

1. Assessment and Certification Services

1.1 Scope and Applicability

These DQS Assessment and Certification Regulations apply to all assessment and certification services offered and rendered to clients of the international DQS Group, including all its subsidiaries and partners. A current list of all members of the DQS Group is available at www.dqs-holding.com. These regulations apply throughout all stages of the certification or assessment process, including but not limited to service offers and quotations, contracts, purchase and/or work orders, schedules and addendums agreed to between DQS and Client, unless it is otherwise explicitly agreed in writing or so prescribed by statutory instruments.

These Assessment and Certification Regulations become effective with immediate effect after their publication and remain valid until a new version is issued and published.

The current version of these regulations is available in English language at <https://www.dqs-holding.com/en/certification-regulation>, or upon request from every DQS office.

Should any discrepancy occur between a translated version and the English version of the document, the English version shall take precedence.

1.2 Definition of terms

- “Client” stands for customers and any organization that inquires about or receives any DQS certification or assessment service, including their representatives, who act on their behalf.
- “DQS” stands for any group member of the international DQS Group, including its subsidiaries and partners, who offer and/or deliver certification and assessment services to clients.
- “Assessment” stands for any systematic DQS activity for obtaining objective evidence and evaluating it objectively to determine the extent to which defined criteria are fulfilled; it may be also referred as “audit”.
- “Assessor” stands for assessors, auditors and experts, who are assigned to a certification and assessment process on behalf of the DQS group.

1.3 Assessment and Certification Services

The assessment and certification of a management system, a process or of a product by an independent, competent third party, such as DQS, generates valuable benefits for the client. A DQS certificate will serve as evidence for a suitable and effective management system, a process or compliant product with the capability to continuously meet customer expectations as well as regulatory and statutory requirements.

During an assessment, qualified and experienced assessors review the management system and its processes or products for ongoing suitability and effectiveness in light of changing markets and environment. By identifying improvement potential, assessors enhance the organization’s ability to meet established goals and objectives, thus enhancing sustainable success for the client. With a DQS certificate customers may place confidence on the client and the certified management system, process or product, which has been assessed and certified to recognized standards and specifications.

1.4 Reference to individual contract and commercial terms

These DQS Assessment and Certification Regulations are an integral part of any and all certification and assessment agreements between Clients and DQS. Such agreements will always specify the individual type and nature of services offered and rendered, including pricing and timing. Furthermore, the parties will establish commercial terms, which will usually be specific to the country of service delivery and/or the country of residence of the contractual partners. Such commercial terms may include clauses on legal representation, jurisdiction, liability, tax, terms of payment and others, defined in the agreement itself or a respective reference document and addendum to the agreement.

1.5 Contractual relationship to the accredited DQS office

Whenever a local DQS office provides a service under authorization or accreditation of another DQS office, it acts in name and in behalf on the respective authorized/accredited office. The offer/quotation identifies the respective accredited office and its acceptance and signature of the local contract constitutes a legal binding certification contract between client and authorized/accredited DQS office. Operational, financial and legal responsibility for activities under a specific accreditation remain always under responsibility of the accredited DQS office.

2. The Certification Process

DQS assesses the Client's management system, processes, products or parts thereof, with the goal of determining its conformity with agreed and acknowledged requirements, such as international, national or sector-specific standards or specifications. The respective assessment process may involve one or more steps, usually ending with an assessment report, which documents the assessment results. In the case of certification services DQS will issue a customer-specific certificate, confirming conformity to the respective requirements, when the fulfillment of all applicable requirements has been evident.

If nonconformities with requirements of the respective standard or specification have been identified during an assessment, corrective action shall be planned and carried out by Client within a specified time frame. Certificates will only be issued after the effective deployment of suitable corrective action has been demonstrated. The scope and duration of validity shall be stated on the certificate.

Most audit findings are based on a sampling process, targeted towards reliable evidence for effective implementation and compliance of the management system. Further business aspects may exist, positive or negative, which have not been reviewed by the audit team. It is the sole organization's responsibility to investigate and evaluate the potential impact and scope of findings, thus continuously ensuring full compliance to the applied standard(s). In cases of non-compliance, DQS is not liable.

DQS and Client agree that the evaluation and/or certification of the Client's management system(s), processes or products shall be performed in accordance with the applicable standards, the industry related requirements (if applicable) and the Assessment and Certification Agreement, including this document and any documents attached thereto or referred to therein.

