

Introduction

ISO/IEC 17024 has been drawn up with the objective of achieving and promoting a globally accepted benchmark for organizations operating certification of persons. Certification of persons is one means of providing assurance that the certified person meets the requirements of the certification scheme. Confidence in the respective certification schemes is achieved by means of a globally accepted process of assessment, subsequent surveillance and periodic re-assessments of the competence of certified persons.

However, it is necessary to distinguish between situations where certification schemes for persons are justified and situations where other forms of qualification are more appropriate. The development of new certification schemes for persons, in response to the ever increasing velocity of technological innovation and growing specialization of personnel, may compensate for variations in education and training and thus facilitate the global job market. Alternatives to certification may still be necessary in positions where public services, official or governmental operations are concerned.

In contrast to other types of conformity assessment bodies, such as management system certification/ registration bodies, one of the characteristic functions of the personnel certification body is to conduct an examination, which uses objective criteria for competence and scoring. While it is recognized that such an examination, if well planned and structured by the certification body, can substantially serve to ensure impartiality of operations and reduce the risk of a conflict of interest, alternative requirements have been included in ISO/IEC 17024.

In either case, ISO/IEC should be the basis for the recognition of the certification bodies and their certification schemes, in order to facilitate their acceptance at the national and international levels. Only the harmonization of the system for developing and maintaining certification schemes for persons can establish the environment for mutual recognition and the global exchange of personnel.

ISO/IEC 17024 specifies requirements which ensure that certification bodies operating certification schemes for persons operate in a consistent, comparable and reliable manner. The requirements in this International Standard are to be considered as general requirements for bodies operating certification schemes for persons and therefore may have to be supplemented in response to additional demonstrated market need/desire (i.e. improvement of the profession) or specific government requirements (i.e. protection of the public).