

## **Certification Regulations**

APC-M-06 (Rev. 4)      24 Mar 2022

### **1. Introduction**

In today's fiercely competitive environment of the global market place, it has become imperative for companies over a wide range of manufacturing and service sectors to provide assurance of the quality of their products or services through an implementation of a variable quality management system.

International standards ISO 9001, ISO 14001 & ISO 45001 series stipulate the minimum requirements for a documented Quality / Environmental / Occupational Health and Safety management system to be established and a Certificate of Compliance to these standards has now become an international criterion of assessing a company's credibility and capability to consistently meet quality standards to the customer satisfaction. Types of management system certification scheme and relevant benefits are depicted in <https://www.apcslimited.com/management-system-audit>.

A-Professional Certification Services Limited (APC) is a certification body established in May 2018, providing certification service of management system to the clients. APC's run its certification schemes by applying normative accreditation guidelines such as ISO/IEC 17021-1, ISO/IEC 17021-2, ISO/IEC 17021-3, ISO/IEC 17021-10, ISO 19011, IAF relevant mandatory documents and HKAS relevant documents. Being a certification body, APC has its impartiality policy stated in its official website (<https://www.apcslimited.com>) which shows APC top management's commitment to impartiality and APC's determination to ensure the objectivity of its management system certification activities.

### **2. Certification Process**

The organization shall understand the process of certification.

The certification process consists of the following key stages:

	<b>Client</b>	<b>APC</b>
Application	Client shall fill the application form which can be downloaded from <a href="https://www.apcslimited.com/downloads">https://www.apcslimited.com/downloads</a> , and then submit the form together with Business Registration.	APC answer enquiries and guide the client to fill the application form.
Application review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Client may need to submit additional information or management system document, upon the request of APC</li> <li>Client receive the notice whether its application is accepted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>APC review the application and, if necessary, identify the area of concerns and request the client to submit additional information.</li> <li>APC also consider whether it has sufficient competence to perform the audit. APC will notice the</li> </ul>

**Certification Regulations**

		client whether their application is accepted.
Initial certification - Stage 1 audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinate the arrangement of stage 1 audit;</li> <li>Receive the stage 1 audit plan;</li> <li>Being audited;</li> <li>Client shall have one complete internal audit and management review before stage 2 audit.</li> <li>Client receives the notice of whether they passed in stage 1 audit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>APC select and appoint the competent auditor for audit and schedule the stage 1 audit.</li> <li>APC will submit an audit plan of stage 1 audit to the client at least 1 week before</li> <li>APC perform the Stage 1 audit (documentation review) to obtain necessary information for scoped activities and review the allocation of resource for stage 2 audit</li> <li>Audit team determine whether stage 2 audit is ready to be proceeded.</li> </ul>
Initial certification - Stage 2 audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being audited</li> <li>Follow up of non-conformities and implement corrective actions</li> <li>Submit the evidence of effective corrective actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>APC perform stage 2 audit;</li> <li>APC issue the audit conclusion;</li> <li>APC request the client to submit the corrective action plan with a fixed time frame, if non-conformities are raised.</li> <li>Verification of non-conformities shall be done before certification review.</li> </ul>
Initial Certification decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submit the corrective action plan and corrective action evidence for verification</li> <li>Get noticed by APC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certification review and certification decision are done by APC certification board.</li> <li>Certificate issuance</li> </ul>
Surveillance visit (SV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need to notice APC if significant changes are made.</li> <li>Plan with APC for audit programme and audit plan</li> <li>Being auditee for SV</li> <li>Submit the corrective action plan for non-conformities to APC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducted at least once a calendar year</li> <li>Date of first SV following initial certification shall not more than 12 months</li> <li>Audit programme confirmed and communicated to the client</li> <li>Competent audit team appointment; Audit scheduling</li> <li>Audit plan submitted at least 5 days before audit.</li> </ul>

