event of delay in getting witness assessment scheduled at the client educational organization(s) for different scope/sectors that the applicant CB has applied for, the applicant CB shall apply in writing to NABET for partial assessment of available scopes. NABET shall have the right to accede to that request or differ. Grant of accreditation for part of the scopes shall be done after all the non-conformities observed during the earlier central office assessment and part of the witness assessments of stage III have been completed and have been closed as per the laid down criteria of NABET. The CB shall need to apply for fresh accreditation for the scopes for which witness assessment could not be carried out within the stipulated time allocated for stage 3 assessment.

8.7 After Stage III, post closure of all NCs and recommendation of the assessment team, the final assessment report shall be presented to the Accreditation Committee within 45 working days.

## 9 Accreditation Decision

9.1 The Accreditation Committee is responsible for taking decision on granting, maintaining, suspending, reducing, extension or withdrawing of Accreditation. NABET criteria shall ensure that the members of the Accreditation Committee are not involved in the assessment and also have had no relationship for the last two years with the applicant body under consideration that can influence their decision on accreditation.

9.2 In case of any existing involvement within last two years, the Member of the Accreditation Committee will abstain from all decision making process of the concerned application.

9.3 The reports are forwarded to the Accreditation Committee for the decision on accreditation only after receipt of the fee for the activities associated with the assessment process till date.

9.4 Where NABET uses the results of an assessment already performed by another accreditation body, NABET shall have an assurance from the applicant CB that the other accreditation body was operating in accordance with the requirements of ISO 17011.

9.5 Accreditation committee shall work on the principle of “unanimous decision“. The decision shall not be put on vote .The Head / Chairman of the Accreditation Committee shall be responsible for coordinating and addressing the issues raised by the members. The Head of the committee shall have the right to call for any other assessor / experts / staff for clarifying any of the issue that is under discussion. The persons so called for clarification shall not take part in the decision of the accreditation.

9.6 The decisions of the accreditation committee shall be based on the assessment report.

9.7 Decision making shall not be outsourced in any case.

## 10 Accreditation documents

10.1 The accreditation certificate in the standard template shall include the following:

- a) NABET Accreditation symbol
- b) The name of the CB

- c) Scope of accreditation
  - d) locations of the accredited conformity assessment body and, as applicable, the conformity assessment activities performed at each location and covered by the scope of accreditation
  - e) Accreditation number
  - f) Brief indication of/or reference to the scope of accreditation
  - g) Effective date of grant of accreditation and the date of expiry of the accreditation certificate.
  - h) A statement of conformity and reference to the standard(s) or other normative document(s), including issue or revision used for assessment of the CB.
- 10.2 The initial accreditation certificate shall be valid for three years and the date of issue and validity shall be indicated on the certificate.

## 11 Surveillance Assessment

- 11.1 To ensure that each of the CBs accredited by NABET continues to comply with the accreditation requirements, a surveillance assessment shall be carried out annually by NABET.
- 11.2 Three months prior to the annual surveillance, NABET secretariat shall send a communication to the Certification Body regarding the due date for surveillance assessment.
- 11.3 The surveillance assessment shall be consistent with the initial assessment normally with lesser duration and it includes assessment of central office and regional office, locations performing key activities including foreign locations and witness of certification of educational organizations as per ISO 21001:2018 by the accredited CB.
- 11.4 Central office shall be covered in each surveillance. Locations to be covered during assessment shall be identified by NABET on the basis of risk based approach as stated in ISO 17011. The choice of educational organization for witnessing will be at the discretion of NABET.
- 11.5 The first surveillance shall be conducted within 12 months from the date of initial accreditation. However, for the subsequent surveillance the accredited Certification Body, for valid reason, may seek a postponement of the assessment by maximum 3 months. For deferring the

