

Inspection Body Accreditation Requirements

Applies to organisations seeking accreditation for defined inspection activities covering products, installations, plants, processes, services or work procedures.

Primary standard	ISO/IEC 17020:2026
Document owner	International Services for Certification Bodies
Review trigger	Standard, scheme, regulatory or ISCB process change

Document status and use

This ISCB applicant guide states the evidence and operating controls normally expected for this programme. It does not reproduce or replace the applicable ISO or ISO/IEC standard. Applicants must hold an authorised current copy and comply with all applicable requirements, legislation, scheme rules and formally issued ISCB criteria.

References to IAF or ILAC publications identify technical criteria that may be relevant. They do not by themselves state or imply that ISCB is an IAF or ILAC arrangement signatory.

Applicable framework

The assessment hierarchy begins with the primary standard and includes applicable normative, regulatory, scheme-owner and ISCB documents. ISCB will identify the controlling criterion if requirements conflict.

- ISO/IEC 17020:2026 is the current primary competence and impartiality standard.
- ISO/IEC 17011:2017 governs ISCB's accreditation process and decisions.
- ILAC P15 and related inspection guidance are applied only to the extent current and compatible with the 2026 edition, pending formal revision or transition instructions.

Core organisational requirements

Legal status and responsibility

Be a legally identifiable entity, or a defined part of one, that can be held responsible for conformity-assessment activities, contracts and decisions.

Impartiality and independence

Identify, analyse, treat, monitor and record threats from ownership, finance, relationships, consultancy, commercial pressure and self-review.

Confidentiality and information security

Protect confidential information, personal data, intellectual property and electronic records; control any legally required disclosure.

Organisation and governance

Define authority, responsibilities, reporting lines and safeguards; assign technical work, review and decisions to competent and appropriately independent functions.

Competence and resources

Set role-specific competence criteria; evaluate, authorise, monitor and re-evaluate personnel; control facilities, equipment, software and external resources.

Controlled operations

Accept work only after confirming capability; use controlled methods and records; handle deviations; review outputs; base decisions on sufficient objective evidence.

Management system

Maintain document and record control, risks and opportunities, complaints, appeals, nonconforming work, corrective action, internal audit, management review and improvement.

Accreditation claims

Limit certificates, symbols and claims to the granted scope and amend them immediately after suspension, reduction, withdrawal or expiry.

Service-specific technical requirements

1. Define each requested field and range of inspection, inspection stage, requirements used, methods, locations and any regulated context.
2. Determine and document the applicable independence model under the 2026 edition and control conflicts arising from design, manufacture, supply, installation, use, maintenance or consultancy relationships.
3. Establish competence criteria, supervised qualification, authorization and monitoring for inspectors and technical decision-makers.
4. Control inspection methods, instructions, sampling, measurements, equipment, reference data, software, records and inspection reports or certificates.
5. Validate non-standard methods and changes; control subcontracting and retain responsibility for conformity decisions.
6. Protect safety, confidentiality, integrity of evidence and traceability of observations throughout the inspection process.

Minimum application and readiness evidence

Submit current, approved documents and representative implementation records. Templates without operational evidence are not sufficient.

01	Legal identity, liability arrangements and independence analysis
02	Proposed inspection scope and applicable regulatory or scheme documents
03	Inspector competence criteria, witnessed evaluations and authorizations
04	Inspection methods, checklists and decision criteria
05	Equipment and measurement-control records
06	Subcontractor evaluation and control records
07	Representative inspection files and reports
08	Internal audit, management review, complaints, appeals and corrective actions

Assessment, decision and continued accreditation

Application and scope review

ISCB reviews legal identity, requested scope, locations, resources, readiness and applicable criteria before quotation and assessment planning. Acceptance of an application is not a promise of accreditation.

Assessment

Assessment may include document review, office or remote assessment, on-site technical assessment, witnessing, interviews, record tracing and evaluation of representative activities. The mix depends on scope and risk.

Nonconformities and decision

The applicant must determine causes, correct the issue, implement proportionate corrective action and provide evidence of effectiveness within the notified period. Accreditation decisions are independent from assessment and limited to demonstrated competence.

Maintenance

Accredited bodies must remain competent, comply with surveillance and reassessment, notify significant changes without delay, cooperate with witnessing and record access, address complaints and nonconformities, and control all accreditation claims.

Principal references

- ISO/IEC 17020:2026
- ISO/IEC 17011:2017
- ILAC P15, subject to edition compatibility
- ILAC G27 and G18, as applicable

External editions can change. The edition stated in the accreditation agreement, transition notice or other formal ISCB communication controls the assessment. Verify current editions before use.

Prepare	Complete the readiness assessment and organise objective evidence.
Apply	Submit the application and proposed scope for formal review.