



## RULES OF CERTIFICATIONS

### ASTRON-F04 RULES OF CERTIFICATIONS

The applicant organization (hereinafter referred to as Client) upon signature on the Application for Certification shall abide by the rules and conditions laid down herewith and shall take necessary measures to correct any violations noticed by ASTRON and/or brought to the knowledge of ASTRON by parties concerned with the certification.

#### 1.0 DEFINITIONS

Where used in the rules and conditions, the terms listed below shall have the following meaning:

ASTRON	ASTRON CERTIFICATION LLC
<b>Client</b>	An applicant organization or a individual applying to ASTRON for certification of the management system
<b>Certification</b>	The decision by ASTRON that the client's management system meets the requirement of the specific standard
<b>Management System Standard</b>	Any recognized commercial, national, or international standard governing management systems such as ISO 9001, ISO 14001, ISO 45001:2018 etc.
<b>Certificate of compliance</b>	Document issued upon certification to recognize that the management system has been assessed by ASTRON and found to meet the requirements of the management system standard appearing on the Certificate for the scope of certification. Each Certificate bears a Certificate number, issue date and expiry date, company name, address, and scope of certification. The Certificate of Compliance cannot be transferred to any other organization

#### 2.0 Introduction to ASTRON

ASTRON LLC is an independent third-party certification body.

##### Confidentiality & Impartiality policy

**ASTRON** management and staff are committed and work on principles of impartiality, transparency in operations and confidentiality. ASTRON understands the importance of impartiality in carrying out management system certification activities, manages conflict of interest and ensures the objectivity of its management system certification activities. We take affirmative action on complaints and appeals.

- a. Conformity assessment activities shall be undertaken impartially. ASTRON is responsible for the impartiality of its conformity assessment activities and shall not allow commercial, financial, or other pressures to compromise impartiality.
- b. Undertakes to safeguard the confidentiality of client information obtained in the entire certification process or obtained through sources other than client. All personnel of ASTRON and those acting on its behalf shall adhere to this principle of confidentiality.
- c. Ensures that list of certifications granted, under suspension, withdrawn or expired for the previous month is made publicly available on ASTRON website. Accreditation Body of ASTRON reserves the right to access the client audit files. For any other client information that ASTRON intends to place in public domain or disclose to a third party, explicit permission to do so shall be obtained from the client. In case ASTRON is required by law to release confidential information to a third party it shall notify the client, or the individual concerned unless regulated by law.
- d. Upon request from any interested party, through ASTRON website or otherwise, shall provide information about geographical areas it operates, status of a given certification as well as the name, related normative document, scope and geographical location (city and country) for a specific certified client. However, such information shall be provided only after verifying the genuineness of the request.
- e. Has well established resources to ensure secure handing of all confidential information.
- f. All Activities of ASTRON shall be impartial and they are subject to scrutiny and review by an Independent Committee for Safeguarding Impartiality each year.

#### 3.0 Contract Review

For the contract review ASTRON will seek information in its (Request for Quote) RFQ format to:

- a. Determine if the offered certificate is within the scope of accreditation and make sure that needed auditing competence is available with it for the required scope.
- b. Determine the effective manpower at the client facility to be audited to calculate the audit man-days required. Ref IAF MD 5; IAF MD 1; IAF MD 11, IAF MD 22.

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- c. The man-days calculated in this review are subject to change based on the perception of the auditor in the stage 1 audit. This may also happen during any surveillance audit if the client organization has undergone any significant change to necessitate this change.
- d. For any significant change in the number of man-days required for the audit, the client will bear the cost of the increased number of man-days.
- e. Upon client request, ASTRON shall provide audit time determination and the justification.

### 4.0 Upon acceptance of ASTRON as its Certification body the client shall:

- a. Issue the required document to accept the financial terms and conditions.
- b. Sign an agreement with ASTRON
- c. Mutually decide with ASTRON the timeframe for the certification process.
- d. The client shall comply with any changes to the requirements of certification as notified by ASTRON to its certified clients from time to time as these changes become applicable. Client shall ensure that such changes are compiled by within stipulated time frame. ASTRON shall verify that each certified client complies with the new requirements. Details of such changes shall also be made publicly available on ASTRON web site.

