



Jordanian Accreditation System

نظام الاعتماد الأردني

Accreditation Unit

ACCREDITATION UNIT

**JAS-AU POLICY ON ACCREDITATION AND CONFORMITY
ASSESSMENT DURING EXTRAORDINARY CONDITIONS**

Authorship

This publication has been written by JAS-AU staff , and approved by the Accreditation Director.

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The text may be translated into other languages as required. The Arabic language version remains the definitive version.

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Every organization is continuously exposed to opportunities, challenges, and risks in a normal business environment. However, extraordinary events or circumstances beyond the control of the organization happen. JAS-AU continues to monitor Government and external advice in order to assess risks and undertake contingency planning.
- 1.2 It is important during this period that end-users and the wider community can continue to rely on the services of accredited conformity assessment bodies (CABs) and therefore that JAS-AU and the bodies it accredits continue to work together to ensure that the principles of accreditation are maintained. Although some of the traditional practices employed by JAS-AU to assess CABs may not be appropriate due to current restrictions, it remains a priority that the technical validity of its service and of the services of the CABs is maintained. Therefore, JAS-AU and its accredited organizations need to be able to demonstrate reasonable due diligence, mutual understanding and trust and to establish an appropriate course of action in response to this extraordinary event.
- 1.3 The aim of this document is to outline the requirements and provide guidance to JAS-AU accredited and applicant CABs on the appropriate course of action. During Extraordinary conditions, this document shall take precedence over existing JAS-AU publications where conflicts in requirements are identified.
- 1.4 The guidance and requirements included within this publication are consistent with the advice published by the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC).

2 Scope

- 2.1 The requirements and guidance contained in this document apply to all types of Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs), including laboratories, certification bodies and inspection bodies.

3 Impact of the Extraordinary conditions on the Generic Operation of the CAB

3.1 It is recognized that the current outbreak may temporarily affect the ability of the CAB to conduct its activities and/or maintain compliance with the requirements for accreditation. Operations may be affected in a number of ways such as site closure, staff shortage, restricted access to supplies and services, sample delivery, additional workloads, reduced demand for services etc. The CAB shall deploy its risk management procedures taking into account the following:

- 3.1.1 Suspension of service: if the CAB is required to stop work for a short period of time that does not affect the delivery of its service to any great extent (e.g. no or minimal impact on service delivery time) then there is no need to inform JAS-AU. Records of any incident or outcome need to be retained and the CAB's customers kept informed. If the service has to be suspended for more than 2 weeks, then the JAS-AU shall be informed.**
- 3.1.2 Where the CAB can continue to provide a service but may have to deviate from its usual processes, a review of the situation and risks shall be conducted and shall include, at least, an evaluation of the CAB's current and expected future situation. Where this review identifies a significant risk to maintaining JAS-AU accreditation the CAB shall notify JAS-AU. At least the following information should be provided by the CAB:**
 - Scope and extent of the effect on the CAB's services, business areas and locations, and the status of current activities;
 - Details of any alternative or mitigating actions in place or planned to address the impact;
 - Where relevant, the CAB's justified action plan to address any temporary deviation from accreditation requirements and/or its procedures;
 - Any request to modify the CAB's scope of accreditation to address the deviation;
 - Where necessary any request to voluntarily suspend part of/all accreditation
- 3.2 Where required, JAS-AU will evaluate the proposed actions and seek to review the temporary deviation(s) to confirm maintenance of accreditation at the earliest opportunity. However, considering the impact that the pandemic may have on JAS-AU's ability to respond promptly, CABs can decide to progress with temporary deviations prior to JAS-AU's review where urgency is required. By doing so the CAB shall acknowledge that there should be a subsequent JAS-AU review to identify deficiencies in the deviations then the CAB may be required to implement corrective actions.**
- 3.3 JAS-AU fully appreciates that CABs will have to re-evaluate priorities during this rapidly changing situation; it is important that the ongoing evaluation and decisions that are made are justified and details of deviations are recorded on an ongoing basis.**

4 Guidance to Accredited Certification Bodies

- 4.1 4.1 Certification Bodies (CBs) offering accredited certification for Management Systems, Products, Processes and Services, and/or Persons are required to follow the requirements of IAF Informative Document IAF ID 3 Management of Extraordinary Events or Circumstances Affecting ABs, CABs and Certified Organizations which sets out CB obligations when dealing with extraordinary situations such as pandemics. CBs should take this document into consideration when deciding on a strategy for maintaining certification in areas that cannot be accessed.
- 4.2 4.2 In particular, information on the overall size of the problems facing a CB's JAS-AU accredited activities shall be provided to JAS-AU, with monthly updates of the status of their affected operations.
- 4.3 4.3 With respect to overseas certification activities, where the local accreditation body and/or authorities have issued instructions within their jurisdiction these requirements shall be taken into consideration when reviewing the acceptability of individual CB action plans.
- 4.4 4.4 When an application for initial certification or an extension to scope is received by a CB, the CB shall implement its risk management procedures to determine whether such work can be accepted during this period, and if so how this can be progressed: This shall be clearly documented during the contract review.
- 4.5 4.4 The certification of products, processes, services or persons would normally require the CB to undertake elements of the evaluation activity on site (e.g. manufacturing facility, assessment center, etc.): During the current pandemic this may not be possible. In these circumstances, the CB shall deploy its risk management procedures in accordance with 3.1 above.
- 4.6 4.5 Not all scheme owners recognize the validity of certification or recertification by remote assessments and therefore it is the responsibility of the CB to determine the acceptability of using remote techniques for recertification purposes for any scheme that it certifies to.