DQS is independent, neutral and objective in its assessments and certifications. Assessments are normally performed at Client's place of operations (on-site) but may be partially conducted, substituted or complemented by remote auditing activities (off-site). The type, extent and time schedule of the procedure are subject to separate agreement by the parties. DQS strives to minimize any disturbances of the business process while conducting the assessment on Client's premises.

The Certification Process will generally include the following steps:

- 2.1** The process starts with the client's needs and expectations. DQS wants to learn about the client's organization, its management system, size and types of operation. Together both parties will define objectives for the assessment and/or certification, including applicable standards and specifications.
- 2.2** DQS will provide a detailed offer for assessment and certification services, tailored to individual client needs, based on the information provided initially. A written contract will specify all relevant deliverables as well as applicable assessment and certification criteria.
- 2.3** A pre-audit can serve as initial performance or gap analysis, identifying strengths and areas for improvement. For larger assessment and certification projects a project planning meeting provides a valuable opportunity for the client to meet the lead assessor and develop a customized assessment plan for all functions and locations involved. Both services are optional.



- 2.4** Stage 1 audit: The assessment procedure itself begins with review and evaluation of system documentation, goals, results of management review and internal audits. During this process, it will be determined whether the client's management system is sufficiently developed and ready for certification. The assessor will explain findings and coordinate any required activities to prepare for the Stage 2 audit. The Stage 1 audit is usually not applicable for the certification of processes and products.

- 2.5** Stage 2 audit: The assigned auditor team will audit the client's management system, processes or products at the place of production or service delivery and/or by use of remote auditing techniques. Applying defined management system standards and specifications, the assessment team will evaluate the effectiveness of all functional areas as well as all management system processes, based upon observations, inspections, interviews, review of pertinent records, and other assessment techniques. The audit result, including all findings will be presented to the client during the closing meeting. Required action plans will be agreed upon as necessary.
- 2.6** System Evaluation: The independent certification function of DQS will evaluate the audit process and its results, and decide independently about issuance of the certificate. The client receives an audit report, documenting the audit results. When all applicable requirements are fulfilled the client also receives the certificate.
- 2.7** Surveillance audits: Either semi-annually or at least once per year, there will be an audit of the critical components of the management system. Improvement potential will be identified, with a focus on continual improvement and sustained effectiveness. For product certification, a surveillance audit is usually replaced by an annual re-audit.
- 2.8** Re-Audit: A certificate is valid for a limited period of time, mostly for a maximum of three years. At the end of this cycle, a re-audit will be carried out to ensure the ongoing fulfillment of all applicable requirements. Subject to this fulfillment, a new certificate will be issued.

For sector specific standards or process and product certification, the described certification process may differ.

3. Rights and Obligations of Client

3.1. Maintaining the Management System / conformity of processes and products

In order to obtain and maintain a certificate, the Client shall implement and maintain a documented management system which fulfils the requirements of the selected standard or specification. In case of process / product certification, Client is responsible for assuring ongoing conformity. The Client shall provide evidence of conformity and effectiveness of the assessed management system, processes or products, readily available for assessment by the assigned assessment team. The Client shall undertake all necessary actions to ensure that the management system and/or product is maintained in a conforming and effective manner at all times.

The Client will be notified of any changes to the certification program or new or revised requirements that affect the Client. In case the certification applies to ongoing production, the Client shall ensure that the certified product continues to fulfill the system or product requirements. DQS shall verify the implementation of changes by the Client and initiate required measures in the certification process.

3.2. Access to Information

The Client ensures that DQS has access to all necessary information and the required facilities to perform the assigned assessment tasks. The Client commits all nominated representatives and employees to grant access to and provide the assessor with accurate and complete information and objective evidence in a timely manner concerning all processes which may be significant to the assessment. Within the scope of certified management systems, processes and/or products, all records relating to complaints and their corrective actions shall be presented to DQS upon request.

3.3. Notification of Changes and Special Incidents

The Client is obliged to inform DQS without delay of any changes, which may influence the certified management system, processes or the certified products. This applies in particular to the purchase/sale of all or a portion of the company, any change in ownership, major changes in operations, fundamental alterations in processes, incidents such as a serious accident or a serious breach of regulation/legal obligation necessitating the involvement of the competent regulatory authority, or the filing for bankruptcy or composition proceedings. In any of these cases, DQS will consult with Client and determine how the certificate may be maintained.

The client is obliged to immediately notify DQS in case of a product recall. The individual certification standards and their regulations use different time frames in terms of meeting this deadline. These specifications can be found in the respective standards and their applicable regulations.

3.4. Independence of the Assessment

Client is obliged to avoid anything that might compromise the independence of the employees and assessors of DQS. This applies in particular to offers of consultancy, offers of employment, both salaried and sub-contracted, to separate agreements about fees or other monetary rewards.

