

Pre-assessment Gap Analysis

CLIENT INFORMATION NOTE

Overview

This Client Information Note (CIN) gives you information on other assessment services offered by LRQA that do not result in certification.

Pre-assessment Gap Analysis

This type of pre-assessment is to review how your management system has addressed, or plans to address, all the requirements of an assessment standard. Our assessor will report on “gaps” in the system.

If you wish, you can set the plan for the pre-assessment and it need not cover all the clauses of the standard. The assessment can be a “dry run” before certification or verification and identify areas that may need attention. The pre-assessment may be undertaken on-site or remotely (off-site).

Purpose

The purpose of the assessment is for LRQA to examine and report on your management system. The readiness for the certification assessment, of the whole or individual parts of the system, will be determined.

The pre-assessment gap analysis also gives an opportunity for you to discuss any concerns you may have regarding your system or the assessment process. Our assessors will be open and helpful, and will follow a practical approach. In this way, we believe that we add value to the assessment process. The gap analysis will help you to identify any weaknesses in your management system and will enable our assessor to estimate realistic timescales for the certification assessment. If the gap analysis reveals any major deficiencies, it is important that you allow for a period of consolidation and maturity before the certification assessment.

Assessments of this type are subject to time limitations and a restricted sampling approach. They concentrate on interpretation and implementation of the relevant requirements, rather than detailed conformity. Sampling in the chosen areas will provide guidance to strengths or weaknesses. However, it is important to remember that even though management system requirement gaps may not have been identified in an area, department, or system element, it does not necessarily mean that there are none. This will be determined at the certification assessment.

Preparing for the Pre-assessment Gap Analysis visit

We agree the scope of the assessment with you before the assessment and record it in the contract. It is helpful for our assessor to be supported by a representative from your organisation who understands your systems. Your representative can both clarify any points raised and note any areas of weakness or concern. Your representative can then communicate the assessment outcomes clearly and quickly to the relevant people in your organisation.

Our assessor will contact you before the assessment to discuss and agree with you the assessment plan and other relevant details.

Pre-assessment gap analysis differ from assessments for certification audits in that the assessment plan is set by you and need not cover all clauses of the assessment standard. We could look at your existing management system or procedures against the full requirements of a standard or against the changed requirements of a revised one.

So that you gain maximum benefit from the assessment, you should consider how best to plan activities into the time available and to ensure our assessor concentrates on your major areas of concern. When planning the assessment, you can request operations of the

business to be examined. This may involve a focused assessment on one business area, activity or clause of the standard. Alternatively, the assessment may take a more generalised approach with samples being taken from a wide range of areas and activities.

Reporting

Our assessor will report the assessment outcome, both verbally and formally. The documented report will be either a “Formal report” or an “Observation record”, as agreed in the contract.

- **Formal report** – Our assessor generates this on the agreed report writing day(s) and the LRQA office sends it to you. The report has a standard format which defines the scope of the assessment, reports assessment outcome, and provides guidance on the route to certification.
- **Observation record** - Our assessor generates this during the assessment and leaves a copy with you at the end of the assessment. We produce a report using the standard LRQA Assessment Report.

Reports will detail our assessor’s conclusions and recommendations regarding your company’s readiness for a certification assessment.

The grading of any potential findings will allow you to focus attention on the areas of the system in which further work may be required before the full certification process. We record assessment findings in a Findings Log, and identify them as ‘Potential Major Nonconformity’ or ‘Potential Minor Nonconformity’. We define these findings as follows:

Potential Major Nonconformity: The absence of, or the failure to implement and maintain, one or more management system elements, or a situation which would, based on the available objective evidence, raise significant doubt of the management to achieve:

- the policy, objectives or public commitments of the organisation
- compliance with the applicable regulatory requirements
- conformance to applicable customer requirements
- conformance with the audit criteria deliverables.

Generally, a major nonconformity will be a system failure that:

- is already affecting system effectiveness or deliverables
- puts at risk the capability of the management system
- requires immediate containment
- requires immediate root cause analysis and corrective action.

Potential Minor Nonconformity: A finding indicative of a weakness in the implemented and maintained system, which has not significantly impacted on the capability of the management system or put at risk the system deliverables, but needs to be addressed to assure the future capability of the system.

Generally, a minor nonconformity will be a weakness in an internal facing process or procedure; or a finding where any further deterioration of control could reasonably be considered likely to result in the system becoming ineffective. Requires root cause investigation and corrective action.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is assured. We will not knowingly pass on any of the information we gather about your organisation (including the contents of reports) to any other person or organisation without your permission (except as required by a relevant accreditation body).

Please see related Client Information Notes in this series for details about the full Assessment process, such as CIN Remote Assessment (Non Food), Stage 1 Assessments, Stage 2 assessments etc.

Get in touch

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