MANAGEMENT SYSTEM CERTIFICATION

GENERAL REGULATIONS

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1. SCOPE

The current General Regulations define the rules applied to the certification of management systems, operated by organizations for the supply of goods or services.

This document provides a detailed description of the initial and continuing certification activity, including the application, initial audits, surveillance audits, and the process for granting, maintaining, reducing, extending, suspending, withdrawing certification and recertification;

2. DEFINITIONS

The definition of the terms used in the current document complies with the ISO 9000: 2015 - Quality Management Systems - Fundamentals and vocabulary"

Furthermore, the following definitions apply:

- Applicant: organization seeking the certification of its management systems
- Organization: Group of people and facilities with arrangement of responsibilities, authorities and relationship).
- Certified Organization: organization of which Viscount has certified the management system.
- Viscount

3. NORMATIVE DOCUMENTS

The certification process applied is based upon a demonstrated compliance with the requirements of the latest version of the following normative documents:

- ISO 9001 : Quality Management Systm Requirements
- ISO 14001 : Environmental Management Systems Requirements
- ISO 45001 : Occupational Health and Safety Systems Requirements
- ISO 22301 : Business Continuity System Requirements

4. GENERAL RULES

4.1 The current General Regulations are applied by VISCOUNT for certification of management systems complying with the standards and normative documents listed in par. 3.

4.2 Any organization seeking certification and registration of its management system by VISCOUNT must abide by the General Regulations in force at the time the certification contract is concluded.

4.3 When the General Regulations are revised, the organizations concerned may choose either to adopt the revised version or the one already applicable to them. This option is available until the next renewal audit.

4.4 The specific conditions defined in the certification contracts may not alter nor modify the requirements of the current General Regulations.

5. CERTIFICATE CHARACTERISTICS

5.1. Scope

The VISCOUNT management system certificate attests that the management system implemented by a Certified Organization complies with the requirements of the reference standard.

5.2. Period of validity

The VISCOUNT certificate is valid for a period of three years from the date of issue. The period may be adapted taking account of the limits of the period of validity of the reference normative document.

At the end of the said period, VISCOUNT automatically applies a new procedure as defined in par 7.9 of the current General Regulations regarding Renewal of Certification.

5.3. Conditions of validity

The validity of a VISCOUNT certificate is maintained provided that the Certified Organization concerned continuously complies with the following requirements:

- The certified management system is continuously maintained.
- A controlled and updated copy of the management system documented information is maintained at the Organization's site and will be made available to VISCOUNT upon request.
- Any significant modification to the management system is communicated to VISCOUNT within one week from its occurrence. (See also par. 8.1. Certification modification). Examples:
    - the legal commercial, organizational status or ownership
    - organization and management
    - contact address and sites
    - scope of operations under the certified management system
    - major changes to the management system and processes
- Any complaint raised by a third party about the quality of products or services covered by the certified management system is recorded and presented to VISCOUNT's auditors upon request.
- The frequency of the surveillance audits is maximum 12 months to keep a valid certification. In case of multi-site certification a yearly surveillance audit is not systematically required in all sites.
- VISCOUNT may carry out unscheduled audits at any time. (See: § 8.3. Short notice audit).
- During the certification, surveillance and renewal audits, the candidates and the certified organizations accept, if the case arises, the presence of representatives of the accreditation bodies.
- All financial obligations with regard to VISCOUNT are satisfied.

6. CERTIFICATION APPLICATION

Any organization interested in the certification of its management system may apply to VISCOUNT, with exception of those providing any threat for impartiality as described in §13.

VISCOUNT will supply the interested organization with a preliminary questionnaire. The organization completes the questionnaire with appropriate information about its organizational structure, activity, products or services to be covered by the management system to be certified, etc.

As soon as the necessary information has been collected and reviewed, VISCOUNT will propose the certification conditions, which are finalized in a quotation. These conditions will define at least:
- the applicable certification standard
- the applicant's entities concerned
- the activities, products or services concerned and
- the audit-time based on the IAF guidelines and the applicable certification model

At the applicant's request, the certification process may include pre-audit of the management system, which is to be certified. Pre-audit man-days shall not exceed certification audit man-days. VISCOUNT cannot carry out more than one pre-audit of the management system, which is to be certified.

