



**SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY
ACCREDITATION SERVICES**

ACCREDITATION REVIEW PANEL COMMITTEE

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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. SAAS convenes an Accreditation Review Panel (ARP), a committee of SAAS whose members review applications for initial accreditation and reaccreditation from auditing companies seeking to become Certification Bodies (CBs) accredited by SAAS. The ARP is given the authority by the SAAS Board of Directors to make accreditation recommendations to the SAAS Executive Director, who shall be responsible for the final accreditation decision.
- 1.2. This document outlines the duties of an Accreditation Review Panel (ARP) member and provides information for making recommendations on accreditation determinations.
- 1.3. This procedure should be read in conjunction with other SAAS documents, particularly SAAS Procedure 200: Audit Requirements for Accredited Certification Bodies for the SA8000 Program, SAAS Procedure 201A: Accreditation Requirements, and SAAS Procedure 202: Complaints and Appeals.

2. OBJECTIVE

- 2.1. The ARP is authorized by the SAAS Board of Directors to recommend whether or not to accredit an organization applying to be accredited by SAAS. This recommendation shall be made on the basis of information provided to ARP members by the SAAS Secretariat and documents provided by the SAAS accreditation auditor and the applicant Body itself (such as the Application Form), as specified in this procedure. This recommendation shall be submitted to the SAAS Executive Director, who shall be responsible for a final decision on accreditation of the applicant CB.
- 2.2. This duty shall be undertaken in an impartial and independent manner and preserve the confidentiality of all parties involved.

3. MEMBERSHIP

- 3.1. The ARP shall comprise a minimum of two members and maximum of five members (typically three members) including at least one who possesses technical expertise in social certification/accreditation/standards and one who represents pertinent supply-chain interests within the scope of SAAS accreditation.
- 3.2. The membership shall include representatives from both civil society and the business sector so that no single interest predominates.
- 3.3. Interested individuals will be nominated by the Scheme Owner/Standard Setting Client for whom the SAAS accreditation services are conducted. Those nominations are considered by the SAAS Board of Directors who then appoints the members of the ARP.
- 3.4. Nominees shall be considered based upon competence criteria defined in the SAAS competence process outline (Procedure 203).
- 3.5. Members shall participate on a volunteer basis for a period of four years. At the end of the four years, the Board of Directors shall appoint the member for a four year renewal period, should the member wish to continue. Should a member resign from the Committee prior to the end of the member's term, SAAS shall seek nominations in a timely manner for a suitable

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replacement.

- 3.6. In the event that an ARP member is unable to participate in two consecutive reviews, the Committee member may be removed and a new member appointed to replace the member.
- 3.7. Term Limits. A Committee member may serve two consecutive four-year terms, but thereafter, he or she shall not be eligible for appointment to the Committee until at least one year has elapsed after the expiration of his or her second consecutive term on the Committee.
- 3.8. The SAAS Executive Director shall be an ex-officio non-voting member of the ARP, representing the SAAS Secretariat and participate in any ARP meetings convened. The SAAS ED shall provide guidance and input as necessary to the members of the Committee.
 - 3.8.1. If the Executive Director has participated in the assessment of the applicant CB, the ED shall appoint another member of the SAAS management team to participate in the ARP meetings and render a final accreditation decision.
- 3.9. All members shall complete a Confidentiality Agreement and declare any possible conflicts of interest that may cause them to act in other than in an impartial or non-discriminatory manner.
 - 3.9.1. ARP members shall be asked to proactively declare their lack of conflict of interest prior to undertaking a review.
 - 3.9.2. Should a member have a conflict of interest with an applicant CB, that member shall recuse themselves.

4. TRAINING AND COMPETENCE

- 4.1. Prior to beginning serving on an ARP, members will be asked to undergo training. The training will examine key accreditation requirements and study sample audit reports.
- 4.2. ARP members shall develop and demonstrate competence based upon criteria defined in the SAAS competence process outline (Procedure 203). Additional training may be required.
- 4.3. SAAS shall maintain records of training provided to ARP members.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 5.1. Powers and Duties. The Committee shall be responsible for providing a recommendation to the SAAS Executive Director on whether or not to accredit an applicant CB to perform certification activities within the scope of SAAS activity. The decision-making powers of the Committee are limited to making recommendations and providing guidance and advice. Ultimate decision-making authority resides with the SAAS Executive Director.
- 5.2. It is expected that the recommendations by the Committee will be considered by the SAAS Executive Director and implemented. Should any recommendations not be accepted, the rationale for not accepting a given recommendation will be provided to the Committee and justified to the SAAS Board of Directors.

