



# **SQAS**

## **Accreditation Manual**

**March 2020**



# SQAS Accreditation Manual

**(Safety and Quality Assessment for Sustainability)**

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## 1. Introduction:

This manual describes the pre-qualification requirements, the training and accreditation process, the performance monitoring approach and the conditions to maintain the accreditation for the SQAS assessors.

Only a high and consistent quality of the assessors will ensure that all parties involved recognize the system as reliable and trustworthy, and that the results of the assessments will drive continuous improvement.

## 2. Accreditation

Firstly, a general accreditation as a SQAS Assessor is obtained based on the pre-qualification requirements, basic training, a written examination, and an interview. However, to be entitled to perform assessments, assessors must also obtain "Accreditation Titles" for each of the SQAS modules of interest by meeting the additional specific modular training and examination requirements. Additionally, they will have to attend one assessment as an observer and will have to be appraised by a current SQAS assessor during another assessment.

### 2.1. Objectives

The objectives of the SQAS Accreditation are:

- To ensure a uniform high quality of the assessors;
- To ensure a uniform interpretation of the assessment questionnaires and associated guidelines by all assessors, independent of their background or country;
- To provide training in the correct use of the electronic SQAS Database;
- To provide an understanding of the relationship of Chemical Companies with the Logistics Industry and with the Chemical Distributor Industry;
- To provide insight into the activities, organizational structures and infrastructure of such typical partner companies (Logistics Companies and Chemical Distributors);
- To create a common standard of assessment amongst assessors as to the legislative requirements and the industry standards, relating to the safety, health, environment, security, quality and corporate social responsibility (CSR) aspects of these partner industries.

### 2.2. Pre-qualification requirements

Applicants for accreditation as a SQAS Assessor will need to meet the following requirements:

- be registered as a quality lead auditor i.e.:
  - have a valid qualification with an accredited certification body; or
  - be registered with a recognised auditor registration organisation (e.g. IRCA)

- have performed during the last 3 years at least five ISO 9001, ISO 14001 or OHSAS audits or SQAS (equivalent) assessments at chemical distributors or at companies providing logistic services to the chemical industry;
- be certified as a DGSA (Dangerous Goods Safety Advisor), documented by a valid certificate;

Employees of a company that is a member of the SQAS or ESAD Service Groups, a distribution company or any other logistics service supplier cannot become an SQAS accredited assessor but may participate in the training.

**NB:** If an applicant has any doubt about a possible conflict of interest with existing contracts, he/she is required to contact the SQAS Manager before registering for the initial training.

- Have a good working knowledge of the English language (written and spoken).

These qualifications must be documented by the applicant in their Application Form and supported by copies of certificates, where applicable.

### 2.3. Cefic administrative fee

SQAS is an independently financed system managed by Cefic.

During the last 25 years SQAS had a fixed income structure supported by SQAS members paying a membership fee. Nevertheless, the variable costs have increased with the success and growth of the scheme.

Cefic considers that additional increases in the membership fee will discourage new members to join the system. And at the same time further cost reduction will affect the quality and capability of the scheme.

Therefore, Cefic has decided to introduce a variable income component (Cefic Administrative fee).

SQAS assessors will be required to pay to Cefic an administrative fee per assessment. The amount of the administrative fee will be:

- 150 euros per assessment (excluding VAT);
- Intermediate assessments will not be affected by the new fee;
- Combined assessments will be considered as individual assessments. i.e. a combined Transport Service and Tank Cleaning assessment will be charged 150 euros x 2 = 300 euros.

It is the decision of each assessor to absorb the fee totally or partially by transferring the fee to the assessed company, based on their own individual decision-making process.

Cefic will issue the first invoice to assessors in August 2020 for the assessments carried out on the second quarter of 2020 (excluding the exceptions) and the

second invoice in January 2021 for the assessments carried out in the second semester of 2020. This process will be repeated as from August 2021, and the subsequent years.

The invoice should be paid 30 days after the receipt date of the invoice.

The payment of the administrative fee is part of the accreditation requirements (please, see section 3.4.).

## **2.4. General Accreditation as SQAS Assessor**

### **2.4.1. Training Course**

All applicants for accreditation as SQAS Assessors will be required to attend a two day training course organised by Cefic.

