



SAAS Office Audit Objectives and Comparisons

As an international accreditation body, SAAS undertakes office and witness audits of accredited and applicant Certification Bodies (CBs) to assess the degree and effectiveness of the implementation of the CB's system against the SAAS accreditation requirements.

These requirements include compliance to required ISO documents and particular requirements for SAAS including the competence of a CB's auditors.

SAAS undertakes a holistic surveillance system for the duration of a CB's accreditation cycle, selecting a sampling of annual offices and witnessed audits to conduct assessments for each CB based upon a CB's organizational structure, critical locations and identified risk and performance criteria.

During an office assessment, SAAS accreditation auditors review the organization's documented management system policy, procedures, documents and files, and conduct interviews with staff and auditors. During a witnessed audit, SAAS auditors observe the CB's auditors performing an audit to ensure that the CB's procedures in the field are effective in delivering credible, consistent and robust audits.

Office audits are intended to provide assurance that a SAAS accredited CB is managing their certification activities in compliance with SAAS requirements. SAAS office audits also confirm that the CB's nominated Head Office is communicating effectively with its local offices and that there is in place a system for the global management of SAAS Accredited certification programs. In addition, SAAS auditors review that any nonconformities that have been raised by SAAS during Office and Witness audits have been analyzed for root cause analysis and the appropriate corrective and preventive action undertaken.

SAAS auditors check to verify that all auditors in the field, including those in remote locations, are given the necessary support by their accredited CB to perform effective and consistent certification audits in line with SAAS requirements. SAAS auditors also seek to understand and then confirm the lines of authority and responsibility from the Head Office to remote locations, including basic activities such as:

- who ensures that documents required by the certification process are current, updated and distributed and that auditors in remote locations are using them;
- who works out the basic needs wage levels in remote locations;
- who undertakes stakeholder consultation relevant to the remote area;
- who prepares, and what is the process for presenting proposed contracts to clients, even in situations when the final client contract goes into a secure data system for the parent company?

Head Office Audits

The objective of a Head Office¹ assessment is to ensure that SAAS accreditation criteria are being met (for example compliance with ISO/IEC 17021:2006 and SAAS Procedure 200 requirements) in a satisfactory manner by the CB's management system and that this system is also being effectively and consistently applied in the field throughout the areas stipulated in the approved accreditation scope of the CB.

During an office assessment, SAAS accreditation auditors review the organization's procedures, documents, work instructions and files as well as conduct interviews with appropriate staff and auditors.

The following list summarizes (but is not limited to) the broad categories reviewed by the SAAS auditors in a CB's head office, and is not intended to be a complete, all-inclusive list of the requirements to be audited:

1. Top management commitment to the SAAS-accredited program, including management of impartiality and conflict of interest throughout the whole organization including remote locations.

¹ Head office as defined in SAAS Procedure 200 1.4.b.

2. Competence of staff members assigned responsibility for the implementation, review, approval and management of the certification process.
3. Competence of field personnel.
4. CB evaluations of field auditors for purposes of development.
5. Control of subcontract auditors and technical experts.
6. Database content, if utilized by CB, for aggregation of regional laws, regulations and statistics for field dissemination.
7. Effectiveness of the management system including the management review function and its control of the internal monitoring process and corrective action system throughout its accredited scope of operation.
8. Insurance coverage for staff, auditors and remote locations.
9. Global procedures for controlling local and remote certification activities and inclusion of SAAS requirements.
10. The review and approval process for managing quality control of certification client files and the resulting issuance of certificates.
11. Handling of complaints and appeals.
12. Control of documentation.
13. Internal Audit and Management review records.
14. Audit reports of other accreditation bodies, if applicable.

Local Office Assessment

The objective of a local office assessment (the office may be owned directly by the CB or subcontracted² to deliver specific services as permitted by ISO/IEC 17021:2006, element 7.5) is to ensure that SAAS accreditation criteria (such as ISO/IEC 17021:2006 and SAAS Procedure 200) are being met in a satisfactory manner and that the local office is operating in conformance with the management system of the controlling accredited CB. Although a local representative office will not be driving/managing the accredited certification process itself, it must be seen to be working within the parameters of the accredited CBs controlling system and the SAAS accredited CB must maintain control through oversight of the delivery of certification process to ensure that controlling guidelines and procedures are followed at all times.

The main objective of a SAAS Local Office Assessment audit is to provide assurance that the managing CB Head Office is communicating effectively with their local office and that the systems in place for the global management of SAAS accredited certification program is effective, robust and consistent.

During a local office audit, SAAS accreditation auditors review the CB's procedures, documents, work instructions and files as well as conducting interviews with appropriate staff and auditors.

The following list summarizes (but is not limited to) the broad categories reviewed by SAAS auditors at a CBs local/ remote office, and is not intended to be a complete, all-inclusive list of the requirements to be audited:

1. Competence and training of office staff and field personnel.
2. Contract or Service Level Agreement or Letter of Authority with SAAS Accredited CB Head Office.
3. Liability Insurance Coverage.
4. Subcontract Auditor Contracts.
5. Confidentiality agreements with contracted personnel.
6. Locally performed on site evaluations of field auditors.
7. Local data used by auditor(s) to understand regional laws, regulations and statistics.

² Subcontracted offices shall be defined as outsourcing as per ISO/IEC 17021:2006, element 7.5 and does not include the use of individual external auditors, as defined in element 7.3. Consistent with this definition, SAAS shall define the following situations as being subcontracted situations: a. the certification client is not invoiced directly by the accredited organization; b. the auditor is not paid directly by the accredited organization.

8. Basic needs wage data calculations.
9. Stakeholder consultation records.
10. Oversight controls used by local organization to assure that auditor is following established protocols.
11. Copies of client proposals.
12. Local client documentation for certified facilities including audit reports.
13. Current procedures and work instructions being utilized by local auditors.
14. Any documentation of local complaints and appeals from or about certified facilities.
15. Management review and internal audits performed locally.

While it is understood that the local organization may be contracted for work on behalf of the controlling accredited CB (in those situations where the local office is not owned by the accredited CB), it is the responsibility of the local organization to ensure that the terms of the contract or service level agreement with the SAAS Accredited CB are met. This includes assurance that all relevant documentation is kept current and accurate, that the auditor(s) is qualified for undertaking the responsibility of certification audit, that the latter is observed periodically on site to ensure performance is acceptable and that the requirements of the contract or service level agreement with the SAAS Accredited CB are fully met.