- surveillance, the Certification Body shall give written justification and shall obtain the consent of NABET.
- 11.6 NABET reserves the right to carry out more frequent or longer surveillance as necessary in case of complaints/concerns against the delivery or administration of the certification process. Cost for the same shall be borne by the Certification Body.
- 11.7 In case of any adverse feedback from interested parties, NABET may conduct surprise special assessment. The stipulated assessment fee for this assessment shall be borne by the Certification Body.
- 11.8 The witness assessment program at educational organizations shall be based on certification resources available with the CB, number of accredited certificates issued, spread of locations and the extent of control demonstrated by the Certification Body, findings of the central office assessment and risk based approach as stated in ISO 17011.
- 11.9 In the event of any major non-conformity that can affect the accreditation process, NABET shall inform the accredited CB and shall call for a time bound corrective action plan. The decision for an additional surveillance visit to verify the implementation of the corrective action plan as committed by the accredited body shall be taken by NABET in consultation with the lead assessor of the assessment team. Such decision shall be binding on the accredited CB. The cost of the additional visit shall be borne by the accredited CB. In the event accredited CB has not shown evidence of completion of the corrective action agreed in the committed time period, NABET shall prepare a status report and submit it along with the assessment report to the accreditation committee for further decision on suspension, reduction or withdrawal of accreditation.
- 11.10 The surveillance assessment reports shall be presented to the accreditation committee for consideration and decision regarding maintaining, extension or suspension (partial/full) of accreditation of the accredited CB.
- 11.11 The frequency of surveillance assessments shall be increased based on the type and nature of non-conformities observed, complaints received, market feedback etc. The accredited CB shall be informed of the reasons for any change in the frequency.

#### **11.12 Other Surveillance Activities**

- 11.12.1 CB has to give information on new certificates issued on a monthly basis to NABET. NABET may decide to seek assessment records on a random basis.
- 11.12.2 The NABET Secretariat would review the reports and seek any clarification. If a clear deviation from the requirement of the standard is established then such findings would be raised as non-conformities requiring the accredited CB to respond. The Accredited CB will bear the cost of such reviews.
- 11.12.3 Based on concerns noticed during the assessment process / market feedback / complaints NABET may decide to arrange visits to accredited CBs or meet the certified educational organizations. CBs shall be informed of any such validation assessment and may join the NABET assessor on such assessment if required. CBs would be informed of the duration of such assessment and the information planned to be collected. Accredited CB would bear the cost related to such validation assessment.

## **12 Re- accreditation/ Re-assessment**

- 12.1 Six months prior to expiry of the accreditation term, the accredited CB shall be informed about the re-accreditation process. The Accredited CB shall apply to NABET for Re-accreditation as per the initial process.
- 12.2 NABET shall carry out re-accreditation assessment before the expiry of the current certificate. NABET shall carry out reaccreditation assessment exactly as initial assessment.
- 12.3 The CB shall submit the re-accreditation application along with prescribed fee at least three months in advance of the expiry of the current accreditation period.
- 12.4 In the event of any major non-conformity, NABET shall inform the accredited CB and shall call for a time bound corrective action plan. The decision for an additional visit to verify the implementation of the corrective action plan as committed by the accredited CB shall be taken by NABET in consultation with the lead assessor of the assessment team. Such decision shall be binding on the accredited CB.



- 12.5 On closure of all non-conformities if any, the report will be presented to accreditation committee.
- 12.6 Re-accreditation shall be based on the performance of the CB during the previous validity period and report of re-accreditation assessment. Any complaints received during the period shall be duly considered.
- 12.7 If the decision by the accreditation committee is to continue the accreditation, a fresh set of accreditation documents shall be issued to the accredited Certification Body.
- 12.8 The re-accreditation shall be for a period of 3 years subject to satisfactory operation of accredited assessment scheme by the CB and reasonable number of NABET accredited certificates being issued by the CB.
- 12.9 In case the decision of the accreditation committee is not favorable, the same shall be communicated to the accredited CB. The accreditation shall be suspended for initiating the appropriate actions including any corrective action. NABET reserves the right to withdraw accreditation without suspension based on the decision of the accreditation committee.
- 12.10 All re-accreditation assessment activities shall be completed prior to the expiry of accreditation. In case there is a delay in decision-making, the accreditation shall continue, if the report of the assessment team is satisfactory. The decision of the accreditation committee shall be binding on the accredited CB.