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6. PROCESS

- 6.1. Each ARP member shall be provided with copies of relevant documents from the SAAS Secretariat. An ARP member shall receive a digital copy of the package of materials, or, upon request may receive a paper copy via mail at their usual business or home address. They shall be invited to study the package of materials provided. After the delivery of the documentation, the ARP members may contact the other members by email or telephone to sound out their opinions, and to ascertain if they would like more information provided.
- 6.2. SAAS staff shall ask if ARP members would like to hold a meeting via teleconference to discuss the issue, and this meeting shall be arranged if any one of the ARP members requests it.
- 6.3. Each ARP member shall make a recommendation on whether the applicant CB should be granted accreditation based upon evaluation of the materials received from SAAS.
 - 6.3.1. Materials provided to the ARP shall provide reasonable confidence that SAAS accreditation process requirements have been followed and that the criteria has been applied impartially.
 - 6.3.2. Audit results shall contain the information needed to evaluate the competence of the CB and its ability to comply with SAAS procedures and requirements.
 - 6.3.3. The ARP shall be satisfied that the information received is adequate to decide that the requirements for accreditation have been fulfilled.
- 6.4. Each ARP member shall reach a decision on recommendation within 30 calendar days from the date that the package is sent by SAAS, either electronically or via mail.
- 6.5. Members, having reached a decision on their recommendation, shall complete SAAS Form 410: *ARP Report Form*, and forward it to the Executive Director or designee. In the event of a split recommendation, the ARP decision on recommendation shall be made by majority. Copies of the forms shall be filed in the individual client files.
- 6.6. If the majority of the ARP chooses to recommend that SAAS decline the application for initial accreditation or reaccreditation, a teleconference shall be convened with the ARP members and minutes from the teleconference shall be taken. The reasons for the decision shall be clearly summarized and attached to the ARP Report Form. This shall be filed in the individual CB files.
- 6.7. Upon receipt of the recommendation by the ARP members, the SAAS Executive Director shall make a final decision on the accreditation application. The Executive Director has 10 calendar days from receipt of the ARP recommendation to render the final decision. This decision shall be based on the result of the accreditation audits and corrective actions put in place as a result.
 - 6.7.1. It is anticipated that recommendations from the ARP shall be considered by the Executive Director and implemented. Should any recommendation not be accepted, the rationale for not accepting a given recommendation shall be provided to the ARP. SAAS maintains complete authority and responsibility for all decisions related to its activities, including granting, maintaining, extending, reducing, suspending and withdrawing of accreditation.

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- 6.8. The Executive Director shall complete SAAS Form 411: *Executive Director Report Form* with the final accreditation decision and this form shall be filed in the individual client files. The SAAS Executive Director or designee shall notify the applicant within 10 calendar days of the final decision.
- 6.9. If an applicant or accredited Certification Body chooses to appeal an accreditation decision, the materials provided by the CB for the appeal shall be provided to the Board of Directors which shall constitute a complaints and appeals subcommittee. The results of the appeal shall be transmitted to the appellant within 30 calendar days of a decision by the Committee of the Board. The ARP shall be notified in the case of an appeal and its results.
- 6.10. The ARP shall be notified of an Accreditation Certificate suspension or withdrawal, per SAAS Procedure 202 and 210.
- 6.10.1. SAAS Secretariat shall notify the ARP of a decision by the SAAS Executive Director to suspend an accreditation certificate, in its entirety or limited by geographic scope for a limited time in circumstances related to the CBs inability to meet contractual obligations (this includes non-payment of fees, material changes in the personnel or structure of the CB or inability to conduct sufficient certification activity).
- 6.10.2. In situations where the SAAS Secretariat suspends an accredited CB, it shall promptly advise of the circumstances and seek comment from the ARP. SAAS Secretariat shall subsequently keep the ARP apprised of the situation seeking further comment, guidance and recommendation as needed. The ARP shall also be consulted in the following situations related to accredited CBs:
- a. Recurrent major Corrective Action Requests and/or CARs that have not been closed out within the designated time limit.
 - b. Significant contraventions of SAAS Procedures and Policies.
 - c. Inadequate response to complaints as determined by SAAS.
 - d. Inadequate performance as identified by SAAS.
 - e. Violation of the rules cited in SAAS Procedure 200 and/or 201.
- 6.11. The SAAS Executive Director shall report annually to the Board of Directors the activities and membership of the ARP.