3.5 Right to reject Assessor

Prior to confirmation of the assessment date, the Client is entitled to review and reject the assessor(s) assigned by DQS with proper justification. In justified cases, e.g. in case of a threat to impartiality, and if applicable accreditation rules allow, DQS will assign a replacement for the rejected assessor.

3.6. Confidentiality and Information Security

The documents provided to the Client by DQS, including the Marks and the DQS certification symbol, are protected by copyright. Client specifically acknowledges that all documents which are provided or made available by DQS for examination remain the property of DQS, and that they may be used only for the internal needs of Client and not made available to third parties or be used for purposes other than those agreed upon herein or in writing. Client is obliged to maintain strict confidentiality about any information revealed within the terms of this Agreement as well as of all knowledge of matters relating to DQS, its employees and assessors. This obligation also applies after termination of the contract. Client similarly accepts this obligation on behalf of any vicarious agents and auxiliary persons.

Client is permitted to forward the assessment report in its entirety. The forwarding of extracts is not permitted.

3.7 Right to use Certification and Marks

With a valid DQS certification, the Client is entitled to use the certificate, the respective certification marks and in some cases, the accreditation marks for promotion purposes according to related rules published at the [DQS website](#).

Authorized use of copyrighted DQS Certified Management System Mark®, the UL Registered Firm Mark® and other Certification or Accreditation Marks shall enhance confidence of customers in the Client's certified management system and the respective performance. These marks are frequently used on company stationery, in brochures, the Internet, at exhibitions, on vehicles or in advertisements and are directly associated with the certified organization and its management system, processes or products. The use of certificates and marks is restricted to the scope and the period of validity of the certification and they shall not be used on a product nor product packaging nor in any other way that may be interpreted as denoting product conformity.

3.8 Complaints

Every Client of DQS has the right to have services performed within the agreed scope in such a way that all reasonable expectations and requirements are fulfilled. In case of non-fulfillment, the Client is entitled to file a complaint with the respective DQS Company. DQS will request information necessary for analysis and improvement.

3.9 Appeals

If a client does not agree with a specific certification decision, client may submit a written appeal and request reconsideration of the decision. A separate impartial technical reviewer, not involved in the conduct of the audit and the initial decision, makes the final decision on an appeal after consultation with the management of the accredited DQS office.

4. Rights and Obligations of DQS

4.1. Assessment of Management Systems

DQS verifies the conformity and effectiveness of Client's certified management system, processes or products by performing regular assessments (usually on a semi-annual or annual basis). For these assessment purposes DQS has the right to access Client's facilities within the framework of planned assessment visits, observe operations, inspect processes, products and services, interview employees and representatives, review documents and pertinent records, and to collect information with other assessment techniques in order to get sufficient objective evidence upon which to base a certification decision. Should DQS receive information from third parties which dispute the conformity or effectiveness of a management system, process or product, which DQS has certified, it is entitled to perform additional, non-routine assessments after consulting with Client. In legally regulated areas, DQS is entitled to perform additional, unannounced assessments, whenever justified.

4.2. Accreditation and Authorization

DQS is authorized by various accreditation bodies and other Government and Non-Government Authorities to issue assessment reports and certificates according to various standards and specifications. This includes the obligation to allow employees or auxiliary persons of these bodies to participate in assessments. According to the applicable accreditation and authorization rules, DQS allows these individuals access to both its own documents and Client-related data, subject to the confidentiality requirements set forth herein. In addition, whenever individual standards or specifications explicitly require, Client-related data and assessment results are passed on to these bodies. By

accepting these Certification and Assessment Regulations the Client consents to the applicable accreditation and authorization requirements in their current version (e.g. ISO/IEC 17021-1 or ISO/IEC 17065), including all of the foregoing.

DQS is entitled to assign specific assessment and certification tasks to other DQS Companies, holding the required accreditations or authorizations. Whenever certificates are issued by a DQS Company other than the Client's local DQS partner, all relevant rights and obligations herein apply equally to the accredited and certifying DQS Company.

4.3 Assignment of Assessors

The assignment of competent assessors is the sole responsibility of DQS. DQS agrees to use only assessors, who are qualified for the task on the basis of their technical qualification, their experience and their personal abilities. Assessors shall be authorized for the required standard(s) or specification(s) and will have appropriate experience in Client's area of operation as well as in management and auditing. In many cases DQS may assign an audit team, comprised of two or more assessors to a specific assessment or certification process. On request, DQS will submit a short CV of the selected assessor to the Client.