Upon agreement, the applicant will fill in and the sign the relevant order form, part of the Viscount quotation.

The relevant order form must be returned to VISCOUNT, possibly attached to a standard order. The provisions of the purchase order will not be contrary to the requirements of the VISCOUNT order forms nor the current General Regulations.

7. CERTIFICATION PROCESS

7.1. Application review

After receipt of the order, VISCOUNT develops an audit programme for the full certification cycle identifying each audit activity. An audit plan of the audit activities is sent to the applicant before each audit.

VISCOUNT assigns auditors and communicate their names to the applicant.
The applicant may refuse the participation of any auditor, providing such refusal is made in writing and not less than three weeks before the beginning of the certification audit. If the applicant is unable to accept any of the auditors proposed by VISCOUNT, the certification order is considered as void. VISCOUNT will inform the applicant of this decision in writing.

7.2. Stage 1 audit

An auditor shall review the documented information of the management system before or during the site visit.

The stage 1 site visit mainly involves the applicant's management representative.

During stage 1, arrangements shall be made about:

Identifying date, site location and site specific conditions,
Collecting necessary information regarding the scope of the management system, areas, processes, compliance to related statutory and regulatory aspects and the responsible persons to be audited.
Confirming that internal audits and management review have been planned and performed.
Gathering reasonable knowledge about the client’s management system and site operations in order to plan the stage 2 audit.
Review of client’s status and understanding regarding the requirements of the standard and readiness for Stage 2 audit.
Review the allocation of resources for Stage 2 audit and to aware the client about the requirements of Stage 2 audit.

After the completion of Stage 1 audit, the auditor shall provide the organization a report including audit findings and any areas of concern that could be classified as nonconformity during the stage 2 audit. The auditor shall provide the stage 2 audit plan as well.

The minimum time gap between Stage 1 and Stage 2 would be reasonably of one week, but may be reduced in agreement with the applicant.

consideration shall be given to the needs of the applicant to resolve areas of concern identified during the stage 1 audit . The date of Stage 2 audit can be postponed though reasonably not over 90 days.

7.3. Stage 2 audit

The audit process commences with an opening meeting involving the applicant's management and the auditors. During the meeting, the participants introduce themselves and the details of the audit program are defined.

The audit itself begins usually with an interview of the top management. During the certification audit, the appointed auditors conducts a process approach audit and verify that the management system described in the manual and in the supporting procedures is effectively implemented and in compliance with the requirements of the reference normative document. The personnel involved in the management system are interviewed and the relevant management reports are analysed. In this phase, all levels of responsibility are involved and the audit is conducted on the applicant's premises and other premises if these areas are relevant to the agreed scope of the audit.
For the duration of the audit, an office with sufficient seating and desks will be allocated to the audit team for their meetings.

The audit ends with a closing meeting with the management of the applicant and the auditors. During the closing meeting the auditors will present their findings and issue corrective action requests (CAR's) for any nonconformity disclosed. The non-conformities are classified as major or minor according to the following criteria:

- Major non-conformity:
  - No evidence of an essential element of documentation or of the implementation of a criterion (or of part of a criterion) of the reference normative document.
  - Significant non-conformity with specific requirements of the applicable directive when the certification is requested in this context.
  - Accumulation of minor non-conformities giving rise to no confidence in the system's efficiency.
  - Non-compliance of a legal requirement attached to process or product.

- Minor non-conformity:
  - Incomplete documentation (if not essential for the functioning of the management system) or incomplete implementation of a criterion of the reference normative document.
  - Evidence of a non-conformity which, individually or collectively with others, does not impair the operability of the management system.
  - Lack of evidence demonstrating the conformity of part of the management system with a criterion of the reference normative document.

The auditor will inform the applicant about the overall conclusion of the audit team an about the further development of the certification process.