5 Guidance to Laboratories, Inspection Bodies and Other CABs Other than CBs

- 5.1 5.1 The restrictions imposed as a result of the outbreak may have serious implications on the provision of accredited services even though the operation of the CAB itself is not directly impacted, i.e. although the site may be open, some external (and in some circumstances internal) services and supplies may not be available. Under such circumstances the CAB will need to review the impact that such restrictions may have on its accredited service and identify what actions it can take to mitigate the risk associated with these. Any deviations from accreditation requirements and/or CAB procedures which pose a significant risk to maintaining JAS-AU accreditation must be notified to JAS-AU (see 3.1.2).
- 5.2 5.2 Temporary deviations from accreditation requirements and/or CAB procedures' could include, for example, delay in performing periodic calibration and

intermediate checks of the measuring and test equipment, use of alternative supplies that could affect the validity of the conformity assessment activity, PT participation, outsourcing, internal quality control, internal audit and management review.

- 5.3 5.3 It is the responsibility of the CAB to ensure that any accredited service it continues to provide during this period remains technically valid and fit for its intended purpose. Therefore, for all justified deviations, it will be necessary to identify what alternatives are available and ensure that these meet appropriate requirements, e.g. identifying new suppliers and/or services. Where it is not possible to source appropriate supplies or services then the CAB should consider whether there are any alternative mechanisms that can be employed which will ensure the same goal is achieved. In circumstances where no reasonable alternatives can be found then the CAB will need to consider disclaiming accreditation for those services affected; in such instance the CAB is recommended to discuss this with JAS-AU.
- 5.4 5.4 It is possible that some site activities undertaken by a CAB, such as inspections, may be successfully achieved through the use of remote techniques. Where a CAB wishes to consider this, it shall first undertake a risk evaluation to ensure that the approach being proposed will not impact adversely on the technical validity of the service being provided.
- 5.5 Further guidance on this can be found in the publications prepared for certification bodies, i.e. IAF MD4 and ID3.
- 5.6 Any transition from site to remote activities shall first be discussed and agreed between the CAB and JAS-AU.

6 JAS-AU Assessments During Extraordinary conditions

- 6.1 6.1 JAS-AU shall implement all measures necessary to protect the health and safety of its staff and assessment teams as well as the staff of the bodies that it accredits. Therefore, it will follow Jordanian Government advice on travel restrictions and social contact, be this social distancing, self-isolation, or total lock-down. For overseas assessments JAS-AU shall also follow the advice of the local government of the country where an assessment is due to take place. JAS-AU has issued and published "General Safety Instructions During COVID-19").
- 6.2 6.2 Where the advice restricts or forbids the possibility of undertaking assessments on-site then JAS-AU shall employ alternative mechanisms to ensure the technical validity of the services it accredits is maintained. This shall be achieved through the use of technologies that enable assessments to be conducted remotely, such as telephone or web-based meetings (e.g. Skype, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, etc.), remote (electronic) access to CAB management systems, remote review of electronically submitted records, etc.
- 6.3 For further information on remote assessments see Annex 1.
- 6.4 6.3 The deployment of such techniques will focus on the essential elements to ensure that confidence can be maintained in accredited activities and JAS-AU will

continue to monitor any necessary follow up activities once any travel restrictions are lifted. The key aim of using a remote assessment in these circumstances is for the JAS-AU assessment team to obtain sufficient confidence to continue to maintain accreditation.

- 6.5 6.4 It is recognized that the ability of a CAB to support remote assessment will vary depending on their capability to share information remotely and/or to partake in remote assessment activity. Their ability to support remote assessment will be established when the JAS-AU assessment team is developing an assessment plan.
- 6.6 6.5 It is strongly recommended that web-conferencing applications between JAS-AU and a CAB are trialed prior to starting the assessment to ensure that both parties can successfully use the selected platform / application.
- 6.7 In the case that CABs have their own preferred web-conferencing application the CAB shall be requested to send a test link and JAS-AU will endeavor to access these systems.
- 6.8 6.6 Where, with justification, a CAB is unable to accept a remote assessment, either in full or in part, then this situation will need to be discussed with the CAB's Lead Assessor to determine an agreed approach. However, if a CAB that is able to accept a remote assessment (in full or part) but refuses to do so within an acceptable timeframe from its usual assessment date, then JAS-AU will need to consider whether a sanction should be imposed.
- 6.9 6.7 JAS-AU will prioritize assessments to support surveillance and reassessment activity to enable existing accreditation to be maintained. Applications for extensions to scope and initial assessments will be progressed using remote assessment techniques where possible, recognizing that it may not be possible to complete all aspects of the assessment remotely or by other means, which may delay the grant of accreditation. Each application will be evaluated, and the customer kept informed of how/whether the assessment can be conducted. Priority will be given to applications that are necessary as a result of the pandemic e.g. COVID-19.