### **13 Extension/ Reduction of the Scope**

#### **13.1 Extension of scope**

13.1.1 It is process of enlarging the scope. This process may cover inclusion of new sector or new assessment scheme along with the already accredited schemes in line with IAF ID 1:2014, issue 2.

13.1.2 The extension of the scope shall be carried out as part of the surveillance visit by increasing the number of assessor days

necessary. Alternatively NABET or the applicant may ask for an additional assessment as deemed necessary.

13.1.3 Such extension visit shall be charged as per prevailing fee structure. The invoice for such visit shall be sent to the CB. Further action shall be initiated only on timely payment of fee to NABET for the extension visit. The procedure followed for the assessment and decision for extension of the scope is similar to the initial assessment as described in clause 7.

## **13.2 Reduction of scope**

13.2.1 The reduction of the scope is a process of cancelling accreditation for the part of scope accredited.

13.2.2 NABET shall take decision to reduce the scope of accreditation of CB to exclude those parts where CB has persistently failed to meet the requirements of accreditation including competencies.

13.2.3 CB may also ask for reduction of its scope of accreditation.

13.3 The accredited body shall submit an application for extension/reduction of scope.

13.4 The requirement for extension and reduction of scope shall be submitted to the accreditation committee for taking final decision on the same.

## **14 Non Conformities and Corrective Actions**

14.1 The non-conformities observed shall be classified in two categories:–

### **14.1.1 Major**

- a) Failure to address any clause of the standard or any element of audit criteria/ Systematic failure to comply with a requirement
- b) Similar minor nonconformities across the processes

- c) If closure actions of minor non-conformities are not found effective within defined time frame.

#### 14.1.2 Minor

- a) Isolated non-systemic deficiency

**NOTE:** Multiple Minor NCs with related impact on the assessment system shall result in a Major non-conformity based on the judgment of the assessment team.

14.2 Minor non-conformities can be closed on the basis of documentary evidences.

14.3 The time for corrective action shall be determined from the day the non-conformities are handed over to the CB.

14.4 Non-conformities of major nature may call for a follow-up visit either to office or on-site as per recommendation of the assessment team. Such reassessment visit shall be charged as per prevailing fee structure. Further steps would be taken only after the CB settles any invoice raised for the assessment.

14.5 In case of minor non-conformities, a declaration in respect of completion of the corrective action by the authorized person of the Certification Body may be accepted.

14.6 During surveillance, if it is found that the minor non-conformity is not effectively addressed, the non-conformity shall be converted into major non-conformity and shall have to be treated as per the criteria laid down for major non-conformity.

14.7 The assessment team may also identify opportunities for improvement and convey the same to the CB and include in their final report.

14.8 All the non-conformities need to be closed within 120 days. If not closed, assessment of that particular stage will be reinitiated. The extra cost shall be borne by the CB.

## 15 Criteria for Accreditation

### 15.1 Adoption of Criteria

15.1.1 The NABET Board shall release the accreditation scheme and NABET shall adopt and document the accreditation scheme for CBs based on international standard (ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015(E) and ISO/IEC 17011), supported by the guidance documents released by the International Accreditation Forum.

15.1.2 Definitions of various terms related to conformity assessment shall be as given in ISO 9000, ISO 17000, ISO 17011, ISO 17021-1 and ISO 21001.

15.1.3 International standards which have been referred in NABET accreditation criteria shall not be provided to CB. In case of need, the certification bodies are to procure such documents from the National Standards Body, Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), and International Organization for Standardization (ISO) or through other authentic sources.