### 5.0 Normative requirements for certification

- a. The organization to be certified should be a legal entity.
- b. The organization should comply with all applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.
- c. The organization should have a documented and implemented management system in accordance with the selected scheme of certification.
- d. It should have conducted at least one cycle of internal audit covering all requirements of the management system standard followed up by a management review prior to the initial certification audit by ASTRON.
- e. It should have nominated a management representative.

### 6.0 The client undertakes to:

- a. Inform ASTRON, without delay, of major changes to client management that affect the status of certification to enable ASTRON to evaluate the same. For example, changes related to contact details, organization, ownership, business activities, scope of operation, locations, processes (e.g. addition or deletion of design function), legal / commercial status of the organization etc.
- b. Extend necessary cooperation during the assessment and provide information on health, safety, and environmental requirements to be fulfilled by ASTRON auditors including appropriate office space for working.
- c. Allow ASTRON Auditors to perform audit as per schedule and provide access to technical experts / interpreter / observers (from ASTRON or Accreditation Body, where necessary), as well as access to documents, records, and sites to assess the management system to determine compliance /continuing compliance to the designated standard and provide information necessary for evaluation by ASTRON.
- d. Provide necessary auditable documents as requested by ASTRON well in advance of the audit.
- e. Allow short notice audits (refer to section 12.0 of this document).
- f. Maintain a complete and clear record of all received complaints, Environmental or Occupational Health and Safety incidents resolution thereof and provide access to ASTRON to evaluate action taken.
- g. Provide access to investigate into any complaints received by ASTRON from any interested parties.
- h. Ensure that the Certificate of compliance, Certification mark or audit report, or any part thereof issued by ASTRON, is not used in a misleading manner violating rule prescribed by ASTRON and accreditation body.
- i. Comply by the ASTRON transition policy for the revised normative standards / audit criteria.
- j. The Certificate or Audit Report issued by ASTRON shall always be used, reproduced, published, and distributed in entirety.

### 7.0 Certification audit

The flow chart for the entire certification process is on page 6. The initial certification audits for all new applications are performed in two parts (Stage 1 and Stage 2).

#### STAGE 1 Audit.

The stage 1 audit is conducted by making a visit to the client premises and covers the followings:

- a. Review the client's management system documentation
- b. Evaluate the client's location and site-specific condition and to undertake discussions with the client's personnel to determine the preparedness for the stage 2 audit.
- c. To review the client's status and understanding regarding requirements of the standard, with respect to the identification of key processes, objectives, key performance indicators, significant aspects-risks, and operational controls as applicable.

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- d. Collect necessary information regarding the scope of the management system, processes and location(s) of the client, outsourced processes exclusion and justifications and related statutory aspects and compliances (e.g. legal aspects of quality, environmental and safety related client's operation, etc.)
- e. Obtain necessary information regarding the scope of the management system, such as sites, processes and equipment used, levels of controls established (particularly in case of multisite clients) and applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.
- f. Review the allocation of resources for stage 2 audit and agree with the client on the details.
- g. Provide a focus for planning the stage 2 audit by gaining a sufficient understanding of the client's management system and site operation in the context of possible significant aspects.
- h. Check if the internal audits and management review are performed and the level of implementation of management is adequate

In case any discrepancies are noticed, the Lead Auditor (LA) will give suitable findings and the client will be requested to take corrective action and inform ASTRON before taking of the stage 2 audits. If any significant changes which would impact the management system occur, ASTRON shall consider the need to repeat all or part of stage 1. If sufficient confidence is not perceived by the audit team, results of stage 1 may lead to postponement or cancellation of stage 2. Stage 2 audit will be conducted minimum 15 days after Stage 1 audit. A maximum gap of 6 months is acceptable between Stage 1 and Stage 2 audits. If the client takes more than 6 months to complete the corrections advised during the Stage 1 audit, the matter will be referred to the Decision Committee of Astron and a decision to conduct Stage 2 audit can be taken only if there are no major changes to the management system of the client.