Only applicants who fulfil all pre-qualification requirements will be accepted to attend the training course. Exceptionally, if the candidate does not hold a valid DGSA certificate, he/she can be accepted provisionally to the training and examination, but he/she will have to present a valid DGSA Certificate before being accredited as SQAS assessor. The training course will be conducted in English.

Candidates should come to the training only after studying the following documents: SQAS Core and ESAD Di questionnaires and the SQAS General Guidelines.

The general accreditation training will address:

- The general features of the SQAS system;
- The assessment process and principles (preparation, fieldwork, evidence seeking, conformance with guidelines, administration, reporting);
- The topics which are relevant to all modules, such as risk assessment, security, safety at work, subcontracting, etc;
- The CORE questionnaire of the logistics modules and the Di questionnaire of SQAS Distributor/ESAD module;

### **2.4.2. Examination**

#### **2.3.2.1 Written examination**

After attending the General Training course, applicants must participate in a written examination to demonstrate their knowledge of the SQAS assessment system.

The examination will be conducted as follows:

- The examination will be in English

- The questions are selected by the SQAS Technical & Accreditation (T&A) ( <sup>1</sup> ) Committee
- The examination will be marked without knowing the name of the applicant

#### 2.3.2.2. Interview

All applicants will be interviewed in English by a panel consisting of members of the Technical & Accreditation Committee. The purpose of the interview is to validate the applicants' technical knowledge, experience and ability to carry out SQAS assessments.

#### 2.3.2.3. Passing/failing the examination

The applicant passes when the average scores of the interview and the written examination is 80% or higher.

Those candidates whose total averages are more than or equal to 70 % and less than 80% may re-sit (once) the written examination through an e-exam. They will pass if the total average of the initial interview and the resit e-exam is 80% or higher.

Candidates who fail to meet the required standards may apply to attend the next SQAS general training and examination organised by Cefic.

## 2.5. Accreditation titles for SQAS modules

After having obtained the general SQAS Accreditation, applicants can obtain an Accreditation Title for each SQAS module in which they want to conduct assessments. The T&A Committee defines the training and examination requirements for each module and organizes regular examination opportunities. This training is based on self-study and e-learning of the subjects and the documents posted on the SQAS website. When required, for example upon a significant revision of a module, specific classroom training may be organized by Cefic, dedicated to that module. This training is usually organised together with the refresher accreditation training explained in section 4.1.

### 2.5.1. General requirements related to the SQAS modules

The requirements for being listed as an accredited assessor for a module are:

- To study the associated documents ( questionnaire and specific guidelines posted in the Cefic website);
- To study the defined literature and documents relevant to the industry or activity covered by the module, as defined by the T&A Committee and posted on the SQAS website;
- To perform a successful examination on the subjects above. Unless otherwise specified, the examination will be an e-exam, downloaded from the website or sent by email and submitted to Cefic before the requested due-date;

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<sup>1</sup> The Technical & Accreditation Committee consists of maximum 15 members. They represent the chemical industry, the various transport/logistics sectors covered in the SQAS logistics modules, and the Chemical Distributors

- The applicant passes the e-exam if a minimum score of 80% is obtained;
- If the applicant fails the e-exam at the first attempt, he/she may re-sit the examination once.
- To succeed in the supervision step described in item 2.5

The countries where the assessors have demonstrated a knowledge of the local legislation and local language are called the “assessors’ territory”. When assessors undertake assessments “out of their territory”, it is also essential:

- To sufficiently master the local language when assessments are conducted in a language different from the assessor’s mother tongue. Otherwise the assessor should be accompanied by a colleague independent of the company to be assessed who has local language skills;
- To be knowledgeable of the local regulations to ensure that key documents and procedures (e.g. operating permits, training records, inspection certificates) can be interpreted correctly. Otherwise the assessor should be accompanied by a person independent of the company to be assessed who knows local legislation.
- The T&A committee grants an approval for each individual case/country after the assessor concerned has provided the necessary application and supporting evidence;
- This approval is based upon the Country Application Form filled in by the assessor and the evaluations done by the members of the T&A committee or observers. The form can be found on [www.sqas.org /download /download assessor documents](http://www.sqas.org/download/download-assessor-documents)

### **2.5.2. SQAS Transport Service**

In addition to above general requirements, applicants for SQAS Transport Service need to demonstrate through their Continued Professional Development (CPD):

- Knowledge of national and international regulations related to road transport operations.
- When appropriate for the supply chain, knowledge of national and international regulations covering intermodal operations (e.g. IMDG, ADR, RID, ADN, etc.).
- Knowledge of basic technical issues concerning Transport.