A post-audit may be requested in case disclosed major nonconformities. A complete re-audit will be requested in case of

- high number of major non-conformities or total breakdown of system, or
- high number of customer complaints and no clear evidence of action taken towards customer satisfaction.

When applicable, the applicant will respond to the CAR's by giving his position and a proposed completion date for each accepted CAR. These responses will be sent to VISCOUNT at the earliest convenience but in any event not later than two weeks after the end of the audit.

7.4. Audit report

Following the audit, a confidential report will be established, including a brief description of the applicant , the audit criteria, scope, objectives and findings, the Corrective Action Requests (CAR's) on disclosed non-conformities replied by the applicant , the general conclusion and the recommendation of the audit team.
Generally, the report will be mailed to the applicant within two weeks after receipt of the applicant's responses to the CAR's issued.

7.5. Certification file

The Administration of VISCOUNT will prepare the certification file, to be presented to VISCOUNT's Certification Committee. A certification file contains all information concerning the applicant, the contractual agreement, the audit report and the recommendation and any additional comment from the audit team regarding the applicant and the audited management system.

7.6. Certification decision:

VISCOUNT's Certification Committee will review the certification file for decision. The committee is composed of a chairman and senior auditors with veto right. The senior auditor is a lead auditor having the benefit of a long experience and of a high esteem in his work field. The committee has a weekly meeting, generally on Monday, when, all submitted files will be reviewed. If necessary, the concerned auditors will be consulted as well. In each case, the Certification Committee will decide either to grant a certificate and under what conditions, or to refuse the certification and for what reasons.

The decision of the Certification Committee will be communicated to the applicant within two working days. When granted, the effective date of issuance of the certificate will be the date of the Committee meeting. The certificate is valid for 3 years maximum.

The granting of a certificate will be refused when the Certification Committee decides that the management system implemented substantially deviates from the requirements of the reference standard. Evidence of deviation could be:

- Evidence of major non-conformities.
- Accumulation of minor non-conformities giving rise to no confidence in the operability of the management system.
- Attitude of the applicant towards the resolution of CAR's.

7.7. Certification and publication

After a positive decision for certification, VISCOUNT shall issue the certificate, identifying:

- The reference standard,
- Name and address of the certificate holder,
- The scope of the certified activity,
- The audit report number on which the certification is based
- The registration number of the certificate, composed by two digits of the year of issue and a sequential number.
- VISCOUNT, its logo and address,
- The logo of the accreditation body
- The name and signature of the Chairman of the Certification Committee,
- The effective date of certification (the date when the certification decision has been taken)
- The validity period of the certificate (maximum 3 years from the date of certification decision)

7.8. Surveillance

The maintenance program consists of a sequence of surveillance audits on site. There shall be not more than 12 months between two audits, starting from the previous renewal or initial certification audit.

During a surveillance audit a number of elements defined at the certification audit have to be re-verified. These elements will be spread over the several surveillance audits in such a way that all the relevant items will be covered within the scope of the maintenance programme. The maintenance programme shall include at least:

Internal audits and management review.
A review of actions taken on nonconformities identified during the previous audit.
Treatment of complaints.
Effectiveness of the management system to achieve Organization's objectives.
Progress of planned activities aimed at continual improvement.
Continual operational control.
Review of any changes.
Use of marks or reference to certification

The surveillance audit report and the auditor recommendation shall have to be submitted to the Certification Committee for further decision in the following cases:

- Disclosure of major non-conformities or unreasonable accumulation of minor non-conformities.
- Any other reason for suspension of the certificate.
- Request for modification of the current certificate.

7.9. Renewal

Three months before the end of the validity period of a given certificate, VISCOUNT will issue a proposal for the renewal of the certificate.
The renewal process is comparable to the original certification. However, the program takes account of the knowledge gained of the management system to re-assess and the General Regulations in force at the date of the renewal proposal are applicable,

The renewal audit on site shall be conducted like the initial certification stage 2 audit and shall also address the following:

- Effectiveness of the entire management system despite internal and external changes.
- Continued relevance of the scope of certification.
- Commitment to maintain and improve the effectiveness of the management system.
- Achievement of the organization's policy and objectives.