### 15.2 Amendment to the Criteria

15.2.1 The amendment to the criteria shall be based on the nature of change required. The assessment criteria and the guidance documents shall be taken up for amendment based on following conditions individually or jointly:

- a) Any change in the International standards and guides.
- b) Significant feedback from the Peer Review assessment team that warrants amendment.
- c) Critical feedback from the stakeholders on the implementation of the criteria.
- d) Any other reason as deemed fit by the QCI Board or the Technical Committee.

15.2.2 The NABET Board shall approve the amended accreditation scheme after completion of any one or more of the following consultative processes:

- a) Advice of the Technical Committee.
- b) A representation of CBs before approval of the amendment.

- c) Seek public comments on the proposed changes through the Members of NABET Board and other representative bodies as NABET Board may deem fit.

### **15.3 Communication of changes to the Criteria**

- 15.3.1 Any change in the criteria shall be notified to the accredited CB / applicant CB by registered post / courier/ email/ publishing on QCI website or other means and a suitable time frame shall be given for implementing the amended criteria for transition.
- 15.3.2 The accredited CB shall communicate their objection, if any, in writing by registered post / courier / email or other means within 30 days of the receipt of the amended scheme.
- 15.3.3 If the communication is not received from accredited CB within 30 days, it will be presumed that the accredited CB is willing to adopt the amended scheme.
- 15.3.4 The implementation of the amended scheme shall be verified during the surveillance assessment of each CB.
- 15.3.5 In the event of any major change in the scheme, NABET reserves the right to carry out an additional assessment and the fee of such assessment visit shall be borne by CB and is required to be paid in advance.
- 15.3.6 In the event that an accredited CB is not willing to adopt the amended scheme it is allowed to opt out of the accreditation scheme and the accreditation is withdrawn with effect from the date of the implementation of amended scheme. The CB in such cases shall forfeit their right for refund of the paid fees.

### **16 Accreditation Criteria for ISO 17021-1 scheme includes-**

- a) NABET:SCD:PR:01-Procedure for Accreditation
- b) NABET:SCD:PR:02-Procedure for Obligations of Conformity Assessment Bodies
- c) NABET:SCD:PR:03-Procedure for Complaints, Appeals and Disputes
- d) NABET:SCD:PR:04-Procedure for Reference to Accreditation and use of Accreditation Symbol
- e) NABET:SCD:PR:05-Procedure for Suspension and Withdrawal of Accreditation

## 17 Condition for Accreditation

### 17.1 Granting of Accreditation

17.1.1 The accreditation is granted to an applicant CB:

- A. on completion of assessment as per the provisions of Clause 7 of this procedure and as a pre-condition, fulfilment of the following by the CB:
- a) The applicant has a formal certification system (activities including contracting for assessment process, assessment planning, conduct of assessment and decision making) in operation.
  - b) The applicant CB meets the criteria of accreditation and all non-conformities found against the criteria of accreditation during assessment have been closed to the satisfaction of NABET in accordance with the guidelines on the subject
  - c) There are no adverse reports / information / complaints with NABET about the applicant CB regarding the quality and effectiveness of implementation of certification system as per the criteria of NABET.
  - d) The certified clients of the applicant CB are generally satisfied by the conduct of the applicant CB and its certification system.
  - e) NABET may request feedback from selected clients of the CB / publicize receipt of application and seek a feedback from interested parties.
  - f) The applicant body has paid all the outstanding dues.
  - g) The Initial accreditation shall be for a period of 3 years. Subsequent renewals are for a period of 3 years subject to satisfactory operation of accredited certification scheme and reasonable number of NABET accredited certificates being issued by the CB.

**NOTE:** If any adverse feedback is received by NABET, the CB shall be given an appropriate opportunity to explain its position in writing to NABET and present its case in person to NABET Accreditation/

Technical Committee as the case may be. The final decision with respect to grant of accreditation will be taken on the basis of facts and results of such presentation.