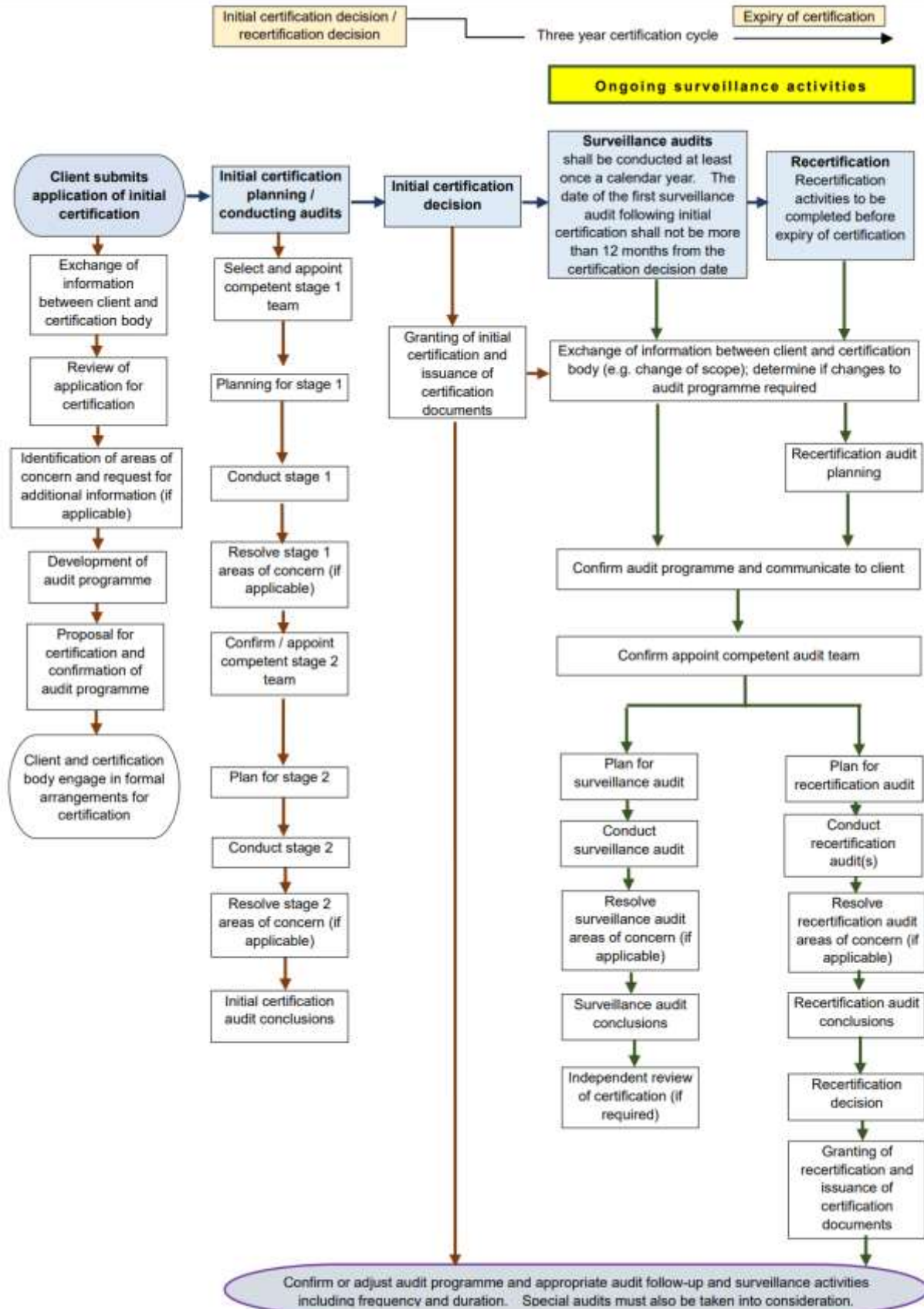
**Certification Regulations**

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct SV and issue audit conclusion</li> <li>• APC request the client to submit the corrective action plan with a fixed time frame</li> <li>• Certification review if required</li> </ul>
<p>Re-assessment Audit (REA)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to notice APC if significant changes are made.</li> <li>• Plan with APC for audit programme and audit plan</li> <li>• Being auditee for REA</li> <li>• Submit the corrective action plan and corrective action evidence for verification</li> <li>• Obtain the new certificate if certification review of APC is passed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• REA to be done before the expiry date of the certificate</li> <li>• Audit programme confirmed and communicated to the client</li> <li>• Competent audit team appointment; Audit scheduling</li> <li>• Audit plan submitted at least 5 days before audit.</li> <li>• Conduct REA</li> <li>• Audit conclusion of REA</li> <li>• APC request the client to submit the corrective action plan with a fixed time frame, if non-conformities are raised.</li> <li>• Verification of non-conformities shall be done before certification review.</li> <li>• Granting of recertification and issuance of certification document</li> </ul>

# Certification Regulations

APC-M-06 (Rev. 4)

24 Mar 2022



## **Certification Regulations**

APC-M-06 (Rev. 4)

24 Mar 2022

### **3. Granting, Refusing, Maintaining, Renewing, Suspension, Withdrawal, Extension and reduction of Certification**

#### Granting Initial Certification

APC Certification Board make the certification decision on the basis of an evaluation of the audit findings and conclusions and any other relevant information (e.g. public information, comments on the audit report from the client).

The Certification Board will analyze all information and audit evidence gathered during the stage 1 and stage 2 audits to review the audit findings and agree on the audit conclusions. Upon completion of the review of all audit documentation and corrective actions being closed out, APC will issue the certificate to the client.

#### Refusing certification

Certification Board can make rejection and demand follow up action. Reason of rejection shall be stated clearly. If follow up action is required and the action has been implemented as effective within a defined time frame, Certification Board will review the certification.

#### Maintaining and renewing certification

Maintaining the certification require a system of monitoring on certificate issued – surveillance audit and recertification audit. Other surveillance activities may include: enquiries from APC to the certified client, reviewing any client’s statement with respect to its operation, request to the certified client to provide documented information (paper or electronic media), or other feasible means.