### STAGE 2 Audit

Client management system is assessed to establish effectiveness of the implementation of the system across the organization by taking samples of records, reviewing/witnessing on-going process/ operations and by interviewing personnel performing the tasks. Any significant finding of stage 1 is taken into consideration while finalizing the audit plan for stage 2. NCRs of stage 1 are reviewed and closed. Stage 2 audit shall address the following, as a minimum:

- a. Information and evidence about conformity to all requirement of the management system standard.
- b. Performance monitoring, measuring, reporting, and reviewing against key performance objectives and targets.
- c. Performance as regards legal compliance.
- d. Operational control of the client's processes
- e. Internal auditing and management review.
- f. Management responsibility
- g. Links between the normative requirements, policy, performance objectives and targets (consistent with the expectations in the applicable management system standard or other normative document), any applicable legal requirements, responsibilities, competence of personnel, operations, procedures, performance data and internal audit findings and conclusions.

At the end of the stage 2 audit, the LA shall present the audit findings to the client management and inform the audit recommendation to the ASTRON Certification Decision Committee. The classification of audit findings is explained to the client during the opening and at the closing meeting. The non-conformance(s) are documented in the format for non-conformance note (NCN) and issued to the client for initiating investigation and action. The client is expected to propose corrective actions for each NCN issued. The LA will make his recommendation only when the proposed corrective actions are acceptable to him/her. Depending on the nature of the findings the LA may indicate the requirement of a follow-up audit prior to recommending for certification. Follow-up audit shall be performed on agreed date(s) and fees charged as per agreed man-day rates in the accepted quotation.

If ASTRON is not able to verify the implementation of corrections and corrective actions of any major nonconformity within 6 months after the last day of stage 2, another stage 2 audit shall be conducted prior to recommending certification.

The LA may modify the scope of certification based on the audit findings.

An audit may be aborted only in extra ordinary situations, the decision for which shall be taken by the LA in consultation with the client.

### 8.0 Certification decision

The Certification Decision Committee shall make the final decision for granting certification. The LA shall forward the audit report and other documentation for review by the certification decision committee clearly stating the audit recommendation. When recommendation is approved by the committee a Certificate of Compliance shall be issued by ASTRON. The decision committee may seek additional clarifications from the LA or the client before accepting the recommendation. A draft Certificate of Compliance shall be forwarded to the client for review prior to issue of the Original Certificate. The Certificate of Compliance shall be valid for a period of three years from certification date. The validity of the certificate is verified at least yearly in surveillance.

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### 9.0 Surveillance audits

After Certification, surveillance audits will be carried out at intervals indicated in the accepted quotation. Surveillance audits are carried out periodically to verify that the certified management system continue to comply with the requirements and are effectively in place. Non-conformances identified during the Surveillance audits shall be documented and classified as described in 7.0 above. The Surveillance audit program shall address, as a minimum:

- a. internal Audits and management review,
- b. a review of actions taken on nonconformities identified during the previous audit,
- c. handling of complaints,
- d. effectiveness of the management system about achieving the established objectives,
- e. progress of planned activities aimed at continual improvement,
- f. continuing operational control.
- g. review of any changes,
- h. use of certification marks and/or any reference to certification.

The LA shall submit the audit report and providing recommendation for continual validity of certification to the ASTRON certification decision committee. First surveillance shall be conducted between 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> month of the certification/recertification audit.

**Recertification:** Before the expiry of the existing certificate, fresh contract review shall be carried out. ASTRON will have an extensive relook at the client's management system during recertification audit. It will be binding for the client to have rrecertification audit, close all resulting major NCs (if any) and propose correction - corrective action plans for any minor NCs before expiry of the existing certificate.

If ASTRON has not completed the recertification audit or is unable to verify the implementation of corrections and corrective actions for any major nonconformity prior to the expiry date of the certification, then recertification shall not be recommended, and the validity of the certification shall not be extended.

Following expiration of certification, the ASTRON can restore certification within 6 months provided that the outstanding recertification activities are completed, otherwise at least a stage 2 shall be conducted. The effective current date on the certificate shall be on or after the recertification decision and the expiry date shall be based on prior certification cycle.

