COVID-19 impact on the IACS Members' quality certification

1   Each IACS Member is subject to annual audits against the requirements of ISO 9001 and IACS QSCS by an independent Accredited Certification Body (ACB). Provided the result of the audits are satisfactory, the ACB issues or endorses the Member's ISO 9001 certificate.

In addition, the ACB furnishes each IACS member annually with a Statement of Compliance, demonstrating the requirements of IACS QSCS (and consequently the IMO RO Code) have been satisfied.

2   The development and spread of Coronavirus COVID-19 and its resultant declaration as a global pandemic by the World Health Organisation (WHO) has led to an unprecedented range of control and response measures being implemented by many Governments and organisations across the world.   The cumulative effect of these responses is having a significant impact on the normal operations of ships, potentially impacting on world trade.

3   In response to requests from the IMO Secretary General, industry stakeholders and several industry associations, for proactive action to ensure disruptions to safe and compliant ship operations are minimised, and individual action by some national Administrations in permitting extensions to validity of statutory certificates, IACS has considered appropriate temporary amendments to relevant procedural requirements in the light of the current COVID-19 force majeure situation.

4   Persistent worldwide travel and quarantine restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic are having a significant impact on the IACS Members ISO9001 and QSCS certification. Having considered the matter carefully, IACS Council have agreed the following.

5   IACS in this unpredicted situation would like to inform that:

i.   IACS Members in cooperation with their Accredited Certification Bodies (ACB), based on the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and National Accreditation Bodies (NAB) requirements, are encouraged to implement remote auditing techniques for auditing the Survey Locations (SL), and as far as practicable, also Head Offices (HO), Controlling Offices (CO) and Plan Approval Centres (PA).

ii.   Vertical Contract Audits (VCA) required by IACS QSCS cannot be effectively carried out with the use of the remote auditing techniques.

iii.   before the end of 2020, in line with the IAF, NAB requirements and IACS QSCS, IACS Members and their respective ACB's shall complete the following audits: HO planned for 2020 as well as CO and PA (if any), and all SLs as required by the ISO9001 certification programme.

iv.   the conducted audits should cover the whole scope of services and fundamental processes as per the IACS QMSR provisions (please refer to the QMSR 10th Issue, Clause 3.10).

v.   the VCAs conducted in 2020 should cover the following:

- New construction;
- ISM Code, or ISPS Code, or MLC Convention;
- Significant equipment and/or material certification;
- Ships in service.

    vi. QSCS Operations Centre (OC) will observe as many audits as possible within the limits already set in QSCS and, based on that, the Quality Secretary will advise by the end of November whether enough audits have been observed for all the Members to ensure that the ACB benchmarking can be conducted fairly and appropriately.

6 IACS will observe the situation and, on at least monthly basis, further steps may be considered. As these measures are a temporary response to the current extraordinary situation, this ongoing review will also monitor when the measures are to be withdrawn and normal arrangements will resume.

Revision History:

Rev.0: IACS Quality Committee, on the 28th April 2020, agreed on the content of this document.

Rev.1: IACS Quality Committee during video meeting held on the 17th June 2020 reviewed the document and confirmed its validity.

Rev.2: IACS Quality Committee during video meeting held on the 21st July 2020 reviewed the document and confirmed its validity.

Rev.3: IACS Quality Committee during video meeting held on the 20th August 2020 reviewed the document and having noted the persistent worldwide travel and quarantine restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, agreed:
- to extend the use of remote auditing techniques for auditing the head office;
- continue not to impose the minimum number of VCAs to be conducted in 2020, however, to encourage the IACS Members and ACBs to cover the scope of VCAs as indicated in paragraph 5. v. above.

Rev.4: IACS Quality Committee during video meeting held on the 17th September 2020 reviewed the document and confirmed its validity.

Rev.5: IACS Quality Committee during video meeting held on the 20th October 2020 reviewed the document and confirmed its validity.

Rev.6: IACS Quality Committee during video meeting held on the 17th November 2020 reviewed the document and confirmed its validity.