Should an assessor become unavailable before or during the assessment, DQS will strive to provide a suitable replacement assessor, as feasible.

4.4 Scheduling of Assessments

DQS has the right to schedule assessments of the Client's management system, processes or products. Assessments shall be scheduled at the mutual convenience of both parties within the time frames mandated by the applicable requirements. Assessment dates shall be agreed upon in writing. Once confirmed such assessment dates are binding. Individual assessment agreements may include provisions for compensation for canceling or postponing confirmed assessments.

Certification may also include, depending on the standard, unannounced audits, which are either completely unannounced or announced on short notice. If an unannounced audit cannot be performed due to reasons the client is accountable for (denial of entrance) DQS may charge the costs actually incurred by preparing for the unannounced audit to the client's account. The certified site has to take the necessary steps to ensure access is granted to the auditor in the event of an unannounced audit.

4.5 Issuance of certificate

DQS shall issue a DQS Certificate (herein referred to as "Certificate") and deliver it to Client upon Client's fulfillment of all certification requirements and contractual obligations. The certification decision is the sole responsibility of the **accredited** and issuing DQS group company, based on the assessors' recommendation for issue and all assessment results, as recorded in the assessment report. DQS certificates are valid for a limited period of time, usually a maximum of three years, commencing from the date of issuance.

4.6 Confidentiality and Data Protection

DQS commits itself to protect the confidentiality of all confidential information of Client that is not publicly available and that is made available to DQS in the context of its activities on Client's premises, whether this information relates to internal matters of Client or to its business relations. This also applies to the verbal and written results of the assessment. DQS will disclose confidential information to third parties only with the written authorization of Client, unless legally required or explicitly provided otherwise in these Certification and Assessment Regulations. These commitments also apply after termination of the contract. In some sector certification schemes, part of the audit and client data are mandatorily handled in applications provided by the scheme owner (e.g. automotive, aerospace, food schemes); client consents to this.

DQS retains records associated with assessments for a minimum of two certification cycles (usually six years).

4.7 Publicity

DQS is entitled to maintain and publish a register of all Clients holding a current DQS certification. This publication contains the name and address of the certified organization as well as the scope and reference standard/specification and certification status. Client hereby consents to the publication of such information hereunder. Additionally, in the course of order processing customer data is stored and processed in external databases of scheme owners. The client agrees with the acceptance of the offer that customer data can be stored, accessed and viewed by third parties in the corresponding databases.

4.8 Electronic Communication

Notwithstanding the foregoing, Client hereby authorizes DQS to transmit unencrypted confidential information and other information through the Internet or a public network to e-mail addresses or other locations provided by Client. Client acknowledges that DQS cannot guarantee the privacy and confidentiality of such transmissions. Client agrees that DQS's transmission of confidential information via the Internet or other public network shall not be a breach of any confidentiality obligation under these Certification and Assessment Regulations and that DQS shall not be liable for any damages resulting from such transmissions, provided that such confidential information is handled with the same degree of care as DQS handles its confidential information.

If Client hyperlinks to DQS's web site, Client agrees: (i) the information contained on DQS's web site belongs to DQS; (ii) the linking web site will transfer the user directly to DQS's web site as posted by DQS without imposing any frames, browser windows or third-party content; and (iii) the linking web site may not state or imply that Client or its products or services are endorsed by DQS.

5. Certificates and Marks

5.1 Issuance of certificates and use of marks

DQS issues certificates confirming the conformity of the Client's management system, processes or product to selected national and international standards as well as to recognized industry- or customer-specific requirements, when the Client has demonstrated in an assessment that all applicable requirements have been fulfilled. The Client is entitled to use the certificate and the related certification marks to promote confidence with business partners.

Upon issuance of a Certificate, an ongoing surveillance service will be established to ensure that conformity of the management system, processes or products is maintained continuously. The establishment and maintenance of certification is contingent upon the execution of the assessment and certification agreement and the continued adherence to its terms and conditions by the Client.

Client agrees to cooperate with DQS in ascertaining the facts if it is reported that Client's management system, processes, products or services are not in conformance with regulatory, statutory, certification or other applicable requirements, including sharing such information as Client acquires regarding the reported nonconformance, and to take and report to DQS on any corrective action necessary.

Client agrees that the surveillance service, such as surveillance assessments, and any special assessments conducted by DQS are designed to serve only as a check on the means the Client exercises to determine conformance of its management system, processes or products with certification requirements, and that Client is in no way relieved of its responsibility for its management system, processes, products and services within the scope of certification.

