



**NATIONAL ACCREDITATION BOARD FOR CERTIFICATION BODIES (NABCB)**

Quality Council of India (QCI), 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Institution of Engineers Building, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi – 110002

Phone: +91-11-2337 8056 / 57; E-mail: [nabcb@qcin.org](mailto:nabcb@qcin.org); Web: [www.qcin.org](http://www.qcin.org);

**Policy and Procedure**  
*for*  
**Conducting Remote Assessment**



**BCB 003 –Apr 2021**

**(Effective: Immediate)**



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## 0. Introduction:

The traditional methodology used for assessment of Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs), based on ISO/IEC 17011 involves on-site office assessments of the CAB, but this standard also allows for performing assessments remotely. The Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) today with the advent of significant technological advances maintain a fairly centralized networks, quality management systems, conformity assessment operations, and are able to create **virtual sites** that allow persons from different physical locations to execute conformity assessment processes in an effective manner. It is an on-line environment in which processes are executed, where demonstration of evidence, conformity or traceability can be confirmed via electronic means. This document prescribes the use of Remote Assessment as one of the techniques to supplement the traditional on-site assessment activities, when appropriate, feasible or necessary. Remote assessments provide the opportunity for increased efficiency, increased safety, better timing, inclusion of CAB personnel that may not be easily accessible, and avoidance of travel delays and restrictions.

### 1.0 Scope

This document is applicable for carrying out Remote Assessments by NABCB in order to complement traditional oversight techniques (On-site and/or Witness assessments of CABs). It establishes the minimum requirements to allow use of remote assessment techniques. The requirements as per IAF MD 4 are applicable in addition to the requirements defined in this document. This document is applicable for the office assessment/witness assessment of CABs for management systems, persons, product, inspection, GHG and other NABCB Accreditation Schemes as established from time to time unless otherwise specified.

### 2.0 Objective:

The objective of Remote Assessment is to establish the level of confidence in the conformity assessment processes of CABs and compliance to applicable accreditation requirements by direct observations carried out through an electronic medium. This document describes how NABCB will utilize Remote Assessments to make its accreditation processes more effective and efficient, and at the same time provide IT-based assessments for accredited/applicant CABs.

### 3.0 Definition of terms:

The following definitions are taken from ISO/IEC 17011:2017 *“Conformity assessment - Requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies”*.

- 3.1 **Remote Assessment:** An assessment of the physical location or virtual site of a conformity assessment body, using electronic means.
- 3.2 **Virtual Site:** A virtual site is an online environment allowing persons to execute processes, e.g. in a cloud environment.



NOTE 1: *Examples of remote assessment include: webinars/web meetings, teleconferences, online video/audio services, remote access to organization's data processing and management systems, databases, etc.*

#### **4.0 Reference Documents** (Latest versions unless specified)

- 4.1 ISO/IEC 17011 - Conformity assessment – Requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies
- 4.2 IAF ID 12 – IAF Informative Document for Principles on Remote Assessment (guidance only)
- 4.3 IAF MD 4 - IAF Mandatory Document for the use of Information and communication technology for auditing/assessment purposes
- 4.4 IAF ID 3 - IAF Informative Document for Management of Extraordinary Events or Circumstances Affecting ABs, CABs and Certified Organizations
- 4.5 BCB 201 - NABCB Accreditation Procedure as applicable for relevant accreditation Schemes
- 4.6 NABCB Policy on Management of Extraordinary Events or Circumstances.
- 4.7 IAF FAQs published by IAF on website <https://iaffaq.com/>

#### **5.0 Eligibility Criteria for Remote Assessment**

The acceptability and the extent of remote assessment techniques will vary from organization to organization and will depend on circumstances such as level of technology available to the organization, the organization's assessment preference, resources, etc.

The use of remote assessment by NABCB will be on voluntary basis, by mutual agreement, or may be initiated by the NABCB as per assessment needs (initial office assessment, surveillance, investigations, reaccreditation, scope extension, witness assessment, verifications, etc.).