### **2.5.3. SQAS Tank Cleaning**

In addition to above general requirements, applicants for SQAS Tank Cleaning need to demonstrate through their Continued Professional Development (CPD):

- Knowledge of national regulations related to cleaning operations, environment, permits and water treatment.
- Knowledge of basic technical issues concerning Tank Cleaning.

### **2.5.4. SQAS Rail (Carrier)**

In addition to above general requirements, applicants for SQAS Rail need to demonstrate through their Continued Professional Development (CPD):

- Knowledge of national and international regulations related to Rail Operations.

- Knowledge of basic technical issues concerning Rail equipment (rolling stock)

#### **2.5.5. SQAS Warehouse**

In addition to above general requirements, applicants for SQAS Warehouse need to demonstrate through their Continued Professional Development (CPD):

- Knowledge of national regulations related to warehousing operations
- Knowledge of basic technical issues concerning Warehousing.

#### **2.5.6. Accreditation for sections 12 of SQAS Transport Service and section 11 of SQAS Warehouse (food, feed and food-contact requirements)**

The assessors will have to demonstrate additional competence in food hygiene to carry out assessments of the sections 12 of SQAS Transport Service and section 11 of SQAS Warehouse.

To obtain this accreditation the assessor has to fulfil any of the conditions below:

1. Be accredited in the ESAD "F&G" section
2. Be accredited in any of the following food schemes:
  - a) ISO 22000
  - b) FSSC 22000
  - c) BRC Food
  - d) IFS Food
  - e) SQF
3. To have held a two-day training in "Food hygiene (including HACCP) – Qualified training on the basis of the Codex General Principles for Food hygiene"
4. Be accredited with the EFTCO Food assessment accreditation

The assessors who want to be accredited using the options 2 or 4 above will have to send to the SQAS Manager the corresponding certificates of compliance.

#### **2.5.7. SQAS Distributor / ESAD.**

##### **2.5.7.1. General**

In addition to above general requirements, applicants for SQAS Distributor/ESAD need to demonstrate through their Continued Professional Development (CPD):

- Knowledge of national and international regulations related to Distributor operations, warehousing operations and product safety.
- Knowledge of basic technical issues concerning Distribution Operations and Warehousing.

##### **2.5.7.2. Section F (Food, Cosmetic and/or Pharma) of SQAS Distributor/ESAD**



ESAD assessors who want to be accredited for the section F (Food, Cosmetic and/or Pharma) of SQAS Distributor/ESAD, have to fulfill the following pre-qualification requirements:

- Be a pharmacist, chemist or chemical engineer (or equivalent), or
- Have knowledge in GMP/GDP practice

A person is considered to "have knowledge" when he/she:

- Is a Qualified Person according to Directive 2001/83/EC, or
- Has worked for at least two years in one of the following categories of companies that was either GMP or HACCP certified or operated according to GMP or HACCP, in the functions mentioned below:
  - a drug product manufacturer in Manufacturing, QA or QC, or
  - a manufacturer of pharmaceutical active ingredients or excipients (in the area of Manufacturing, QA, QC), or
  - a manufacturer of feed or food products with application of HACCP practices (in the area of manufacturing, QA, QC), or
  - a manufacturer of cosmetic products with application of GMP practices (in the area of manufacturing, QA, QC), or
  - a distributor of active pharmaceutical ingredients, excipients, food, feed or cosmetic ingredients with GDP practices (in the area of repackaging, blending and/or QA, QC).

Alternative ways to acquire this level of experience and knowledge in the area of GMP and/or GDP may be accepted when a detailed justification can be presented (e.g. experience in GMP/GDP auditing according to comparable standards).

In addition, a candidate assessor must attend a specific Cefic/FECC (\*) training course of 2 full days, which will be periodically organized, and pass successfully an exam

Where the assessor holds a relevant food accreditation in the list of recognized food standards below, he/she can also obtain the SQAS accreditation in the module F&G using one of the following alternatives:

<b>ESAD assessor +</b>	<b>e-learning</b>	<b>e-examination</b>	<b>1 additional supervised assessment by an ESAD F&amp;G assessor</b>
ISO 22000 Accreditation	x	x	
EXCIPAT Accreditation	x	x	

HACCP Accreditation level 3	x	x	x
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The e-learning and e-exams will be provided by Cefic. The examination will have a pass mark of 80%. The supervised assessment will follow the rules described in item 2.5 of this manual.