17.1.2 NABET on regular basis publishes in its newsletter/ website with regard to grant of new accreditation, for information and feedback from the industry & other interested parties.

## **17.2 Maintaining Accreditation**

17.2.1 CB shall have to comply with the following conditions for maintaining their accreditation for next 3 years.

- a) The Accredited CB continues to meet the accreditation criteria and ensure conduct of surveillance audit by NABET.
- b) All non –conformances raised during the surveillance assessment have been closed to the satisfaction of NABET.
- c) NABET Board does not have any adverse reports/ information or complaints with respect to implementation of certification system of Certification Body as laid down by NABET Board.
- d) Clients certified by CB are satisfied with the services being rendered by CB.
- e) The CB has cleared all pending dues.

## **17.3 Suspension of Accreditation (Partial or full)**

17.3.1 NABET may suspend accreditation of Certification Body fully or for the part of scope of accreditation. based on the following requirements:

- a) Non-compliance or violation of NABET accreditation criteria
- b) Non-conduct of annual surveillance.
- c) Providing insufficient or incorrect information to NABET
- d) Improper use of NABET accreditation symbol

- e) If a CB has failed to take effective corrective action in response to the non-conformities observed during any assessment in the due time frame.
- f) Any major change in the legal Status, ownership, impartiality etc. not in line to the requirements of ISO 17011 and ISO 17021-1:2015.
- g) Any willful misleading declaration in the application for accreditation
- h) Willful non-compliance to the accreditation agreement
- i) Evidence of lack of control over the certification process
- j) Excessive and/or serious complaints against the certification system of CB
- k) Evidence of unethical certification practices including providing incorrect information to NABET, faking of certification records
- l) Non-availability of resources in some of the technical areas covered under accreditation
- m) Non-payment of fees/dues.
- n) At the request of CB
- o) Any other condition deemed appropriate by NABET

17.3.2 A notice citing reasons and intention to suspend shall be sent to the CB inviting response within 15 days.

17.3.3 The accredited CB shall be given an opportunity to explain its position in writing to NABET and present its case in person to the accreditation committee. The final decision shall be taken in respect of Suspension of Accreditation (Partial or full) on the basis of facts and the results of such presentation.

17.3.4 Notwithstanding the above provision for a representation by the CB, the accreditation committee may decide to suspend accreditation if there is sufficient evidence of willful



misrepresentation of facts or willful non-compliance to accreditation criteria. The period of suspension shall be formally communicated.

17.3.5 In case the accreditation of the CB is suspended (partially or full); the information would be made public via newsletters / website etc. for information and feedback from the industry & other interested parties.

17.3.6 The period of suspension shall not be more than six months. Subsequent to the suspension, NABET shall have the right to withdraw the accreditation if the accredited CB does not take suitable corrective action to the satisfaction of NABET and its assessment team within six months.

17.3.7 In the event of part / full suspension of the accreditation, the accredited CB shall be informed and shall be barred from issuing accredited certificates for the scopes for which the accreditation has been suspended.

17.3.8 For revoking suspension, the accredited certification body shall formally apply to NABET. The suspension shall be revoked after an assessment has been carried out to verify that the corrective action has been implemented and is effective in eliminating the reasons for suspension. Fee of this assessment shall be borne by CB.

#### **17.4 Withdrawal of Accreditation**

17.4.1 The CB shall be subject to withdrawal of accreditation based on the following conditions individually or jointly:

- a) If an accredited CB willfully relinquishes its accredited status
- b) If the non-conformities are not appropriately addressed after suspension for a period not more than six months
- c) If no action is taken by the accredited CB in response to the suspension on any other grounds

- d) Complaints are received about the certification process / CB and their validity is established based on facts.
- e) Filing of any voluntary or involuntary bankruptcy by CB.
- f) Liquidation of business or organization
- g) Non-compliance to accreditation criteria.

17.4.2 The notice of the intention to withdraw accreditation and citing reasons shall be sent to the accredited CB. The CB shall respond within 15 days.