Upon request by client, ASTRON can keep the original certification date on the certificate when a certificate lapses for a period. In such cases, the renewed certificate shall indicate:

- the current certification cycle start and expiry date
- the previous certification cycle expiry date and the date of recertification audit

### 10.0 Scope extension or reduction

Upon request by the client for scope extension, fresh contract review shall be performed. Special audit may be planned for such extensions or may be clubbed together with upcoming surveillance audit. Stage 1 and stage 2 requirements shall be verified during the audit for the requested extended scope. Compliance to the requirements would result in issue of revised certificate with extended scope.

Client may request for scope reduction voluntarily. In such cases, it may not be necessary to conduct special audit, unless the reduced scope is exclusive of the existing scope in defining client's business activity.

During any audit, if the LA is not provided with sufficient evidence of documentation and implementation of a part of the certified scope, LA has right to recommend to the decision committee to reduce the scope by eliminating that part of the scope for which evidence was not made available.

### 11.0 Transfer of certification

ASTRON may accept to transfer the existing certification under following conditions:

- Pre-Transfer Review Visit shall be made to verify the validity of the existing certificate and to confirm that the current certification is not under threat of suspension or withdrawal.
- Transfer will be accepted only if requirements of IAF MD 02 (Transfer of Accredited Certification of Management Systems) are complied with.

### 12.0 Short notice audits

It may be necessary for ASTRON to conduct audits of certified clients at short notice under following circumstances:

- to investigate complaints from clients or other interested parties of the certified client
- to verify and validate the integrity of the client management system in case of significant changes to the client management system / organization

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Because of the lack of opportunity for the client to object to audit team members, ASTRON ensures that the members of audit team assigned have not been party to any complaint or appeal from the client under consideration.

### 13.0 Suspension and withdrawal of Certificates

ASTRON certification decision is final binding on the client and ASTRON shall have full right to suspend a certification, reduction of scope of Certification. Suspension of certification can occur when one or more of the following situations, as applicable,

- a. Unresponsiveness of the client to the audit notifications and noncooperation in conduct of surveillance audits in time.
- b. No actions/objective evidence submitted on major non-conformances issued during re-certification and/or Surveillance audits within the specified time.
- c. Recurring major non-conformity noticed by the audit team indicating ineffective controls.
- d. Failure of the client to inform ASTRON of any major changes in its organization that may affect the status of certificate.
- e. No evidence of conducting planned internal audit and/or management review in two successive surveillance audits.
- f. ASTRON comes to know that the client no longer complying with the ASTRON Rules of Certification and/or found misusing the Certification Marks or Certificate or Scope of Certification is misreported.
- g. If ASTRON learns of any legal / public action against the client that violates the credence of certification.
- h. Payment is overdue
- i. Certified client has voluntarily requested a suspension

The status of suspension of any client has validity for maximum of 6 months after which the certificate will be withdrawn unless the conditions for which the suspension was enforced are effectively reversed, that may be verified through a short notice audit. On confirmation that the conditions resulting in suspension are reversed, suspension will be lifted (certification will be restored) by ASTRON.

**Withdrawal of Certificate:** The client shall comply with post withdrawal actions requested by ASTRON within the time frame determined by ASTRON. Withdrawal will necessitates that -

- a. The client must return the original certificate and
- b. Discontinue with immediate effect the certification and accreditation marks and confirm the same failing which ASTRON may take recourse of a legal action.