7 Further Information

- 7.1 For up to date information on JAS-AU policy and actions relating to the coronavirus outbreak please contact the lead assessor and/or the accreditation and assessment sections.
- 7.2 The following publications can also be a useful source of information:
 - 7.2.1 IAF MD 4: 2018 -IAF Mandatory Document for the Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for Auditing/Assessment Purposes
 - 7.2.2 IAF ID 3: 2011 - Informative Document for Management of Extraordinary Events or Circumstances Affecting ABs, CABs and Certified Organizations
 - 7.2.3 IAF ID 12: 2015- Principles on Remote Assessment

8 Annex 1:

8.1 What to expect from a JAS-AU remote assessment What is a remote assessment?

A remote assessment is one that is conducted off site either in whole or in part. Remote assessments generally make use of technology, such as Skype, Microsoft Teams, Zoom Meeting or GoTo Meeting, to support the Assessment team when a site visit is not possible / appropriate.

The assessment may include everything that is usually covered during a site visit, but it is likely that some activities, particularly our witnessing of staff conducting their technical functions will not be able to be covered. These technical aspects may need to be assessed at a later date, but this will be discussed and agreed during the remote assessment.

8.2 What should customers expect?

The structure of the visit will be quite familiar; we will conduct opening and closing meetings and review information with you to ensure ongoing competence although there will clearly be some changes as to how we achieve these reviews. The duration of a remote assessment may differ to that of your on-site 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.

Therefore, you will not necessarily need to be available at all times when the assessment is occurring, but a schedule of planned web-conferencing will be agreed with you.

When assessments are conducted via web-conference technology it is recommended that both parties use screen sharing and web-cam functionality. This reduces the amount of data and information that has to be transferred between your organization and JAS-AU. However, it is also likely that the assessors will ask for documentation to be submitted for them to review offline because this is often done more efficiently with large amounts of information. You may be asked to email documents or use file sharing sites to provide the documentation to the Assessor. Please be assured that the information you send us will be securely managed in accordance with our existing confidentiality and data privacy policies.

8.3 What do customers need to do to make sure they are ready?

Remote assessment is heavily reliant on technology, so we recommend taking the following actions to ensure you are ready;

- Check your IT systems will allow you to access one of the following web-conferencing solutions. Confirm with the assessment team which of these applications works for you.
- If you cannot access these applications and wish to use your own web- conferencing solution, contact the assessment team so that JAS-AU can check whether it is accessible to us.
- If online connectivity is not possible, then the assessment will be carried out using telephone conferencing and the emailing/file sharing of documentation;

As well as checking access please ensure you are familiar with the technology, particularly the management of your audio and screen sharing prior to your assessment to avoid unnecessary delays.

8.4 What do customers need to make available for the remote assessment?

8.4.1 •Personnel

- Key personnel who normally support the on-site JAS-AU assessment need to be available for web-conferences and answering ad-hoc queries from the assessment team as the assessment progresses;
- Personnel with specific technical or administrative responsibilities will need to be available for their relevant parts of the assessment;
- Top management and members of the leadership team will need to be available for relevant parts of the assessment as well as the opening and closing meetings.

8.4.2 •Documentation

- We will review as much of the management system as possible remotely. This can be done via screen share or by sending the information to your Assessor via email/file sharing;
- Your assessment team may well request documentation to be sent in advance of the assessment so they can review beforehand.
- Typical documents your assessment team may request are:
 - Internal audit program and supporting records or reports
 - Minutes of management system review
 - Reports of complaints and nonconforming work
 - Case/job files
 - Training records of new staff
 - Details of changes affecting your organization
 - Proficiency testing data (where relevant)
 - Quality control data (where relevant)

8.4.3 Witnessing of technical activities

This is the most challenging part of any remote assessment, but it can be achieved by a mix of live streaming, recordings, post audit reviews or technical interviews;

- For live streaming, check if you can live stream visual and have two-way audio at the location the activity is performed. This often requires use of mobile networks or wi-fi so check connectivity at the location;
- For recordings, these need to be agreed with the assessment team in advance. Make sure that the recording is of suitable clarity for both visual and audio. Also, the personnel conducting the activity should narrate what they are doing and why. It is also likely that the technical personnel will need to be available for discussions with the assessor to explain elements of the recording when it is assessed;
- For post audit reviews the JAS-AU team will select job files which will then be reviewed with the individual(s) who conducted the technical activity. Therefore, the individual(s) involved need to be available to interact with the JAS-AU team;
- Technical interviews involve a JAS-AU assessor talking through key aspects of the technical activity with a member of your staff who is authorized for that activity. They are used when it is not possible to live stream or record the activity or to conduct a post audit review.

8.4.4 What happens if connectivity fails during the assessment?

The assessment team will try to continue with the assessment wherever possible. If the issues cannot be corrected quickly, then the assessment team will revert to conducting the assessment by telephone conference.