8. SPECIAL CASES

In addition to the standard certification programme described above, special cases can also be accommodated. The most common examples are detailed below.

8.1. Certification modification

8.1.1 A Certified Organization may request to modify elements on its current certificate. (See also § 5.3.) This request may involve modified, additional or excluded processes, products, services, activities, locations or organization.

In such a case, a specific program is developed, taking account of the nature of the request. In general, the program is limited to the Certified Organization's entities concerned.
Where the modification is accepted, the initial certificate is adapted to the new situation or replaced by a new certificate with new conditions. The certification surveillance program will be modified accordingly.

8.1.2 The certified organization shall amend all advertising matter when the scope of certification has been reduced

8.2. <u>Multi-site certification</u>

Upon request, VISCOUNT may organize the certification of several organizations belonging to the same group. In such a case, a single or several certificates are issued by VISCOUNT

8.3. <u>Short notice audit</u>

VISCOUNT may request an audit on short-term notice or unaanounced at any time to verify handling of customer's complaints, important modification within the organization or any reason leading to withdrawal or suspension of the certificate. In case of "short notice" or "unannounced" audit because of Customer Complaint, the audit team is not allowed to disclose the name of the complainant.

VISCOUNT will communicate the name of the appointed auditor. The organization may refuse the appointed auditor and request once for a substitute. After the audit, the auditor shall report about the results of his investigation and shall make his recommendation to the Certification Committee for further decision.

8.4. <u>Transfer of certificate</u>

On the request of a Certified Organization that wishes to transfer a certificate issued by another certified body to VISCOUNT, VISCOUNT can issue a certificate based on examination of the original certificate and the last audit reports.

If the last certification, recertification or subsequent surveillance audit reports are not made available or if the surveillance audit is overdue or major non-conformities are still not settled then initial certification audit is offered to the organization.

When a VISCOUNT certificate is issued the expiration date will be the same as on the original certificate.

9. <u>USE OF THE CERTIFICATE AND CERTIFICATION BODY AND ACCREDITATION LOGOS/ MARKS</u>

9.1 The Certified Organization:

a. may display, reproduce and issue copies of the certificate (additional originals are available from VISCOUNT),
b. shall disclose only full copies of the audit reports to any third party
c. shall not imply that the certification applies to activities that are outside the scope of certification
d. shall not refer its management system certification in such as way as to imply that Viscount certifies a product(including service) or process
e. shall not imply that the certification applies to activites and sites that are out side the scope of certification
f. shall not use its certification in such a manner that would bring the certification body and/or certification system into disrepute and lose public trust

9.2 Rules governing certificaiton bodies logo(s):

9.2.1 On successful certification of the management system standards, Viscount provides registration (certification) logo(s) to its cleints.

9.2.2 The logos shall always be used together with the name of the certified organization

9.2.3 Certified client may use and reproduce the VISCOUNT registration logo referring to the applicable normative document, but only on correspondence, promotional documentation, advertising documentation (inclusive web-sites), company vehicles. In this case, the following conditions apply:

a) The registration logo shall only be related to activities, products or services covered by the relevant certificate. The Certified Organization will identify the activities, goods or services to which the certificate applies when the use of the logo might lead to confusion

b) This logo shall never be associated with activities, products or services in such a way as to seem them to have been certified by VISCOUNT. Therefore, the logo may not be applied on the product itself or on its direct packaging

c) This logo shall never be applied to laboratory tests, calibration or inspection reports or certificates

d) The Certified Organization discontinues any use of the logo, judged unacceptable by VISCOUNT and any form of declaration relating to the authority of the certified Organization for the use of the logo, which VISCOUNT might deem to be misleading

e) Upon termination of the certification for whatever reason (expiration of the validity period, withdrawal notified by VISCOUNT), the Certified Organization undertakes to discontinue all use of the logo immediately, and destroy stock of any material on which it appears

f) The registration logo can be printed only in black or in blue (Sapphire #0f52ba)

Note: VISCOUNT keeps soft copies of logos to be used. It will be forwarded on request of the certified organization.