17.4.3 The accredited CB shall be given an opportunity to explain its position in writing to NABET and present its case in person to the Technical committee or accreditation committee. The final decision shall be taken in respect of Withdrawal of Accreditation on the basis of facts and the results of such presentation.

17.4.4 The withdrawal of Accreditation shall be formally communicated.

17.4.5 NABET would publish information about any withdrawal of accreditation in its newsletter / website / newspapers for information of the industry / other interested parties.

17.4.6 In addition to the above NABET may decide to withdraw accreditation based on market feedback, repetitive complaints about the certification process.

17.4.7 In the event of the decision to withdraw the accreditation, the CB shall be asked to return the original accreditation certificate and the enclosure of scopes to NABET and to stop using the accreditation mark of NABET henceforth. NABET shall also notify the legal course for initiating any penalty of such misuses if it is reported and found supported by facts and evidences.

17.4.8 Withdrawal of an accreditation has consequences on the customers of the CB. Accredited certificates issued to the educational organizations shall be considered as unaccredited once the accreditation is withdrawn. The CB shall provide its customers with information on the withdrawal of its accreditation and on its consequences. The CB may, in

consultation with NABET, arrange for the transfer of such accredited certificates to another accredited CB.

17.4.9 Following withdrawal of accreditation, the CB would be eligible to seek fresh accreditation as a new applicant only after a lay off period of one year.

#### **17.5 Public Information on Suspension or Withdrawal of Accreditation:**

17.5.1 The information about suspension or withdrawal shall be placed on the website in the register of the accredited bodies and NABET may make a public declaration in the newspapers. The charges for making the information public through newspapers shall be recovered from the CB involved before revoking the suspension or renewal of the accreditation.

### **18 Notification to NABET**

18.1 As part of the application for accreditation, the applicant CB / accredited CB undertakes to inform NABET within 30 days if any change takes place in any of the aspects of its status or operation that affects its:

- a) Legal, commercial or organizational status
- b) Organization and management, for example key managerial staff
- c) Policies or procedures, where appropriate
- d) Premises
- e) Personnel, equipment, facilities, working environment or other resources, where significant.
- f) Scope of accreditation
- g) Other such matters that may affect the ability of the CB to fulfil requirements of NABET accreditation criteria & 17021-1:2015.

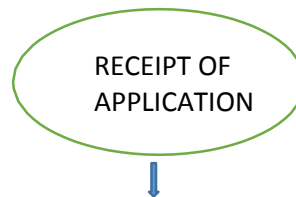
- 18.2 On receipt of the information of change in any of the above parameters, NABET decides whether an extra surveillance visit is necessary or the change shall not affect the operation of the certification system within the accredited scope.
- 18.3 If NABET recommends a surveillance visit, such surveillance visit shall be charged as per prevailing fee structure. The invoice for such surveillance visit is sent to the CB. Further action shall be initiated only on timely payment of full fees to NABET for the surveillance visit. The procedure of surveillance assessment shall then be followed.
- 18.4 During regular surveillance the accredited CB shall be asked to confirm that no change in the parameters mentioned above or any other aspect that will affect the certification has taken place since the last assessment.
- 18.5 In case an accredited CB is found to have given a willful wrong declaration, the NABET shall initiate suitable action and reserves the right to suspend / withdraw the accreditation.