### 14.0 Requirements for use of Certification mark and reference to certification

- a. ASTRON has established rules for use of *Certification mark*.
- b. Clients that hold certification shall be provided with soft copy of ASTRON Certification mark. ASTRON Certification mark may be used in conjunction with the accreditation body Mark. The applicable rules for use of marks issued by accreditation body will be valid at all times.
- c. For an accredited certified client when the *combined* mark of ASTRON and accreditation body is issued, the size of the accreditation body mark must not exceed the size of the ASTRON Certification mark. These shall always be printed side by side.
- d. The certification mark shall be used only on correspondence, Letter heads, visiting cards advertising and promotional material and must not be directly used on products and product packages. The mark shall not be more conspicuous compared to the certified client logo. (Note: Product packaging is considered as that which can be removed without the product disintegrating or being damaged. Accompanying information is considered as separately available or easily detachable. Type labels or identification plates are considered as part of the product).
- e. Promotional or informative statement used to communicate the certified status shall include reference to identification of certified client, type of management system, applicable standard and ASTRON. The statement shall in no way imply that the product, process, or service is certified by this means.
- f. Proportional increase shall be allowed on stationary of larger size than A4. Client shall ensure that the marks, including the standard and the Certificate number are legible with no distortion or overlapping.
- g. The Certificate marks shall be used only as per color specified in ASTRON rules.
- h. The certified organization undertakes to discontinue any use of certification mark that is unacceptable to ASTRON and any form of statement that in the opinion of ASTRON might be misleading.
- i. Upon withdrawal of the Certification by ASTRON the client shall immediately discontinue use of all marks. The client shall not use certification in such a manner as to bring ASTRON into disrepute.



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- j. ASTRON shall initiate direct communication with the client to rectify any misuse of the Certification mark and/or certification mark or improper reference to certification noticed by their auditors including those violations brought to the notice of ASTRON by any interested parties and general public subject to thorough investigation as per laid down procedures. Failure to address or rectify reported misuse might lead to suspension and ultimately withdrawal of Certification.
- k. The Certification Mark shall be issued by ASTRON through ASTRON-F-40 and specific terms and conditions shall be described in the document.
- l. The Certification mark shall not be applied by certified clients to laboratory test, calibration or inspection reports or certificates.
- m. The certified client shall amend all advertising material when the scope of certification has been reduced.

### 15.0 Appeal and Complaints

Definition of Appeal: Client request for reconsideration of a decision, ASTRON has made relating to certification result.  
Definition of Complaint: Communication from client (or other interested party) expressing dissatisfaction, other than appeal, relating to the activities of ASTRON, where a response is expected.

ASTRON website has provision for lodging Appeal / Complaint. Processes at ASTRON ensure that complaints / appeals are received, evaluated, and validated impartially. Validated complaints are investigated impartially to determine and ensure that effective corrective action(s) are taken, where applicable. Appeals are handled and investigated impartially by Appeals Committee. The committee may hear evidence from the client representative.

ASTRON ensures to acknowledge the receipt of complaint / appeal and further keep the complainant / appellant informed about the status of proceedings of complaint / appeal handling process until the end of the process. ASTRON shall ensure that the decision to be communicated to the complainant or appellant are made by, or reviewed and approved by, individual(s) not involved in the certification activities in question.

ASTRON shall be responsible for all decisions at all levels during handling complaints and appeals. ASTRON shall ensure that investigation and decisions on appeals do not result in any discriminatory actions against the appellant /complainant. In the event of any valid complaint about a certified client, ASTRON shall refer to the certified client in question at an appropriate time.

Detailed procedure could be made available to the interested party on request.

### 16.0 Fee Structure & Terms of Payment

Fees and associated costs shall be paid as per rates agreed in the quotation. All payments shall be made within 30 days from the date of invoice. Certificate of Compliance or Certificate of Continuation shall not be issued by ASTRON unless all payments as per invoice are made as above. Commission, bank transfer charges or similar expenses incurred while effecting payment shall be borne by the client.

### 17.0 Limits of Liability

In any hitherto unforeseen situation for any claim, loss, damage, or expense however arising, ASTRON's liability to the client shall in no circumstances exceed the fee amount paid by the client to ASTRON. Under no circumstances ASTRON be liable for any consequential losses. ASTRON is covered by professional insurance for this.

### 18.0 Indemnification

The client will completely indemnify ASTRON against any loss suffered by it.

### 19.0 Revisions

ASTRON completely reserves the right to amend and/or revise this "Rules of Certification" and conditions stipulated herein and any other associated procedure or documents of ASTRON. [www.astrongroup.com](http://www.astrongroup.com). Any unforeseen situation will be dealt with by D, COO and / or the Board in the ascending order of responsibility, authority, and gravity.

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**ASTRON Certification process**

