Module 5: Auditor Competence and Audit Models in ISO Certification

Auditor Competence – Knowledge, Skills, and Attributes for Effective OH&S Auditing

To effectively fulfill their roles, lead auditors must possess a comprehensive set of knowledge and skills as outlined in ISO 19011:2018. This standard provides guidance on auditing management systems, emphasizing the competence requirements for auditors. Below is an extensive overview of the essential knowledge and skills required for lead auditors:

1. Personal Attributes

Lead auditors should exhibit personal behaviors that enable them to act ethically and professionally:

a) **Ethical**, i.e. fair, truthful, sincere, honest and discreet;

b) **Open-minded**, i.e. willing to consider alternative ideas or points of view;

c) **Diplomatic**, i.e. tactful in dealing with people;

d) **Collaborative**, i.e. effectively interacting with others;

e) **Observant**, i.e. actively aware of physical surroundings and activities;

f) **Perceptive**, i.e. instinctively aware of and able to understand situations;

g) **Versatile**, i.e. adjusts readily to different situations;

h) **Tenacious**, i.e. persistent and focused on achieving objectives;

i) **Decisive**, i.e. reaches timely conclusions based on logical reasoning and analysis;

j) **Self-reliant**, i.e. acts and functions independently;

k) **Professional**, i.e. exhibiting a courteous, conscientious and generally business-like demeanor in the workplace;

l) **Morally courageous**, i.e. willing to act responsibly and ethically even though these actions may not always be popular and may sometimes result in disagreement or confrontation;

m) **Organized**, i.e. exhibiting effective time management, prioritization, planning, and efficiency..

2. Knowledge and Skills

a. Knowledge of Business Management Practices:

Understanding general organizational types, governance, structures, workplace practices, information and data systems, documentation systems, and information technology.

b. Audit Principles, Procedures, and Techniques

Lead auditors should have a thorough understanding of audit principles and be proficient in applying audit procedures and techniques, including:

- **Audit Planning**: Developing audit plans that align with audit objectives.

- **Audit Execution**: Conducting audits systematically, including collecting and verifying information.
- **Audit Reporting**: Preparing clear and concise audit reports.
- **Follow-up Activities**: Monitoring the implementation of audit recommendations.

c. Management System Standards and Reference Documents

Comprehension of the management system standard or other normative documents specified for certification, sufficient to determine effective implementation and conformity about the specific management system standards relevant to the audit, such as:

- **ISO 9001**: Quality Management Systems.
- **ISO 14001**: Environmental Management Systems.
- **ISO 45001**: Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems.
- **ISO/IEC 27001**: Information Security Management Systems.

They should also be familiar with applicable legal and regulatory requirements.

d. Knowledge of Certification Body's Processes:

To effectively fulfill their role, a management system auditor must do more than understand the ISO standard being audited (e.g., ISO 9001, ISO 14001, ISO 45001); they must also have a working knowledge of how their certification body (CB) operates.

This includes understanding the full certification process and procedures, from initial client engagement to audit planning, execution, reporting, and decision-making. Each certification body has documented procedures aligned with ISO/IEC 17021-1 and other applicable IAF/ISO documents. Auditors must be competent in applying these procedures consistently.

e. Knowledge of Client's Business Sector:

Understanding the client's business sector enables auditors to:

- Accurately interpret how sector-specific processes align with management system requirements.
- Identify sector-related risks and opportunities that may impact the effectiveness of the management system.
- Assess compliance with applicable legal and regulatory requirements pertinent to the sector.
- Evaluate the adequacy of sector-specific controls and performance metrics.

IAF Requirements and Guidance

IAF ID 1:2023 – Informative Document for QMS and EMS Scopes of Accreditation

IAF ID 1:2023 provides guidance on defining scopes of accreditation for Quality Management Systems (QMS) and Environmental Management Systems (EMS). It underscores the necessity

for auditors to have competence in the specific industry sectors they audit, ensuring they can effectively assess sector-specific processes and environmental aspects.

IAF MD 22:2023 – Application of ISO/IEC 17021-1 for OH&SMS Certification

IAF MD 22:2023 emphasizes that certification bodies must ensure auditors have sector-specific knowledge relevant to the scope of the Occupational Health and Safety Management System (OH&SMS) being audited. This includes understanding industry-specific hazards, risk controls, and legal requirements..

f. Knowledge of Client Products, Processes, and Organization:

Insight into the types of products or processes of a client to understand organizational operations and application of management system requirements.