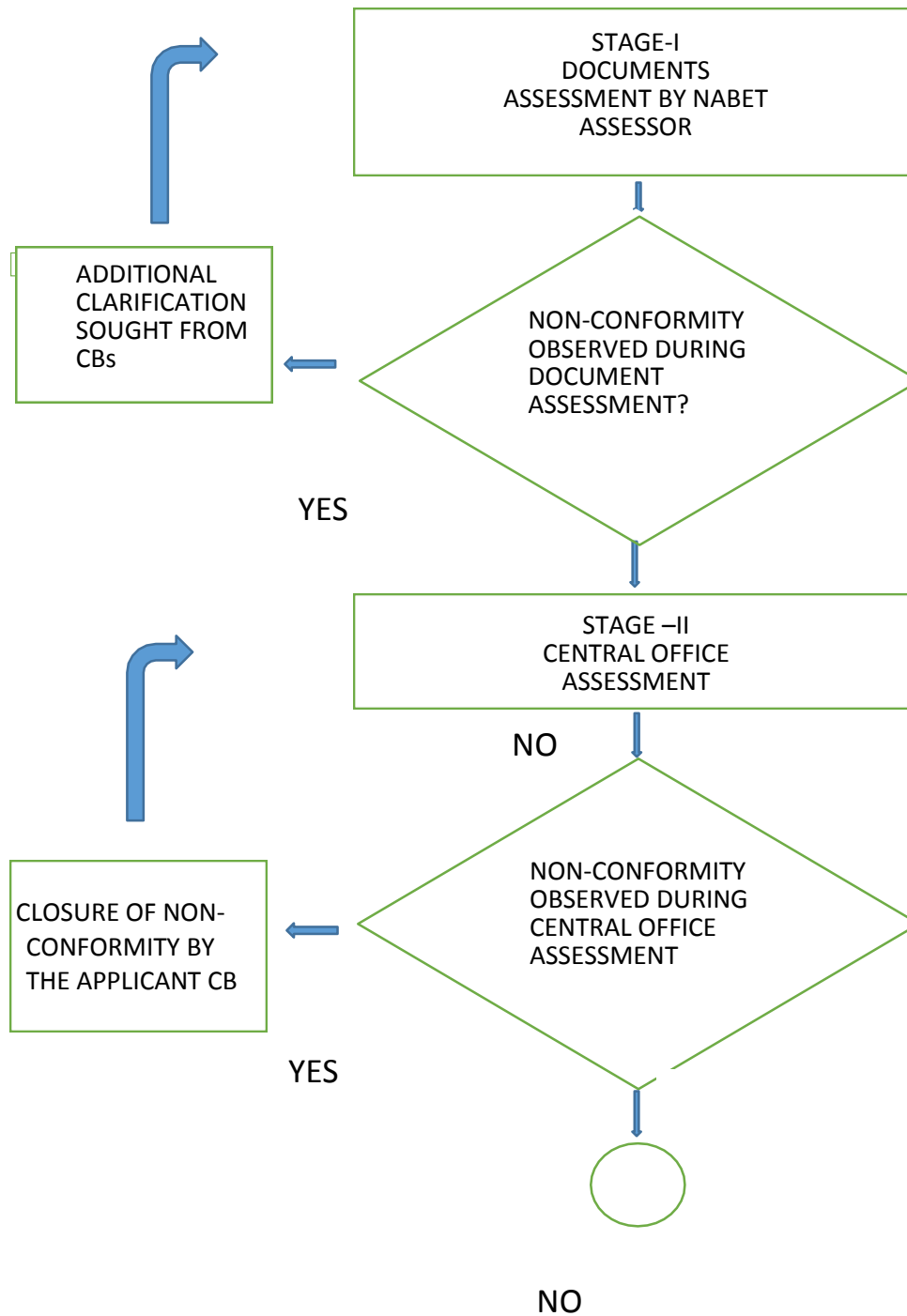
## **19 Fees payable for the accreditation process and Annual Fees**

