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**Department of Standards Malaysia**  
**ACCREDITATION CIRCULAR 2/2021**  
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**STANDARDS MALAYSIA'S ACCREDITATION ACTIVITIES DURING COVID-19  
PANDEMIC**

**A. Introduction and scope**

1. This circular is to provide Department of Standards Malaysia's (Standards Malaysia) policy and procedures to its accredited/applicant Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) accreditation activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. This circular is applicable with any current government directive in force and supersedes Accreditation Circular 1/2020, Issue 2 dated 27 October 2020.
2. In light of the current COVID-19 situation, Standards Malaysia's conduct of assessments will proceed as per scheduled with the implementation of precautionary measures as advised by the Government of Malaysia.
3. During the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, it is important that Standards Malaysia and accredited CAB to continue to act in accordance with the principles on which the accreditation system is based, so that the general public and businesses can continue to rely on accredited services. Both Standards Malaysia and accredited CAB need to be able to provide and perform our services even though we have limitation on the travel arrangement, access to the necessary materials, and reduced manpower and resources. Standards Malaysia has therefore compiled these policies and procedures to describe how Standards Malaysia will act, and what requirements Standards Malaysia will set for accredited CAB during the ongoing pandemic.
4. This circular applies to all assessments except where mentioned in clause D of this circular.

## B. Definitions

1. **On-site assessment** – Assessments that are conducted at the premises of the CAB or at the site where the CAB is conducting a conformity assessment activity.
2. **Remote assessment** – Assessments of the physical location or virtual site of a CAB using electronic means.
3. **Off-site documentation review** – Assessments that are conducted off-site through a review of documents and records.
4. **Witnessing** – Observation by Standards Malaysia of a CAB carrying out conformity assessment activities within its scope of accreditation.

## C. Conduct of Assessments

Standards Malaysia allows for assessments to be conducted as follows:

### 1.1 On-site assessment

1.1.1 As the wellbeing of our assessors are of the utmost importance, conduct of on-site assessments during this period depends on the readiness of the assessors.

1.1.2 If an on-site assessment is conducted during this period, **prior to commencement of assessment**, CABs shall take measures as follows:

- a) There shall be no positive COVID-19 cases in the organisation within the 14-days prior to the commencement of the assessment. Should there be any positive COVID-19 cases in the organisation, the assessment shall be postponed. It is the obligation of the CAB to notify Standards Malaysia as soon as possible of the postponement of the assessment and reschedule the assessment to a suitable date.
- b) Should the assessment be conducted at high risk CABs (e.g. laboratories that process COVID-19 samples), the assessment can proceed if it is agreed between the assessment team and the CAB. The laboratory shall ensure that all measures have been taken to provide a safe environment for the assessment team to conduct the assessment.
- c) Should the CAB require the assessment team to undertake a COVID-19 swab test, the cost of the procedure shall be borne by the CAB.

1.1.3 **During the on-site assessment**, the CAB shall take measures as follows:

- a) Provide suitable Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as face masks;
- b) Provide hand hygiene solutions (e.g. hand sanitiser/soap and water);
- c) Avoid contact (e.g: handshaking, appropriate social distancing) with the assessment team;

- d) Provide a safe and suitable room/space for the assessment team.

## 1.2 Remote assessment

1.2.1 Standards Malaysia allows for assessments to be conducted remotely (e.g. online platform, cloud sharing, video conferencing, teleconferencing etc.).

1.2.2 The general principles for the conduct of remote assessments are as follows:

- a) The CAB is able to provide documents and records electronically;
- b) The CAB is able to provide a suitable remote platform;
- c) The CAB is able to demonstrate competency to Standards Malaysia assessment team remotely (i.e. through witnessing of CAB's personnel conducting conformity assessment activities);
  - i. Witnessing activities are mandatory, where applicable;
  - ii. For initial assessment (pre-assessment and/or compliance), extension of scope or extension of branch, witnessing shall be in real time;
  - iii. For surveillance and reassessment, witnessing should be conducted in real time. If it is not possible to be conducted in real time, with justification, the CAB in agreement with the assessment team may allow for recording of CAB conducting CA activity. As a last option, with justification, off-site documentation review may be conducted.
- d) If at any point of the remote assessment, Standards Malaysia's assessment team is dissatisfied with the conduct of remote assessment, Standards Malaysia's assessment team may terminate the remote assessment or request for a verification on-site.