- Understand the organization's core products and services, processes needed and their interactions, and how they are delivered or produced.
- Identify the key internal and external issues that influence the organization's ability to consistently deliver intended results.
- Recognize the interested parties relevant to the organization and how their expectations affect product and process requirements.
- Interpret how the organization determines and applies the scope of its QMS in relation to its product lines and operational boundaries.
- Be familiar with the complete process flow—from customer requirements, design and development (if applicable), procurement, production/service delivery, to final release.
- Assess how risks and opportunities related to products and processes are identified and planned for within the management system.
- Evaluate how the organization's quality objectives are linked to its products, services, and operational performance.
- Understand how product specifications, technical requirements, and performance indicators are managed within the QMS.
- Analyze how controls are applied to ensure conformity of products and services during production, service delivery, and after-sales processes.
- Evaluate the handling of outsourced processes and supplier controls related to product and service realization.
- Examine how nonconforming outputs are managed, including criteria for product release and corrective action.
- Understand the organization's structure, resources, and responsibilities that support the consistent application of QMS requirements to its products and operations.
- Apply a process-based audit approach that connects documented procedures and QMS controls directly to the actual production or service provision.

g. Organizational Context

Understanding the auditee's organizational context is crucial, including:

- **Organizational Structure and Processes**: Comprehending how the organization operates.
- **Business Environment**: Recognizing external factors that affect the organization.
- **Risk Management**: Identifying and assessing risks relevant to the audit.

h. Applicable Laws, Regulations, and Other Requirements

Lead auditors should be aware of and understand the legal and regulatory frameworks applicable to the auditee's operations, ensuring audits consider compliance obligations.

i. Customer Requirements

Recognizing and evaluating how the organization meets customer requirements is essential, particularly in quality management system audits.

3. Skills

a. Interpersonal Skills

Effective communication and interpersonal skills are vital for lead auditors to:

- **Conduct Interviews**: Engaging with auditees to gather information.
- **Facilitate Meetings**: Leading opening and closing meetings effectively.
- **Resolve Conflicts**: Addressing and managing disagreements constructively.

b. Analytical Skills

Lead auditors should be capable of:

- **Data Analysis**: Interpreting and evaluating information accurately.
- **Problem-Solving**: Identifying issues and determining root causes.
- **Decision-Making**: Making informed judgments based on audit evidence.

c. Leadership Skills

As leaders of audit teams, they must:

- **Manage Teams**: Coordinating and guiding audit team members.
- **Delegate Tasks**: Assigning responsibilities effectively.
- **Ensure Objectivity**: Maintaining impartiality throughout the audit process.

d. Language Skills Appropriate to All Levels Within the Client Organization:

Ability to communicate effectively with individuals at any organizational level using appropriate terms and expressions.

e. Notetaking and Report-writing Skills:

Capability to read and write with sufficient speed and accuracy to record notes and effectively communicate audit findings and conclusions.

f. Presentation Skills:

Ability to present audit findings and conclusions clearly and understandably, including public presentations during meetings.

g. Interviewing Skills:

Proficiency in obtaining relevant information through open-ended, well-formulated questions and active listening.

h. Audit-management Skills:

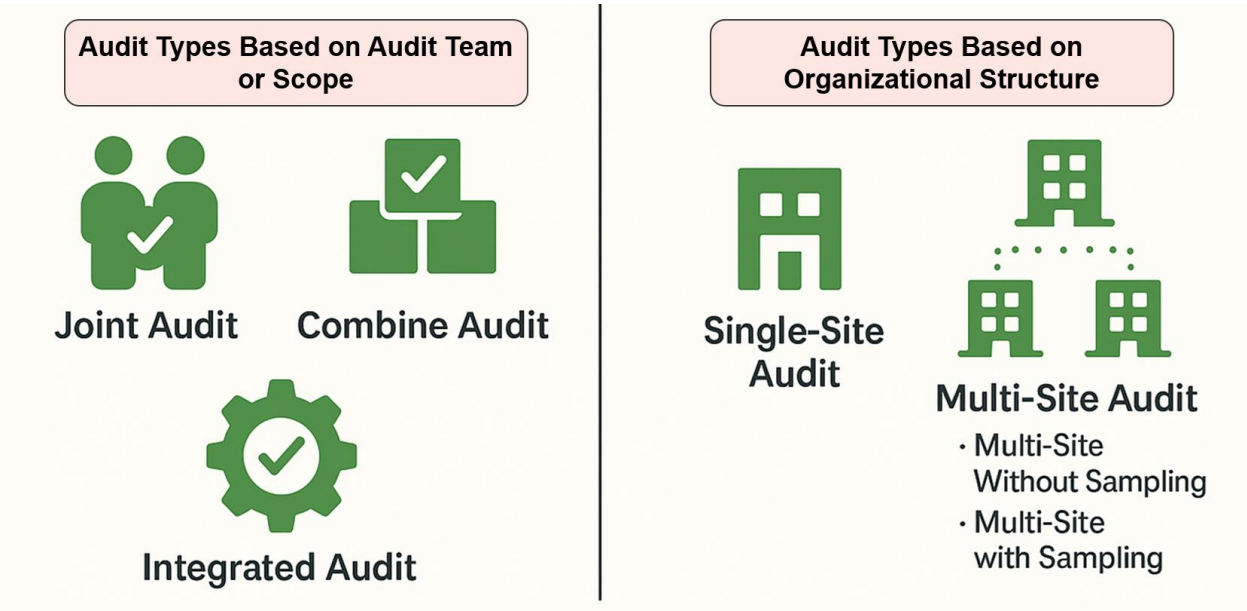
Competence in conducting and managing audits to achieve objectives within agreed timeframes, including facilitating meetings and assigning tasks as necessary.

