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SPECIFICATION

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**Conformity assessment — Disclosure of
information — Principles and
requirements**

*Évaluation de la conformité — Divulgence d'informations — Principes et
exigences*



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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization. In the field of conformity assessment, the ISO Committee on conformity assessment (CASCO) is responsible for the development of International Standards and Guides.

International Standards are drafted in accordance with the rules given in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2.

Draft International Standards are circulated to the member bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the member bodies casting a vote.

In other circumstances, particularly when there is an urgent market requirement for such documents, a technical committee may decide to publish other types of normative document:

- an ISO Publicly Available Specification (ISO/PAS) represents an agreement between technical experts in an ISO working group and is accepted for publication if it is approved by more than 50 % of the members of the parent committee casting a vote;
- an ISO Technical Specification (ISO/TS) represents an agreement between the members of a technical committee and is accepted for publication if it is approved by 2/3 of the members of the committee casting a vote.

An ISO/PAS or ISO/TS is reviewed after three years in order to decide whether it will be confirmed for a further three years, revised to become an International Standard, or withdrawn. If the ISO/PAS or ISO/TS is confirmed, it is reviewed again after a further three years, at which time it must either be transformed into an International Standard or be withdrawn.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

ISO/PAS 17004 was prepared by the ISO *Committee on conformity assessment* (CASCO).

Introduction

In 2001 the ISO Council asked its policy committee on conformity assessment (CASCO) to study and prepare a group of common elements for application in future ISO documents on conformity assessment. Subsequent to this request, ISO/CASCO approved the formation of Working Group 23, *Common elements in ISO/IEC Standards for conformity assessment activities*, to undertake this task.

The working group has identified several common elements, including among others

- impartiality (ISO/PAS 17001),
- confidentiality (ISO/PAS 17002),
- complaints and appeals (ISO/PAS 17003),
- disclosure of information (ISO/PAS 17004),
- management systems (ISO/PAS 17005).

In the process of developing ISO/PAS 17002, which addresses the common element of “confidentiality”, CASCO Working Group 23 identified the need to elaborate on the related common element of “disclosure of information”. This Publicly Available Specification (PAS) addresses the “disclosure of information” element that occurs in many of the ISO/IEC Guides and International Standards on conformity assessment.

This Publicly Available Specification covers the agreed principles that give substance to the element of disclosure of information, and also provides requirements clauses intended to be included in future ISO/IEC International Standards on conformity assessment.

This Publicly Available Specification is intended to apply to the drafting of documents on conformity assessment by ISO/CASCO.

Clause 4 (Background) contains some comments on the importance of disclosure of information to conformity assessment.

Clause 5 (Principles) contains statements that are intended to orientate ISO/CASCO working groups in their task of creating requirements to address disclosure of information in their documents.

The requirements to be inserted into future ISO/CASCO documents that cover the common element of “disclosure of information” are detailed in Clause 6. ISO/CASCO has adopted a common structure for the presentation of requirements. Requirements are grouped under one or more of the following headings:

- a) General requirements;
- b) Structural requirements;
- c) Resource requirements;
- d) Process requirements;
- e) Management system requirements.

As such, each of the common elements will have requirements related to it grouped under one or more of the headings given in a) to e).

This PAS is not intended to become a future International Standard. At the end of three years after the date of publication, it is expected this PAS will be withdrawn and its contents incorporated as appropriate in relevant ISO/CASCO normative and guidance documents.

Conformity assessment — Disclosure of information — Principles and requirements

1 Scope

This Publicly Available Specification (PAS) contains principles and requirements for the element of disclosure of information as it relates to standards for conformity assessment.

It is an internal tool for use in the ISO/IEC standards development process by ISO/CASCO working groups when considering the element of disclosure of information in preparation of their documents.

This Publicly Available Specification is not a standalone normative document to be used directly in conformity assessment activities.

2 Normative references

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO/IEC 17000:2004, *Conformity assessment — Vocabulary and general principles*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO/IEC 17000 apply.