9.3 When making reference to its certification status in communication media such as the internet, brochures or advertising or other documents, the certified organziaiton shall make sure to follow above rules.

9.4 If any client claims about their certification, through any statement on their packaging material or in accompanying information, that the company has a certified management system, they are allowed to use the statement "Certified System" only with Viscount Logo. The statement and logo are allowed to be used along with the name of the certified organization indicating that the particular orgnizaiton is cerified.

9.5 Upon withdrawal of its certification, the certified organziaiton shall discontinues its use of all advertising matter that contains a reference to certification.

9.6 In case of scope modification, the certified organization commits itself to use the modified certificate, logo and amend all advertising matter.

9.7 The accreditation logos/marks are issued to Viscount by accreditation bodies, which are used by Viscount as per related accreditation body's requriements. However, certificaed client's are not authorized to use accreditation logos/marks.

10. Certification Suspension

The reviewing lead auditor communicates the exact reason of suspension, withdrawal or scope reduction, the actions to be taken for reinstatement and the time limit within those actions are to be implemented and verified through an audit.

The Certification Secretary informs the organization about the decision within one week after the decision with the approval of General Manager.

Suspension period of invalidity should not normally be more than 3 months. Suspension period can continue only till the expiry date of the certificate.

The reviewing lead auditor can reinstate a suspended certificate based on an audit (post- or short notice audit) performed by a Viscount auditor. The auditor submits a report providing evidence concerning the requested action and his recommendation.

Following are few situations when certification can be suspended:

- the client's certified management system has persistently or seriously failed to meet certification requirements, including requirements for the effectiveness of the management system
- the certified client does not allow surveillance or recertification audits to be conducted at the required frequencies
- the certified client has voluntarily requested a suspension

Under suspension, the client’s management system certification is temporarily invalid.

The suspended certification is restored if the issue that has resulted in the suspension has been resolved.

The failure to resolve the issues that have resulted in the suspension in a time established by Viscount is resulted in withdrawal or reduction of the scope of certification. The maximum suspension period is six month.

11. CERTIFICATE WITHDRAWAL

11.1 A certificate may be withdrawn by VISCOUNT only in the following cases:

- at the written request of the Certified Organization to VISCOUNT,
- the Certified Organization does not abide by the applicable General Regulations.

Only VISCOUNT’s Certification Committee has the authority to withdraw a certificate. A withdrawal is notified to the Certified Organization concerned by email.

11.2 Upon withdrawal of its certification, the certified organization should discontinues its use of all advertising matter that contains a reference to certification as directed by Viscount

12. COMPLAINTS & APPEALS

12.1 Complaint Handling Process

Any party concerned may object to a decision made by VISCOUNT or may complaint about any activity or processes of Viscount. All objections can be sent to VISCOUNT by post or e-mail to Certification Coordinator at viscount@visocunt.ae or General Manager at wasim@viscount.ae or through the link provided on Viscount’s website for registering complaints on the page of “Contact

Us" at the following link www.viscount.ae/contact-us. VISCOUNT keeps the complainant informed about the handling, the status and final results of the complaint.

VISCOUNT acknowledges and registers the complaint and designates a person in-charge to investigate the complaint and propose corrective actions. The person handling the complaint is not involved in the concerned certification process. If the results of the investigation are unacceptable to the complainant, VISCOUNT informs him/her about the possibility to launch an appeals procedure.

12.2 Appeal Process

The complainant may appeal to the Appeals Committee, through Certification Coordinator at viscount@visocunt.ae or General Manager at wasim@viscount.ae or through the field provided on Viscount's website for registering appeals on the page of "Contact Us" at the following link www.viscount.ae/contact-us. VISCOUNT keeps the appellant informed about the handling, the status and final results of the complaint.

The Appeals committee is comprised of at least three members of the Impartiality Committee. The members of the Appeals Committee will communicate to the appellant. The appellant has the right to contest members of the committee by an email within 8 days of being notified of the committee members.