1.2.3 **Annex 1 – Conduct of Remote Assessment** provides information on Standards Malaysia's conduct of remote assessment.

## 1.3 Postponement of scheduled assessments

1.3.1 Normally, a scheduled assessment is conducted  $\pm$  2 months from the planned date (LA 1402-1/FM 1401 – Assessment Programme). However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the assessment can be conducted up to 6 months from the planned date.

1.3.2 In cases where the accredited CAB wishes to postpone the assessment from the planned date, the CAB shall formally request in writing to Standards Malaysia providing justification for postponement. Standards Malaysia may consider to re-schedule the assessment to a later date.

## 1.4 Failure to conduct scheduled assessments

If the CAB fails to conduct the assessment within the extended time, the CAB may request to become inoperative or Standards Malaysia will initiate suspension or withdrawal of the CAB's accreditation.

**D. Exclusion**

If at any time, Standards Malaysia deems necessary to conduct an extraordinary assessment due to a complaint or evidence of fraudulent behaviour, Standards Malaysia may conduct an on-site verification assessment and if the situation does not permit, suspend the CAB pending conduct of verification assessment.

**E. Extension of application validity**

1. The application validity may be extended for up to one year from the original date of expiry. This only applies for applications accepted by Standards Malaysia between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2019 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020.
2. In cases where the applicant CAB wishes to extend the application validity, the CAB shall formally request in writing to Standards Malaysia providing justification for extension.

**F. Extension of accreditation certificate validity**

The accreditation validity for Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) which will expire between 1<sup>st</sup> March 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 will be automatically extended for 3 months, from the original date of expiry.

**G. Implementation Date**

This circular is effective immediately.

Approved by,

**Director of Accreditation  
For the Director General  
Department of Standards Malaysia**

Date: 18 Jan. 2021

**DEPARTMENT OF STANDARDS MALAYSIA (STANDARDS MALAYSIA)  
CONDUCT OF REMOTE ASSESSMENT**

**1. Transmission of information during remote assessment**

CABs and assessment team that agree to remote assessment shall agree to the terms and conditions outlined in AF 117-1 that can be downloaded from the application kit/form tab of the respective accreditation schemes on Standards Malaysia's website, [www.jsm.gov.my](http://www.jsm.gov.my).

**2. Prior to assessment:**

- 2.1 The assessment team and CAB shall agree on a time and date to conduct the assessment;
- 2.2 Delivery Order (DO) and Assessment Plan is issued by Standards Malaysia and task is available on e-Accreditation;
- 2.3 The assessment team and CAB shall agree on the medium of assessment. The medium of assessment can be, but not limited to:
  - a) Teleconferencing;
  - b) Webconferencing (e.g. Skype, Zoom, etc)
  - c) Media Messaging Services (MMS) (e.g. WhatsApp, Telegram, Kakao, Line etc).
  - d) Email
- 2.4 The CAB shall provide documentation to the Assessment Team (e.g. email, cloud sharing etc.) as per in AF 117-1 at least 7 days prior to the assessment.

**3. During the assessment:**

- 3.1 The CAB shall ensure that full cooperation is provided (e.g. contactable and able to provide information to the extent necessary, when needed).
- 3.2 The CAB shall inform immediately if there is any disruption of e-Accreditation to the officer-in-charge.

**4. After the assessment:**

- 4.1 The assessment team shall provide a summary report including confirmation of medium of assessment used.
- 4.2 The assessment team shall dispose all documentation reviewed after assessment is completed.