NOTE The use of the term “body” in this Publicly Available Specification means either an accreditation body or a conformity assessment body as defined in ISO/IEC 17000.

4 Background to information disclosure

4.1 Managing the balance between confidentiality and disclosure of information related to fulfilment of requirements affects stakeholders' trust and their perception of value in the conformity assessment activity being performed.

4.2 Legal requirements may provide the basis for what, how and to whom, information associated with conformity assessment activities may be disclosed. The content of this Publicly Available Specification, and the application of any subsequent requirements in CASCO documents, are subservient to the provisions found in those legal requirements.

5 Principles of disclosure of information

The following principles included in the common element of disclosure of information apply to bodies and their activities.

a) Openness:

A body needs to disclose information about its conformity assessment activities to any user.

Subject to relevant legal requirements, the current status of an attestation for any object of conformity that the body has made an assessment of, may be publicly disclosed with the permission of the customer, or in response to a query about the authenticity of a claim by a user.

A body needs to provide access or disclosure to specific interested parties of non-confidential and non-proprietary information about the attestations it has made for specific objects of conformity, in order to gain or maintain confidence in its conformity assessment activities.

b) Access to information:

Any information held by the body on an object of conformity that is the subject of an assessment should, upon request, be made accessible to the person or organization which contracted the conformity assessment body to undertake the conformity assessment activity.

c) Challenging confidentiality and disclosure of information:

An individual or organization should be able to submit a challenge to the body concerning that body's conformity with requirements related to confidentiality and disclosure of information.

6 Requirements for disclosure of information

6.1 General

In developing this Publicly Available Specification, it was recognized that there are varying degrees of specificity that ISO/CASCO working groups should consider. Consequently, the requirements in this clause are categorized into three levels of specificity as follows:

a) Obligatory:

These are specific drafted requirements that shall be used by ISO/CASCO working groups where the element has to be addressed, without modification, except for substitution of more specific terms. For example, the phrase "Conformity assessment activities shall be undertaken impartially", may be substituted more specifically with "Management system certification activities shall be undertaken impartially". Justification is required from ISO/CASCO working groups that do not use these requirements when dealing with the relevant common element.

b) Recommended:

These are drafted requirements that working groups should use if they wished to have a greater degree of specification. Modification is permissible.

c) Suggested:

These are considerations that could be taken into account in the drafting of requirements by the ISO/CASCO working group.

By providing for these different levels of specificity, the Publicly Available Specification achieves the ISO/CASCO intent to have an agreed statement on elements that are common to all conformity assessment activities and, at the same time, maintains some flexibility for specific wording by individual ISO/CASCO working groups.

When formulating requirements that are related to disclosure of information, CASCO working groups should take into account the following aspects:

- whether all information is confidential unless explicitly stated as not being so, or whether all information is considered freely available unless explicitly stated as being confidential;
- in cases where disclosure of information is permitted, the extent to which the conformity assessment body should be obligated to be proactive in disclosing that information (including any obligation to voluntarily inform stakeholders of changes in attestation status);
- whether the organization or person for whom the assessment of the object of conformity was performed needs to be informed of the disclosure of such information.

As an aid to future CASCO working groups, the following text that they shall either use (obligatory requirements) or otherwise incorporate (recommended requirements) in future International Standards is that which is contained in the boxes; the rest of the text is explanatory in nature.

6.2 General requirements — Obligatory requirement

The body, or the issuer of a supplier's declaration of conformity, shall upon request provide a general description of the conformity assessment system and the status of the attestation for objects of conformity it has assessed.

6.3 Process requirements — Recommended requirements

6.3.1 The body shall have a process by which individuals and organizations can complain about, or appeal against, a decision by the body to publicly disclose information or keep it confidential.

6.3.2 In response to any complaint or appeal, the body shall determine whether its original decision remains valid, and shall also provide reasons why it has decided to publicly disclose information or keep it confidential.

Bibliography

- [1] ISO/PAS 17002, *Conformity assessment — Confidentiality — Principles and requirements*
- [2] CAN/CSA-Q830-03, *Model Code for the Protection of Personal Information*

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