(\*) FECC = The European Association of Chemical Distributors

## **2.6. Final step for accreditation. Observation and appraisal by an SQAS assessor**

- 2.6.1. The candidate will have to participate, as a minimum, in two SQAS assessments.
- 2.6.2. In the first assessment the candidate will participate as an observer.
- 2.6.3. In the second assessment the candidate will have to be appraised by one SQAS supervising assessor. If the appraisal is positive, the candidate will be granted the SQAS accreditation. If it is negative, corrective actions will be required.
- 2.6.4. These steps are described in the "Procedure for accreditation of candidates to become SQAS assessors. Final step":  
<http://www.sqas.org/download-public.php?category=general> .

## **2.7. Granting the accreditation**

The Technical & Accreditation Committee grants the SQAS accreditation if the candidate has:

- demonstrated that he/she has the requisite knowledge and experience;
- attended the General SQAS training course;
- passed successfully the written examination and the interview;
- obtained successfully an Accreditation Title for one or more specific modules;
- passed the supervised assessments described in item 2.5

The applicant will receive a Cefic Certificate of Accreditation, which is valid for 3 years.

In the event that an applicant, applying for accreditation as an SQAS Assessor, considers that a decision made by the Technical & Accreditation Committee is unreasonable, he/she may appeal to the SQAS Executive Committee. In this case, the procedure referred to in section 5 will be followed.

## **2.8. Independency and confidentiality requirements**

### **2.8.1. Independency (reference ISO – IEC 17021):**

1. The assessor shall not have financial, commercial or advisory links with the company to be assessed for a period of at least 3 years prior to the assessment, except for the SQAS commercial agreement or ISO audits. The assessor will not be allowed to carry out a SQAS pre-audit on the same company that he/she is going to assess by SQAS. A pre-audit is an audit carried out before the SQAS assessment and the report sent only to the company and is not uploaded into the SQAS website
2. Before offering an SQAS assessment, the assessor should identify any conflict of interest that could arise. This identification should include any conflict originating in the services provided by the assessor's professional relationships. Having professional relationships does not necessarily imply a conflict of interest. However, if any relationship creates a threat to impartiality, the assessor shall communicate this to the SQAS Manager and be able to demonstrate how they propose to eliminate such threats.
3. A professional relationship that threatens the impartiality of the assessors can be based on family ties, shared resources, payment of a sales commission or other inducement, to the referral of new clients, assessing the work of a colleague, etc;

### **2.8.2. Confidentiality**

The assessor will keep confidential any information about a particular assessed company or individual that could be obtained during the assessment process. The information will not be disclosed to any third party, including the companies where the assessors could be working.

## **2.9. Use of "SQAS" in web domain/applications by SQAS assessors**

SQAS assessors are not allowed to use the 'SQAS' acronym as any part of their website domain names or their mobile applications name without the prior express written consent of Cefic.

## **3. Performance Monitoring and Appraisal**

### **3.1. Performance Criteria. General**

To maintain a high quality, an assessor must carry out at least three complete SQAS assessments per year (all modules together).

- Efficient communication between the assessor and Cefic is important. The assessor must be accessible by e-mail and phone.
  - The assessor must comply with all the requirements defined in the SQAS/ESAD Guidelines and in this manual. The pre-qualification requirements defined in 2.2 are also applicable for the assessors already accredited.

- If, after reasonable efforts to contact the assessor, he/she does not answer the emails or the phone calls, his/her accreditation may be suspended pending a final decision of the T&A Committee on continued accreditation.
- It is strongly recommended that assessors perform no more than 2 subsequent assessments at the same site. This should be the general rule expected to be followed in countries when there is more than one assessor.

### **3.2. Performance Monitoring and Appraisal Process**

The qualifications of each SQAS assessor will be reviewed by the Technical & Accreditation Committee on a periodic basis depending on the performance of the assessor but at least once every three years, based on:

- The Assessors Evaluation Scheme
- A review of recent assessments
- Any feedback from observers who are present during SQAS assessments
- Any feedback from chemical company representatives
- Any feedback from the assessed companies
- Through interviewing the assessor (if required).

