

ICNDT Recommendations for the operations of Certification Bodies during the COVID-19 pandemic in compliance with ISO/IEC 17024:2012 and ISO 9712:2012

1 Introduction

At the time of writing, the Coronavirus pandemic continues to spread, with the number of cases continuing to rise. ICNDT is concerned with ensuring appropriate qualification and certification under the conditions of government restrictions on travel, educational services, the need for social distancing and the need to adopt safe working practices.

The main challenge for Certification bodies (CB) is to provide qualification and certification following three main principles of ISO/IEC 17024:2012 which are independence, integrity and impartiality.

ICNDT recommends using the following practice to address both ISO/IEC 17024:2012 and ISO 9712:2012. Please note that providing recommendations does not constitute an approval to deviate from any requirements set forth by the Accrediting Body.

2 Recommended practice

2.1 Eligibility: Training

Recognition of a Blended Training option by the Certification Body

The CB may regard a candidate as eligible to sit the qualification examination, leading towards initial certification, if the candidate can provide documentary evidence that he or she has satisfactorily completed blended training programme, recognised by the CB, consisting of:

- a distance/online learning component covering the theoretical part of the course, and
- conventional classroom training component covering the practical part of the course.

NOTE: The compilation of a written instruction (Level 2) and a written procedure (Level 3), as part of the practical part of the course, may, as an exemption, be facilitated via the distance learning approach.

Ref. ISO 9712:2012

7.2.1 *The candidate shall provide documentary evidence, acceptable to the certification body, that he has satisfactorily completed training in the method and level for which the certification is sought.*

7.2.2 *For all levels, the candidate shall satisfactorily complete a course of theoretical and practical training recognized by the certification body.*

2.2 Eligibility: Industrial NDT Experience

While the eligibility requirements for industrial experience may still be applicable, the duration for which the examination results remain valid, to allow for experience to be gained, might have to be extended. The CB may consider granting extensions on a case by case basis taking into account the greater of the two periods i.e. 2 years OR for the total time required for the methods concerned.

Ref. ISO 9712:2012

7.3.1 For all levels, a minimum period of experience prior to examination shall be defined by certification body (a fraction or percentage of the total requirement in Table 3, as appropriate). In the event that a part of the experience is sought following successful examination, the results of the examination shall remain valid for two years or for the total experience time required for the methods concerned, whichever is the greater.

2.3 Examination

The CB shall have documented procedures to ensure a consistent examination administration during such restricted period.

Theoretical examinations can be done remotely using an e-assessment system validated and approved by the CB. Proof of candidate identification shall be provided. Time allocation should be predetermined and strictly adhered to in order to inhibit any possible fraudulent practices. All electronic devices capable of accessing unauthorized aides shall be prohibited from the examination venue. The relevant e-assessment system shall be incapable of accessing any internet connection or relevant sources that would be regarded as unauthorized aides.

Theoretical examinations shall be monitored by an NDT examiner or appropriately trained invigilator, approved and authorized by the CB. The invigilator shall confirm that no conflict of interest exists, either with examination venue personnel or candidates being examined.

Video surveillance of either theoretical or practical examinations shall be facilitated to monitor and prevent access to any unauthorized aides or assistance from fellow candidates during examinations.

Practical examinations can be conducted in:

- Permanent (subject to surveillance) examination centres established, approved and monitored by the CB, either directly or through an authorized qualification body (AQB). CB approved/authorized personnel shall facilitate the relevant examination, utilizing the resources of the AQB/CB within the infrastructure provided by the Examination centre i.e. following the normal examination process OR
- On-site facilities audited by the CB before examinations to ensure that the facility meets the requirements of the CB and the requirements of impartiality are fulfilled. CB approved/authorized personnel shall facilitate the relevant examination, utilizing the resources of the site within the infrastructure available.

Practical examinations shall be conducted in the presence of an examiner or appropriately trained invigilator. If only an invigilator is involved, the CB shall provide him or her with an appropriate set of examination specimens. Confidentiality and security shall be maintained at all time. The invigilator shall not be permitted to invigilate

the examination of any candidate who is working (permanently or temporarily) in the same facility as the invigilator.

The CB shall identify threats to its impartiality during examinations on an ongoing basis. All possible threats shall be registered and analyzed to be minimized or eliminated.

The criteria for the conditions for administering examinations shall be extended to include the COVID-19 requirements/regulations mandated by the national authorities.