7. INFORMATION FOR ARP MEMBERS

- 7.1. Upon joining, each ARP member shall receive, at minimum, relevant SAAS procedures and normative documents related to the accreditation process. Prior to undertaking a decision to recommend accreditation, ARP members shall receive copies of accreditation audit reports and supporting material as per the checklist of information, below.
- 7.2. SAAS shall maintain a password-protected website where normative documents and related SAAS accreditation procedures shall be stored. ARP members shall have a username and password to log into the site and access the documents. Should ARP members choose to have their package of relevant audit documents delivered electronically, SAAS can make the information available on its password-protected website.

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- 7.3. The Audit reports and related material shall comment on the compliance of the applicant Certification Body to SAAS accreditation requirements. Some of the comments are by nature subjective rather than objective and the ARP members shall carefully weigh the evidence provided to reach a conclusion of their own based on the auditor’s recommendation for accreditation. The materials shall show that the accreditation recommendation by the SAAS Accreditation Auditor is appropriate and reasonable based on the assessment of the applicant. It is the role of the ARP to review the materials and determine if the accreditation records provide reasonable confidence that SAAS assessment process requirements have been followed and that accreditation criteria have been applied impartially.
- 7.4. ARP members may seek further clarification of issues, or more information from the SAAS Executive Director or designee, or Lead Auditor, but may not under any circumstance contact the applicant Certification Body directly.

8. Revision History:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Revision History</i>	<i>Requested By</i>
March 2017	Clarified membership terms, responsibilities and process.	Lisa Bernstein

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9. SAAS Accreditation Review Panel: Terms of Reference

1. Purpose: The purpose of this policy is to define the Terms of Reference of the ARP Committee for the consideration of initial and reaccreditation applicants for accreditation by SAAS.
2. Scope: These terms of reference cover the membership, operation and responsibilities of the ARP Committee in its role of recommending applicant CBs for accreditation by SAAS. This Terms of Reference supplements SAAS internal Procedure 303 and is written for use by ARP members. This document should be read in conjunction with SAAS Procedure 303.
3. Membership:
 - a. The ARP shall consist of a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 5 members, representing a balance of technical experts in social certification and/or accreditation and the Standards within the scope of SAAS accreditation.
 - b. Members shall represent both civil society and the business sector so that no single interest predominates.
 - c. Membership in the Committee is for a period of four years. Should a member resign from the Committee, SAAS shall seek to appoint a new member in a timely manner.
 - d. A Committee member may serve two consecutive four-year terms but thereafter, he or she shall not be eligible for reappointment to the Committee until at least one year has elapsed.
 - e. The SAAS Executive Director shall be an ex-officio non-voting member of the ARP Committee.
4. Goals: The ARP Committee acts as an additional impartial, independent verification of the SAAS accreditation system, its functions and the decision-making process. Committee members assist the SAAS Executive Director in reviewing the materials for initial and reaccreditation applications and provide additional oversight to ensure the basic accreditation functions are carried out in the prescribed manner.
5. Deliverables: The ARP is authorized by the SAAS Board of Directors to recommend whether or not to accredit an applicant applying to be accredited or reaccredited by SAAS. This recommendation is made based on the information provided to ARP members by the SAAS Secretariat and documents provided by the SAAS Accreditation Auditor and applicant body. The SAAS Executive Director is responsible for the final decision on accreditation of the applicant CB.
6. Resources: Each ARP member will be provided with copies of relevant documents from the SAAS Secretariat. Upon joining the ARP, SAAS shall provide the new member with training materials and normative references. Prior to making a recommendation, an ARP member will receive a package of materials (either electronically or in paper copy) containing the application materials to study.
7. Budget: Membership in the ARP Committee is fully voluntary and services are rendered pro bono. ARP members are not compensated for time spent serving on the ARP Committee. All actual and reasonable direct expenses incurred (such as telephone calls, postage, etc.) will be reimbursed with prior permission from the SAAS Executive Director or designee.
8. Operations: The ARP is responsible for approximately 5 initial and reaccreditation

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recommendations per year. Each ARP member is expected to make a recommendation on whether the applicant CB should be granted accreditation based upon evaluation of the materials received from SAAS.