NABCB will carry out the remote assessment (fully remote assessment or using a combination of part on-site and part remote assessment) after review of the need on case by case basis considering the risk aspect. The decision on use of remote assessment methodology would be taken by NABCB secretariat depending on the complexities involved.

#### **Remote assessment is permitted, under one or more of the following conditions:**

- 5.1 The number of sites to be assessed is difficult for NABCB to completely fulfil within its timeframe
- 5.2 The assessment is for a minor extension to scope of accreditation
- 5.3 The situation requires the assessment team to come back for a follow up assessment, but another visit is not easily achievable within a short time frame
- 5.4 Office assessment of another location of a CAB for the currently accredited scope.
- 5.5 Complaint investigation



- 5.6 Verification of corrective action implementation
- 5.7 When timing of the assessment does not support the travel logistics required to conduct the assessment on site
- 5.8 Travel to a CAB or specific location is not reasonable (i.e., for safety reasons, travel restrictions, etc.)
- 5.9 On-site office and/or witness assessment is not possible due to a circumstance beyond the control of the organization, commonly referred to as “Force Majeure” or “Act of God” as defined in IAF ID 3 document or in NABCB Policy on Management of Extraordinary Events or Circumstances.
- 5.10 The CAB has a proven track record of conformance at the location of the remote assessment and NABCB has determined the activity as low risk level.
- 5.11 An activity planned for the on-site assessment could not be completed and extending the on-site assessment is not the best resolution.
- 5.12 Unavoidable changes in scheduling for the assessment team/assessor or CAB (i.e., personal issues, change in business priorities, etc.)
- 5.13 NABCB is confident that the assessment objectives can be achieved via remote assessment activities.
- 5.14 An on-site assessment is not required for the relevant standard or scheme.
- 5.15 When an NABCB accredited CAB seeks accreditation for additional scheme, a complete remote assessment for initial office and/or witness may be conducted based on review by NABCB.
- 5.16 In case of new applicant CAB (new entity seeking accreditation from NABCB for the first time), the initial office assessment may be conducted partly remote and partly on-site (with at least one assessor present on-site during initial office assessment). However, remote witness assessments, based on risk assessment, may be carried out in schemes/standards where there is no restriction by scheme owner.  

In case partly on-site assessment is not possible, a complete remote assessment may be conducted based on results of risk assessment by NABCB, and in such case, the first annual surveillance assessment shall be conducted on-site after grant of initial accreditation. Alternatively, first annual surveillance assessment may be conducted remotely, where it is not feasible to visit onsite in view of the risk arising from extraordinary situation.
- 5.17 Remote witness assessments of CABs conducting remote audit/inspections may also be considered based on risk assessment by NABCB depending on type of scheme, complexity of scope etc.

## **6.0 Remote assessments shall not be permitted in the following conditions:**

- 6.1 When the CAB has a history of major non-conformances at the location being assessed.
- 6.2 Where the scope and/or the competence of personnel is critical, and requires an on-site assessment



- 6.3 The CAB has changed location and/or address
- 6.4 Another AB is conducting an assessment on NABCB's behalf.

## **7.0 Qualification Criteria for Remote Assessment**

- 7.1 The CAB qualifies the eligibility criteria for remote assessment as described above.
- 7.2 All the information (records, data, documents etc) of the CAB are readily available in electronic formats or document reader.
- 7.3 The CAB has virtual meeting capabilities, including audio (and video when used), aptitude, and resources (on-site IT, personnel, and tools).
- 7.4 The CAB and the assessment team are competent to navigate an online meeting, and remote personnel are competent to participate.
- 7.5 The CAB is able to provide a representative that is capable of communicating in the same language as the assessor.
- 7.6 Difference of time zone, if any, must be supportive to CAB and assessors.
- 7.7 NABCB may provide the IT platform for remote assessment if the CAB is not well equipped. In this case the CAB shall bear the additional expenses associated with the remote assessment process such as fees for teleconference, webinar, audio/visual, etc.
- 7.8 Remote assessment techniques are not prohibited by the standards or scheme requirement.
- 7.9 In case of remote witness assessment, CAB shall ensure the provision of smooth live streaming and recording of the entire technical activity performed so that NABCB Assessment Team may interact with the CAB's auditor/inspector and witness the entire process which is under audit.