When concerns are noted, a written appraisal form with the observed concerns will be presented to the assessor, to which he/she must respond and take corrective actions.

### **3.3. Continued Professional Development (CPD)**

Every year in January assessors must provide their progress report to the SQAS Manager on "Continued Professional Development" documenting and demonstrating their current status/progress and the main achievements regarding their professional development (training, self-study topics, etc.), using the format provided in [www.sqas.org /home/documents/documents for assessors](http://www.sqas.org/home/documents/documents%20for%20assessors). The assessor has to login first.

More particularly, to keep the SQAS Accreditation current and valid for the next year, the SQAS Assessor:

- Shall maintain the ISO Lead Auditor qualification (documentary proof has to be sent)
- Shall maintain the DGSA certificate (copy of a valid certificate has to be sent);
- Ensure that he/she is up-to-date on the changing regulations regarding the carriage and handling of dangerous goods. (i.e. the 2 yearly cycle of ADR/RID changes).

### **3.4. Suspension and/or revocation of an accreditation**

When repeated or serious deviations from the required performance criteria are observed, the assessor may be called to an interview with a panel drawn from the T&A Committee to discuss their appraisal. The assessor will have the opportunity to

present his/her case. The assessor will be formally informed of the outcome of such an interview by the SQAS Manager.

The accreditation of the assessor can be suspended by the SQAS Manager in cases where serious or repeated deviations are found. The suspension imposes a temporary prohibition to carry out assessments. In this case, the assessor will be invited to an interview with a panel drawn from the T&A Committee. The procedure described in the previous paragraph will be followed.

The assessor accreditation may be revoked by the T&A Committee where the performance of the assessor does not meet the required standards. Depending on the discrepancy, this may result in the revocation of one or more Accreditation Title(s) or in the revoking of the basic SQAS-Accreditation. The SQAS Manager will remind the assessor of his/her right to appeal following the procedure of section 5.

[The assessor accreditation may also be suspended / revoked by the T&A Committee in case an assessor does not pay the Cefic fee mentioned in section 2.3.](#)

In the event that an assessor considers that a decision made by the Technical & Accreditation Committee is unreasonable, he/she may appeal to the SQAS Executive Committee. In this case, the procedure referred in section 5 will be followed.

## **4. Accreditation Extension**

### **4.1. Refresher Accreditation Training**

Regular refresher training will be held to ensure continual high quality of the assessors and to facilitate the general accreditation extension process. All assessors must attend the re-fresher training held by Cefic once every 3 years.

The refresher training will cover:

- A general update on the status and content of all modules;
- Selected topics chosen from all modules, where assessors experienced difficulties or where the T&A Committee noticed inconsistencies;
- An exchange of learning. The sessions will allow sufficient time for debate amongst assessors and with the industry specialists in attendance.

### **4.2. Granting the Accreditation extension**

The accreditation will be extended for a further period if the assessor is successfully evaluated by the T&A Committee in regard to the refresher training (either by an exam or an evaluation of his cooperation and/or competencies shown during the refresher training), and paid regularly the [Cefic fee mentioned in section 2.3.](#)

The assessor succeeds when the score of the written examination is 80% or higher.

Those assessors whose scores are more than 70 % and less than 80% may re-sit (once) the written examination through an e-exam. They will pass if the score is 80% or higher.

## **5. Appeal Procedure**

- The appellant should write to the Chairman of the SQAS Executive Committee indicating in detail the reasons why he/she believes that a decision taken by the Technical & Accreditation Committee is unreasonable or not in accordance with the SQAS Accreditation Manual, and that the applicant wishes to appeal.
- The SQAS Manager will be notified of receipt of an appeal notice by the Executive Committee Chairman and then collect the relevant information that may be helpful in reviewing the case and convene an Appeal Panel.
- The Appeal Panel will consist of five members, none being members of the Technical & Accreditation Committee panel who interviewed the assessor.
- The SQAS Manager will provide the Appeal Panel with the necessary background information on the decision.
- The appellant shall be entitled to be heard by the Appeal Panel.
- The majority of the Appeal Panel decides if the original decision should be upheld or the appellant should be given another opportunity to succeed. The appellant will be informed in writing accordingly by the SQAS Manager.