Certificates and Certification Marks may not be transferred to successors in title or other organizations. After a certification has expired or has been suspended, withdrawn or annulled, Client must desist from any promotion or other use of the certification. Client agrees to return the certificate following expiration, withdrawal or annulment. The right of retention is specifically excluded.

5.2 Non-issuance of Certificates

DQS may only issue Certificates if all requirements of the selected standard(s), specifications and contracts have been fulfilled following the assessment (initial/re-assessment). In case of non-fulfillment, the assessor documents the shortcomings in a nonconformity report and/or otherwise identifies the restraints which shall be complied with in order for a certificate to be issued.

All non-conformances or restraints shall be eliminated prior to the issuance of a DQS certificate. If necessary, DQS will repeat the assessment partially or in full. If the non-conformances have not been eliminated or if the prerequisites for the granting of a certificate have not been achieved even after follow-up assessments, the certification procedure will be concluded by the issuance of a report without a certificate.

5.3 Suspension, Withdrawal and Annulment of a Certificate

5.3.1 Suspension

DQS is entitled to temporarily suspend a Certificate if Client violates certification, contractual or financial obligations towards DQS, including but not limited to:

- Corrective actions have not been demonstrably and effectively implemented within the agreed-upon time frame;
- The schedule of audits suggested by DQS for assessment(s) necessary for the maintenance of the certification have not been complied with and the prescribed frequency since the previous assessment has thereby been exceeded;

- DQS has not been informed in a timely manner about planned changes to the management system, special incidents or product recall (see 3.3) or other changes, which affect the conformity with the standard or specification which forms the basis for the assessment;
- A DQS certificate or a certification symbol has been used in a misleading or unauthorized manner;
- Due payments for assessment and certifications services have not been made timely after at least one written reminder.

DQS is also entitled to suspend a certificate if significant breaches of accreditation rules become known after the certification decision.

DQS will notify Client of a proposed suspension in writing. If the reasons for the proposed suspension are not eliminated within two weeks, DQS will inform Client in writing of the suspension of the Certificate stating the reasons as well as the corrective actions necessary for the certification to be reinstated.

Certificates are suspended for a restricted period (usually a maximum of 90 days). If the required measures have been implemented demonstrably and effectively by the established deadline, the suspension of the Certificate is cancelled. If the required measures have not been implemented within the established deadline, DQS may withdraw the Certificate as set forth below.

5.3.2 Withdrawal

DQS is entitled to withdraw Certificates or to declare them invalid upon written notice to Client if:

- The suspension period of the Certificate has been exceeded,
- The conformity of the management system, processes or products with the standard or specification on which it is based is not ensured or Client is not willing or able to eliminate nonconformities;
- Client continues to use the certification for promotion following the suspension of the Certificate;
- Client uses the certification in such a way as to undermine the reputation of the certification body or DQS;
- The preconditions which led to issuing the Certificate no longer apply;
- Client files any voluntary or involuntary petition in bankruptcy;
- Client effectively terminates its contractual relationship with DQS.

5.3.3 Annulment

DQS is entitled to annul Certificates, or retroactively declare them invalid, if:

- It subsequently turns out that the preconditions required for issuance of the Certificate had not in fact been fulfilled;
- Client has compromised the certification procedure so that the objectivity, neutrality or independence of the assessment results are, in the judgment of DQS, in question.

6. Additional Program Requirements

For some sector specific management system or product certification and assessment services, additional mandatory program requirements may apply, including but not limited to:

Automotive Sector:	Annex Automotive	https://www.dqs-holding.com/en/certification-regulation/
Aerospace Sector:	Annex Aerospace	https://www.dqs-holding.com/en/certification-regulation/
DQS GmbH - Railway Sector:	Annex IRIS	https://www.dqs-holding.com/en/certification-regulation/ and/or https://www.dqs.de/en/auditing-and-certification-regulations/
DQS Inc. - Telecommunication Sector:	Annex TL9000	https://www.dqs-holding.com/en/certification-regulation/ and/or https://dqsus.com/requirements-and-regulations/
DQS MED programs:	DQS Auditing and certification regulations of DQS Medizinprodukte GmbH and its supplements	https://www.dqs-med.com/good-to-know/general-information
DQS CFS programs:	Specific Conditions for the Assessment of Management System and Product Certification of DQS CFS GmbH	https://dqs-cfs.com/audit-and-certification-regulations/
Chinese Market:	Specific Conditions for activities on the Chinese market as defined by Chinese governmental authorities (E.g. CNCA)	https://www.dqs-holding.com/en/certification-regulation/ or http://www.dqs-cn.com/Cn/Custommer/download/catid/21.html

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