## **8.0 Conduct of Remote Assessment**

- 8.1 Once NABCB accepts the request of CAB for remote assessment after review of *duly filled-in prerequisite checklist of remote assessment, (BCB F046)*, or decides to carry out remote assessment on its own, the normal process of on-site assessment will apply as per NABCB Accreditation Procedure (BCB 201). The additional time required for remote assessment for use of ICT shall be determined after review and will be informed to CAB on a case to case basis.
- 8.2 The specific dates & time period to perform a remote assessment shall be decided by NABCB AT and CAB. The duration of a remote assessment (part/complete) may differ from that of onsite assessment, depending on what aspects are planned to be covered. In addition, it is also likely that the assessment may be fragmented with individual activities happening over the course of a longer period.
- 8.3 The mode of communication and the IT platform between the NABCB Assessment team and CAB for conducting remote assessment, sending documents or clarification on issues shall be pre-defined and communicated.



- 8.4 The CAB shall provide to NABCB the names of the designated individual(s) that will facilitate, manage and coordinate arrangements for the remote assessment on behalf of the CAB.
- 8.5 The key personnel of CAB shall be available during remote assessment. Personnel with specific technical or administrative responsibilities will need to be available for their relevant parts of the assessment. Top management and other members of the leadership team will need to be available for relevant parts of the assessment as well as in the opening and closing meetings.
- 8.6 The CAB and the assessment team shall take appropriate measures to safeguard confidentiality of data in any form and impartiality during the remote assessment.
- 8.7 Both NABCB remote assessment team and the CAB should make their best efforts to confirm what was heard, stated and read throughout the remote assessment. In case if the remote assessment team is not able to review, in part or in full, any specific activity, a record shall be made.
- 8.8 If at any time during the remote assessment process, the CAB cannot support the remote assessment process or the assessor(s) cannot perform the assessment sufficiently using the remote assessment approach then the CAB must have an onsite assessment for those functions that could not be assessed using remote assessment.
- 8.9 The remote assessment team in consultation with NABCB may terminate the remote assessment prior to completion due to an inability to maintain satisfactory connections or conditions during the scheduled time. This shall be recorded in the assessment report.

## **9.0 Post Remote Assessment Activities**

- 9.1 Assessment findings (Non-conformance, Concern etc.) shall be documented by the Remote Assessment team and provided to the CAB in writing in a timely manner at the closure of Remote Assessment or just thereafter. The Assessment team shall debrief the CAB on the assessment findings at the end of each day and in the Closing Meeting of the Remote Assessment.
- 9.2 The assessment report shall be provided by the Assessment team in the prescribed time period as per NABCB accreditation procedure and shall include the details of the standards/requirements, or part thereof, for which compliance is assessed and findings, documents and records reviewed, and CAB personnel whose competence is assessed.
- 9.3 The treatment of Non-conformances and/or Concerns, if raised, and renewing/continuing approval of accreditation shall follow the same processes that are prescribed for on-site assessments in the applicable NABCB accreditation procedure.
- 9.4 The Remote Assessment team shall delete any confidential documents, records, recordings etc. of the CAB, as available with it during the Remote Assessment, on completion of the process.



## **Amendment Record**

| <b><u>Date</u></b> | <b><u>Auth. by</u></b> | <b><u>Description of Amendment</u></b>  |
|--------------------|------------------------|---|
| June 2020          | CEO                    | Aligned with IAF Guidelines on remote audit / assessments and inclusion of remote assessment in case of initial accreditation.            |
| Apr 2021           | CEO                    | Clause 5.16 revised to include provision of first SA remotely.<br>Condition for remote assessment revised wrt ISMS Scheme as per IAF FAQs |