Surveillance audits shall be conducted at periodic interval at minimum intervals of 6 months to maximum intervals of 12 months, during the three year term of validity of the certificate followed by a re-assessment of the quality systems for renewal of the certification prior to its expiry.

#### Suspension of certification

The Certificate is suspended for 6 months, in case the following conditions occur:

(a) The client's certified management system has persistently or seriously failed to meet certification requirements, including requirements for the effectiveness of the management system, (b) The certified client does not allow surveillance or recertification audits to be conducted at the required frequencies, (c) The certified client has voluntarily requested a suspension, (d) Following the major nonconformities found in the audits conducted, (e) The minor nonconformities found in the audits are not closed until the determined deadlines, (f) Not obeying the certification rules, or (g) Failure to pay certification or audit fees.

## **Certification Regulations**

APC-M-06 (Rev. 4)      24 Mar 2022

### Withdrawal of certification

The certificate is withdrawn in the following conditions:

(a) The request of the organization, (b) Bankruptcy of the organization or termination of the activities in the scope of certificate, (c) The client organization makes any arrangements or composition with its creditors, (d) The client organization enters into liquidation, whether compulsory or voluntary, (e) The client organization has a Receiver of its business appointed, (f) an officer of a Business is convicted of an offence tending to discredit the reputation and good faith of the Business as a trader, (g) The certified client has voluntarily requested a suspension, (h) The incorporated body of the organization is changed, (i) The organization does not accept the suspension conditions, (j) The organization does not remove the suspension reasons, (k) The organization does not give permission for the audit until the end of the suspension period, (l) It is found in the follow up audits for removing suspension condition that the organization did not close the non-conformities in the determined time periods, (m) Misleading and unfair usage of the certificate by the organization for the products or service not included in the scope of the certificate, (n) The organization is not present in the stated site address, (o) The alteration of the organization on the certificate, (p) The organization does not confirm the date of surveillance audit, or (q) When APC with justification thinks appropriate. The decision to withdraw or reduce the certification rights of a Business shall be at APC's absolute discretion and such decisions or grounds shall be notified to a Business in writing.

