

## Industry Position Statement:

### Accredited and Non-Accredited Certification

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Over 2.4 million organisations across the globe benefit from certification against management systems standards agreed and published by the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO). The most widely adopted of these is ISO 9001, the management systems requirements standard for quality, the latest version of which was published in 2015.

Using management systems standards can help organisations streamline processes, improve efficiency, mitigate business risk, manage growth and drive continual improvement. And certification against these internationally recognised standards can reduce trade barriers, meeting and exceeding customer tender requirements and providing market differentiation. As such, certification is a vital business tool offering a degree of assurance to customers and suppliers.

Certification is offered by conformity assessment, or certification, bodies (CABs) which may or may not be accredited by national accreditation bodies (NABs).

Accreditation is the formal recognition by an independent NAB that a CAB is competent to perform conformity assessments. Such recognition is based on the CAB being able to demonstrate its competence, consistency and impartiality, according to the relevant international standards, in assessing organisations' ability to meet the requirements of recognised ISO standards.

Although it is not mandatory for CABs to be accredited by an NAB, those that are accredited are able to demonstrate that they have been rigorously assessed by an independent, recognised authority against internationally recognised standards.

Non-accredited CABs are not subject to this independent scrutiny. This does not necessarily mean that a non-accredited CAB is not a competent, impartial and capable organisation. However, it cannot demonstrate that it has the competence, capability and impartiality required to conduct conformity assessments in a universally accepted way.

A consequence of this is that many organisations which require their suppliers' management systems to be certified will only recognise accredited certification.

The United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS), the sole government recognised NAB in the UK, has issued approximately 3,200 accreditations to over 2,700 conformity assessment bodies. These accreditations apply to a wide range of products, services, processes, systems, bodies and persons from all industry sectors, adding an estimated £1bn annually to the UK economy [[Source: University of Birkbeck](#)].

The UK government provides guidance and information on accreditation and conformity assessment including that;

*“The UK government expects UK based conformity assessment bodies to:*

- *be compliant with European legislation*
- *seek accreditation from the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS)”*

Furthermore, it *“recommends UK businesses, government, and local authorities that need third party conformity assessment services to use services from conformity assessment bodies accredited by a national accreditation body.”*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/conformity-assessment-and-accreditation-policy-the-uks-quality-infrastructure>

In addition, the UK government guidance on accreditation and conformity assessment states that:

*“the only ‘authoritative statement’ of competence, that has public authority status - providing the last level of control in the conformity assessment chain is from the UK’s national accreditation body, UKAS.”*

Consistent with this guidance, those organisations listed below advise that organisations requiring conformity assessment should use the services only of CABs which are accredited by the national accreditation body.

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