Ref. ISO 9712:2012

8.4.4 *When e-assessment systems that select questions, present the “written” examination to a candidate on a computer and grade the examinations are used, the certification body shall validate and approve the e-assessment system.*

8.4.5 *Written (whether e-assessment or conventional) and practical qualification examinations shall be invigilated by an examiner or by one or more trained invigilators placed under an examiner’s responsibility.*

8.4.6 *An examiner shall not be permitted to examine any candidate:*

- a) that he has trained for the examination for a period of two years from the date of the conclusion of the training activities;*
- b) who is working (permanently or temporarily) in the same facility as the examiner.*

Ref. ISO/IEC 17024:2012

5.2.3 e)

ensure that personnel do not serve as an examiner of a specific candidate they have trained for a period of two years from the date of the conclusion of the training activities: this interval may be shorted if the certification body demonstrates it does not compromise impartiality.

9.3.2 *The certification body shall have procedures to ensure a consistent examination administration.*

9.3.3 *Criteria for conditions for administering examinations shall be established, documented and monitored.*

NOTE Conditions can include lighting, temperature, separation of candidates, noise, candidate safety, etc.

7.4.3 *Certification bodies shall prevent fraudulent examination practices by:*

- b) requiring an invigilator or examiner to be present;*
- d) implementing procedures to prevent any unauthorized aids from being brought into examination area;*
- e) preventing candidates from gaining access to unauthorized aids during examination;*
- f) monitoring examination results for indications of cheating.*

4.3.6 *The certification body shall identify threats to its impartiality on an ongoing basis. This shall include those threats that arise from its activities, from its related bodies, from its relationships, or from the relationships of its personnel.*

4.3.7 *The certification body shall analyse, document and eliminate or minimize the potential conflict of interests arising from its certification activities. The certification body shall document and be able to demonstrate how it eliminates, minimizes or manages such threats. All potential sources of conflict of interest that are identified, whether they arise from within the certification body, such as assigning responsibilities to personnel, or from the activities of other persons, bodies or organizations, shall be covered.*

7.3.2 *The certification body shall, through legally enforceable agreements, keep confidential all information obtained during the certification process. These agreements shall cover all personnel.*

2.4 Renewal / Recertification

Certification Bodies should establish and apply specific rules for renewal/recertification, aiming to reduce the stresses and risks for NDT personnel whose certification is due to expire during a lockdown or similar period during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.4.1 Renewal

In particular circumstances, certification can be renewed by a CB remotely based on documented evidence which satisfies the requirements of ISO 9712:2012, clause 10.1, or certification can be extended. At the discretion of the CB, the validity of certificates can be extended up to 12 months after the date of expiration. Within this period the ordinary or remotely renewal shall be done. It is mandatory that continued satisfactory work activity shall be demonstrated by certificate holders until the expiration of the extended period.

The renewal date shall be the date on which all requirements for renewal are met. The date of expiration of the new certificate shall be no more than 5 years from the date of expiration of the original certificate.

Ref. ISO 9712:2012, clause 10.2 *It is the responsibility of the certificate holder to initiate the procedure required for renewal. The renewal files shall be presented within six months before the date of expiration of the certification. As an exception, and based upon decision of the certification body, files presented within 12 months after the date of expiration may be considered. Over this period, no exception is admitted and the candidate shall be permitted to attempt a recertification examination.*

2.4.2 Recertification

Upon application for recertification received from the certificate holder, the validity of certificates can be extended up to 12 months after the date of expiration at the discretion of the CB. Certificate holders seeking extension of certification shall satisfy requirements of ISO 9712:2012, clause 10.1 a). It is mandatory that continued satisfactory work activity shall be demonstrated by certificate holders until the expiration of extended period. Postponed recertification examinations shall be performed as soon as possible even if still covered by the extended period (provisions of Clause 2.3 can be used).

Recertification for Level 3 using a structured credit system can be conducted by the CB remotely, based on documented evidence which satisfies the requirements of ISO 9712:2012, Annex C.

The recertification date shall be the date on which all requirements for recertification are met. The date of expiration of the new certificate shall be no more than 5 years from the date of expiration of the original certificate.

Should there be no recertification application during the 12 months after expiry of the period of validity, a complete examination (general, specific, and practical) for Level 1 and Level 2 and a main method examination for Level 3 shall again be passed successfully (provisions of Clause 2.3 can be used).

Ref. ISO 9712:2012

Clause 11.1

Prior to the completion of each second period of validity (every 10 years), the certified individual may be recertified by the certification body for a new period of five years or less, provided the individual meets the criterion for renewal specified in 10.1 a) and meets the applicable conditions described in the following.

It is the responsibility of certificate holders to initiate the procedures required to obtain recertification. If the recertification is applied for more than 12 months after expiry of the period

of validity, a complete examination (general, specific, and practical) for Level 1 and Level 2 and a main method examination for Level 3 shall again be passed successfully.

Clause 11.2.1

Levels 1 and 2 certificate holders seeking recertification shall meet the criterion for renewal specified in 10.1 b) and satisfy 11.2.2.