A meeting of the Appeals Committee is called within two weeks after agreed constitution of the Committee members. Both the appellant and the Certification Committee shall be entitled to be heard in confidence. The Appeals Committee may also hear any other individuals who may be relevant to the appeal.

The Appeals Committee releases its decision on the appeal within two weeks after having collected all relevant information and arguments. The decision, by majority within the Appeals Committee, is considered final. During the whole appeal procedure, the appealed decision will stand.

13. CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

VISCOUNT gets regular feedback from its clients concerning provided certification services. Normally after the initial certification and each renewal audit a Customer Satisfaction Survey Form is sent to the concerned clients. The clients who will provide feedback received the resulting overview of all responding clients during the year concerned.

14. CONFIDENTIALITY

The complete personnel of VISCOUNT, including external personnel if any concerned, Committee members and all personnel of the Group Viscount having any relationship with VISCOUNT certification activities are, by legally enforceable agreement, committed to safeguard the confidentiality of the information obtained or created during the performance of the certification activities.

VISCOUNT has taken the necessary measures to restrict access to client's records, documents on any information in general.

With exception of the situations described here under, no any other information concerning clients shall be disclosed to third parties, without written consent of the client's representative.

Clients are hereby informed about the information VISCOUNT is requested by accreditation rules to disclose and under which conditions:

- Information about certificates granted, suspended or withdrawn is accessible to the public on simple request from any party. Valid certifications shall show the name, reference standard, scope, city, and country of each certified client.
- Where VISCOUNT is required by law to release confidential information to a third party and unless regulated by law, the concerned client representative shall be notified of the provided information.
- When confidential information is required by and made available to the Accreditation Body, members of the Viscount Group, VISCOUNT shall inform the concerned clients about this action.

Information about VISCOUNT's clients, obtained from other sources than the client, like complainants or regulators, shall be treated as confidential.

15. IMPARTIALITY

VISCOUNT's Top management understands the importance of impartiality of its mission and shall manage any conflict of interest and ensure complete objectivity when carrying out certification activities. For those reasons, VISCOUNT, including management, internal and external personnel, shall:

- not certify other certification bodies for management systems
- not carry out any management system consultancy or internal audits
- not have any linked activities with management system consultancy organizations
- not utilize personnel involved with consultancy activities or internal audits over the last 2 years for certification activities at the same client
- not utilize personnel for certification activities on clients having commercial, financial or other pressures to compromise impartiality of this personnel
- not accept any finances or sources of income that could compromise its impartiality
- not outsource audits or certification activities to any management system consultancy organizations, but may offer audits to individual contracted external auditors or technical experts.
- not act contrary to the declaration of impartiality agreed and signed by each individual member of VISCOUNT

In case, any person, body or organisation's actions would lead to the threat to VISCOUNT's impartiality, VISCOUNT shall initiate legal action against that person, body or organisation.

16. CERTIFICATION FEES

Certification fees include standard fees and specific fees.
The standard certification fees fixed by VISCOUNT are defined in four lump sums and a set of daily and hourly rates.The lump sums cover:

- the audit preparation and stage 1 (§ 7.1. & 7.2.)
- the certification audit (stage 2) and report (§ 7.3. & 7.4.)
- the certification and publication (§ 7.5. to 7.7.)
- the certification surveillance program (§ 7.8.)

The lump sums are defined on the basis of the size and the complexity of the organization.
Specific fees are defined for each particular case and are based upon the same principles as the fees for standard certification services.

17. REFERENCE STANDARDS CHANGES

When a revised reference standard or normative document is published, a transition period is defined in compliance with the criteria defined by the competent authorities in the matter: ISO, IAF, EA, EIAC, ANAB, etc.

During this period, applicants and certified organizations shall have the choice between the previous or revised version of the normative document.

Beyond this period, the latest edition will apply only. Non-conformities against the new version of the standard will first be noted as remarks and will be written as Corrective Action Requests only after the transition period.

Changes in the standard and other requirements of competent authroties are also notified to clients through emails. If required, notifications or circulars or news about the changes are also posted on the website of Viscount.