### Extension of scope of certification

Upon the request of the client at any point of certification cycle, the scope of certification can be extended after the verifications conducted as per APC certification process.

### Reducing scope of certification

Upon the request of the client or during the surveillance audit as identified/verified by the audit team, the scope of certification can be reduced after the verifications conducted as per APC certification process.

- a) If there is any complaint from the organization's customer APC needs to verify the complaint and in case if the certified organization is found guilty the certificate will be suspended and will remain suspended until the complaint is resolved.
- b) In case of nonpayment of the fee as per the contractual agreement.
- c) If during the surveillance audit system found not to comply with standard requirement.



## **Certification Regulations**

APC-M-06 (Rev. 4)      24 Mar 2022

### **4. Audit process**

Audit process are briefly described in the below table.

<b>Audit subprocess</b>	<b>description</b>
Opening meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>introduce the audit team and roles, and, if applicable, observer</li> <li>confirmation of scope</li> <li>introduce APC's confidentiality rules and impartiality declaration</li> <li>confirm the audit plan</li> <li>introduce audit finding including area for improvement, minor non-conformities, major conformities</li> </ul>
Communication during the audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>APC audit team periodically exchange the information and assess the audit progress</li> <li>lead auditor shall report immediate and significant risk to the client and if possible, to APC to determine appropriate action</li> <li>review with the client the need for change of the audit scope which become apparent and on-site auditing activities progress</li> </ul>
Obtaining and verifying information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>APC audit team collect the audit evidence through interview, observation of process and activities, review of documentation and records</li> </ul>
Identifying and recording the audit finding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>raise and record non-conformities</li> <li>discuss NC with the client to ensure the evidence is accurate and the non-conformities are understood</li> <li>identify and record areas for improvement</li> </ul>
Prepare audit conclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audit team review audit finding against audit objectives and audit criteria</li> <li>Audit team agree upon the audit conclusion, and agree any necessary follow up actions</li> <li>confirm the appropriateness of audit programme or identify any modification required</li> </ul>
Closing meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>APC audit team record the attendance of auditee including client's management</li> <li>APC audit team present the nonconformities in a way they are understood, timeframe for NC shall be agreed</li> <li>Lead Auditor explain the consequence of NC</li> </ul>

**Certification Regulations**

APC-M-06 (Rev. 4)      24 Mar 2022

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead auditor explain APC's post audit activities</li> <li>• Lead auditor provide information for complaint and appeal handling</li> <li>• Lead auditor records unresolved issues if applicable</li> </ul>
Preparation of audit report	APC provide a pdf version of audit report to the client
Verification of correction and corrective actions to non-conformity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• APC review the corrections, identified cause and corrective action submitted by client</li> <li>• APC shall verify the effectiveness of any correction and corrective actions taken, and record the relevant evidence</li> <li>• APC inform the client the result of review and verification</li> <li>• APC inform client for additional audit if needed</li> </ul>

**5. Certification Transfer**

Transferring management system certification granted by other certification body will typically involve an auditor to review the status of the applicant's current certification and to plan future surveillance visits. APC conduct a pre-transfer review by requesting information and document from the client for the verification purpose. On-site visit is required if necessary. APC will go through:

- last certification or recertification audit reports, subsequent surveillance audit reports;
- any outstanding nonconformities that may arise from them and the relevant corrective action taken;
- the client's certified activities and its scope;
- complaints received in the current certification cycle and action taken;
- any current engagement by the organisation with regulatory bodies in respect of legal compliance

When no further outstanding or potential problems are identified by the pre-transfer review and when the application successfully passed the certification review by certification board, a certificate shall be issued.