4. Competence Evaluation and Maintenance

Organizations should establish processes to evaluate and maintain auditor competence, including:

- **Initial Evaluation**: Assessing knowledge, skills, and personal attributes before assigning audit responsibilities.
- **Ongoing Monitoring**: Regularly reviewing auditor performance and providing feedback.
- **Continual Professional Development**: Encouraging auditors to engage in ongoing learning to keep skills and knowledge up to date.

Audit Models for ISO Certification: Team-Based vs Site-Based Structures



Audit Types Based on Audit Team or Scope

1. Joint Audit

Definition:
An audit conducted by **two or more certification/auditing bodies** on a **single auditee**.

Characteristics:

- Common when a client is subject to certification by multiple CBs.
- Each auditing organization assigns its own auditors.
- May be due to cross-border certifications or accreditation requirements.

Example:
A Malaysian site is certified by both a local CB and an international CB (e.g. DQS and TÜV SÜD) for different markets. They conduct the audit jointly to save time and ensure consistency.

Benefits:

- Reduces duplication
- Harmonizes results from multiple CBs
- Better coordination in international or regulatory contexts

2. Combine Audit

Definition:
An audit where **two or more management systems** are audited together at the **same time**, but with **individual outputs** (i.e. reports and certificates).

Characteristics:

- Systems are not fully integrated.
- Audit is conducted simultaneously, reducing audit burden.
- Results are documented separately.

Example:
A plantation is audited for ISO 9001 and ISO 45001 at the same time, but gets **two separate reports** and **two certificates**.

Benefits:

- Saves time and cost
- Allows partial integration of systems
- Flexibility in certification timelines

Limitation:

- Duplication in documentation and audit findings
- No synergies between systems beyond scheduling

3. Integrated Audit

Definition:
An audit of a **fully integrated management system** covering multiple ISO standards, resulting in **one report** and **one certificate**.

Characteristics:

- One management system aligned to multiple standards.
- Audit planning, execution, findings, and reporting are **fully integrated**.
- Integrated audit team reviews common and standard-specific requirements in a unified way.

Example:
An organization integrates ISO 9001, ISO 14001, and ISO 45001 into a single management system and undergoes an integrated audit covering all requirements in one go.

Benefits:

- Unified system improves consistency and efficiency
- Single point of control

- Reduces redundancies in processes and documentation

Limitation:

- Requires strong internal alignment of processes and documentation
- Audit complexity increases, requiring multi-skilled auditors

Audit Types Based on Organizational Structure

4. Single-Site Audit

Definition:
An audit performed on an organization operating from a **single location**, where **all processes** are implemented.

Characteristics:

- All departments and processes under one physical or virtual roof.
- Simpler audit scope and planning.
- Often seen in SMEs or local companies.

Example:
A logistics company operating only from a central warehouse in Selangor is audited for ISO 9001.

Benefits:

- Easier audit planning
- Direct engagement with all functions
- Lower complexity

Limitation:

- May not reflect scalability or diversified operations

5. Multi-Site Audit

Definition:
An audit of a **multi-site organization** under a **single management system**, coordinated by a **central function**, with **multiple permanent/temporary/virtual sites**.

Multi-Site Without Sampling

All sites are audited.
Used when:

- Sites perform different processes
- Sector or regulatory requirement exists
- Client requests it

Example:
A manufacturing group has different factories (e.g. electronics, plastics, metalwork), each with unique processes.

Benefit: Full visibility
Limitation: Higher cost and effort

Multi-Site with Sampling

Selected sites are audited based on similarity and sampling logic (as per ISO/IAF guidance).

Conditions:

- All sites operate under **one management system**.
- Sites perform **similar activities** (e.g. same SOP, same risk profile).
- **Central function** must manage the whole system.

Sampling Calculation:
Uses √n formula or per DQS table (e.g., 9 sites = audit 3)

Example:
Retail chain with 25 stores across Malaysia; 5 sampled annually, central HQ audited every year.

Benefits:

- Efficient
- Representative of the system
- Lower audit cost

Limitation:

- Not allowed in IATF 16949, AS9100, etc.
- Not suitable if site variability is high

Additional Multi-Site Variants (from uploaded CP30 document):

Type	Description
Extended Site	E.g., warehouse or lab nearby to main site, not performing core processes. Treated as part of parent site.

Campus Site	Multiple units on same premises with different addresses. Can be grouped as one site.
Virtual Site	Fully online operation (e.g., design company in cloud environment). Treated as a single virtual site.
Unmanned Site	Not permanently occupied (e.g., satellite monitoring station). Tied to parent site for audit purposes.
Temporary Site	E.g., construction site for a limited time. Audited if significant to scope.

Summary Comparison Table

Audit Type	Auditing Entities	Management System	Sites Covered	Report/Certificate
Joint Audit	Multiple CBs	One or more	One auditee	Separate reports or joint
Combine Audit	One CB	Separate systems	One location	Separate reports/certs
Integrated Audit	One CB	Integrated system	One or more sites	One report/certificate
Single-Site	One CB	One system	One location	One report/certificate
Multi-Site	One CB	One system with CF	Multiple sites	One certificate + annex