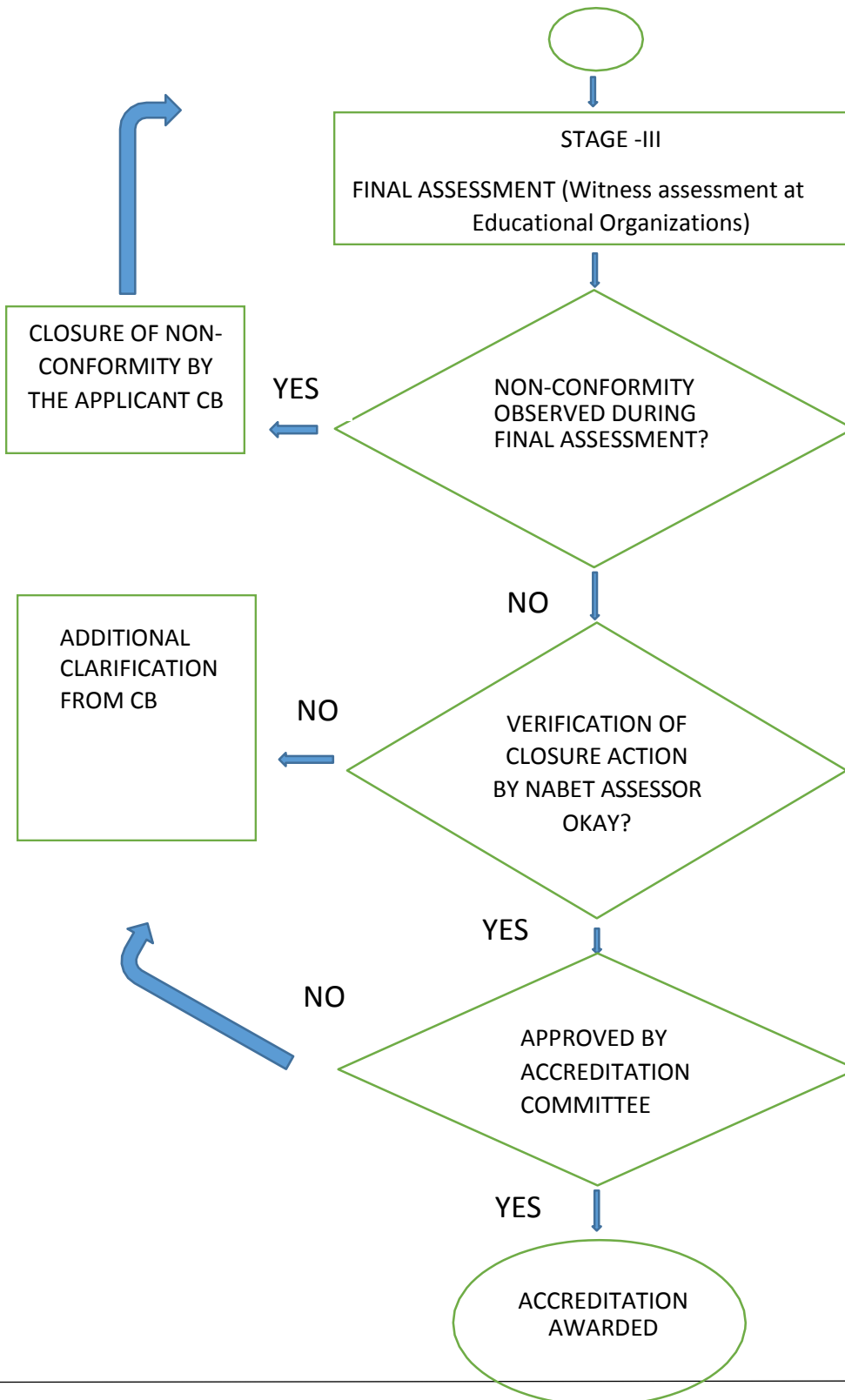
- 19.1 The Fee structure shall be approved by the QCI Governing Body. The current fee approved by the QCI Governing Body shall be applicable to all CBs.
- 19.2 The total fee shall be depend on the actual assessment days and other parameters as specified in the fee structure procedure NABET-AD-PR-12.

**Annexure A**

**Accreditation Process Flowchart**









Annexure B

Amendment Record

| S.No. | Authorized Person | Amendment | Date of Amendment |
|-------|-------------------|-----------|-------------------|
|       |                   |           |                   |
|       |                   |           |                   |
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