Normally, only valid accredited certification should be transferred. In cases where certification has been granted by a certification body which has ceased trading or whose accreditation has expired, been suspended or withdrawn, APC may consider such a certification for transfer at its discretion.

**6. Appeals / Complaints**

In case, an applicant, a certified company or any other interested party wishes to make a complaint in respect of the operation of APC certification or appeal against a decision of the APC which is considered to be unfair and prejudicial to the interests of the complainant, APC will consider the complaint or appeal in accordance with APC audit



## **Certification Regulations**

APC-M-06 (Rev. 4)      24 Mar 2022

procedure, a copy of which can be provided upon request. The latest process flows for handling appeals, enquiries, complaints and disputes is posted on APC's web site (<https://www.apcslimited.com/downloads>) for easy reference and quick retrieval.

### **7. Report of incident or breaching of legal regulations (for the client granted the certification of the certificate of occupational health and safety management system)**

The certified client granted the certificate of occupational health and safety management system have to inform APC without delay of the occurrence of a serious incident or breach of regulation necessitating the involvement of the concerned competent regulatory authority (e.g. Hong Kong Police Force and/or Labour Department of HKSAR, etc.). If the certified organization does not do so, APC would take immediate actions such as imposing an unannounced audit or may even suspend the concerned certification. The kinds of serious accident or breach of regulation necessitating the involvement of the regulatory authority which is required to inform APC are listed, but not limited to below.

- (a) The disintegration of a revolving vessel, wheel, grindstone or grinding wheel that is operated by mechanical power.
- (b) The collapse or failure of a lifting appliance (except the breakage of chain or rope slings).
- (c) An explosion or fire that causes damage to the structure of any workplace, or to any plant or substance at a workplace; and prevents the continuation of ordinary work at the workplace.
- (d) An electrical short circuit or electrical failure of electrical plant that is followed by, or associated with, an explosion or fire; or causes structural damage to the plant, being a short circuit, failure, explosion, fire or damage that stops the operation of the plant or prevents it from being used.
- (e) An explosion of a receiver or container used for the storage at a pressure greater than atmospheric pressure or of any gas or gases (including air) or any liquid or solid resulting from the compression of gases.
- (f) A total or partial collapse of a roof, wall, floor, structure or foundation of premises where a workplace is located.
- (g) A total or partial collapse of any overburden, face, tip or embankment within a quarry.
- (h) The overturning of, or a collision with any object by a bulldozer, dumper, excavator, grader, lorry or shovel loader; or a mobile machine used for the handling of any substance in a quarry.
- (i) An accident causing the death of, or serious bodily injury to, an employee

### **8. Use of Logo and reference to certification**

The use of Logo and reference to certification is governed by this regulation booklet and work guidelines WG-03 and WG-04.

## **Certification Regulations**

APC-M-06 (Rev. 4)      24 Mar 2022

### Use of logo (i.e. certification mark and accreditation symbol)

The certified client shall conform to APC's requirements listed in this section and the requirements of use of certification marks and accreditation symbol of the guidelines (WG-03 and WG-04) available on APC's website: <https://www.apcslimited.com/downloads>.

APC certification mark do not demonstrate product or service approval and therefore may not be used either alone or in conjunction with the accreditation body's symbol (e.g. HKCAS), if any, on products or packaging. Certification mark also cannot be applied in laboratory test, calibration or inspection report or certificates.

### Reference to certification

The statement on product packaging or in accompanying information shall in no way imply that the product, process, or service is certified by this means.

The statement shall include reference to:

- identification (e.g. brand or name) of the certified client;
- the type of management system (e.g. quality, environment, occupational health and safety) and the applicable standard;
- APC issuing the certificate

Remarks:

1. Product packaging is considered as that which can be removed without the product disintegrating or being damaged.
2. Accompanying information is considered as separately available or easily detachable.
3. Type labels or identification plates are considered as part of the product.

**\*\*\*The End\*\*\***