- a. ARP members have 30 days from the date the materials are sent to make a recommendation.
- b. ARP members may request a meeting via teleconference to discuss the applicant CB.
- c. Members, having reached a decision, complete SAAS Form 410 and forward it to the SAAS Executive Director or designee. In the event of a split recommendation, the ARP decision is made by simple majority.
- d. Upon receipt of the recommendation, the SAAS Executive Director shall make a final decision on the accreditation application.

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10. Checklist of Materials For ARP Members

Materials for Members Upon Joining the ARP

1. Standard and Guidance Document, as relevant to accredited system
2. SAAS Policy Manual (Procedure 101)
3. Normative certification and accreditation methodology documents, as relevant to accredited system (example, Procedure 200, Procedure 200A, Procedure 201A and Procedure 201B)
4. Terms of Reference for ARP (Procedure 303)
5. Work Instructions, as relevant to accredited system (example, Work Instructions 311, 314, 316)
6. Report Forms, as relevant to accredited system (example, Forms 313, 315)
7. PowerPoint and other training materials prepared for ARP members related to SAAS and the accreditation process.
8. A user name and password for the SAAS members only website.
9. A sample of 2 previous packages prepared for ARP members consideration.

Materials for ARP Consideration of an Applicant CB for Initial and Reccreditation

1. Executive Summary, including details about the applicant, a list of all audits, a summary of complaints, a brief history of their activity and other relevant information related to the CB.
2. A copy of the application form.
3. A copy of the initial/reaccreditation office and witnessed audit report.
4. A summary of Corrective Action Requests and details of closure of the CARs.
5. A chart with the CBs growth of certifications (for reaccreditation applicants).

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11. Guidance for Accreditation Review Panel Members

1. **Hours of Work:** ARP members are asked to take all due care in their deliberations and decision making. The total time will vary between individuals and between application decisions, but it is likely that for individual ARP members, the total time involved will be approximately 3-4 hours for each deliberation, plus time for any meetings that may occur. In a given year, the ARP will be asked to consider approximately 5 initial and re-accreditation applicants per year.
2. **Expenses:** Members of the ARP are volunteers and are not paid for their time. However, all actual and reasonable direct expenses incurred (such as telephone calls, courier charges etc.) will be reimbursed. ARP members are asked to contact the SAAS Executive Director or designee prior to incurring expenses for which the member is seeking reimbursement.
3. **Liabilities:** SAAS completely indemnifies ARP members from any possible claims that may be levied against them from applicant or accredited Certification Bodies. The SAAS Board of Directors and Secretariat are ultimately responsible for all decisions made on behalf of SAAS. The authority under which the ARP has been convened was granted by the SAAS Board and the SAAS Executive Director, as appointed by the Board, retains all decision-making responsibility.
4. **Conflicts of interest:** Conflict of interest can arise in many ways. Any real or potential conflict of interest must be proactively declared to the SAAS Executive Director or designee, and if in doubt, ARP members are invited to discuss any concerns with the SAAS Executive Director. The following are examples of possible conflicts of interest by an ARP member:
 - Provided consultancy services to the applicant Certification Body;
 - Retains an ownership interest in the applicant Certification Body;
 - Participated in the audit of the applicant Certification Body;
 - Has been an employee or principal in a company who is a major supplier of goods or services to the applicant Certification Body;
 - Maintains an intent to form a relationship of some nature with the applicant Certification Body after the deliberations;
 - Is currently a client of the applicant Certification Body;
 - Maintains a personal relationship (e.g. immediate family) with key personnel from the applicant Certification Body;
 - Is currently or was formerly an employee of the applicant CB or of a subsidiary of the applicant CB;
 - Has or does currently employ the applicant CB.
5. **CB Knowledge:** The Certification Body will not know who is a member of the ARP considering their case. This information is kept confidential. However, in the interest of transparency, all members of the ARP are publicly listed on the SAAS website.
6. **Description of materials:** The audit reports are comprehensive records of the SAAS accreditation audit team's findings of compliance with accreditation requirements and of any related non-conformities identified, together with actions taken by the applicant Certification Body to correct these. All reports distributed to the ARP have undergone a technical review by SAAS.