

SQA Advisory: No. 2

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TOPIC: Changing from semi-annual to annual surveillance:

Introduction:

The rules for accreditation require that certification bodies (registrars) perform, as a minimum, annual assessments of their certified clients' management systems to assure their continuing maintenance and integrity. These annual assessments may be executed on a semi-annual basis, provided such semi-annual assessments meet the annual requirement regarding audit-days.

Discussion:

An issue that needs clarification deals with those clients that wish to change from a semi-annual to an annual surveillance frequency. The requirement upon registrars is to perform, at a minimum, annual assessments. The accreditation and approval bodies permit these annual assessments to be split into two phases, which is commonly referred to as a semi-annual frequency. Switching from a semi-annual to an annual frequency may be done only if the annual requirement has or will be fulfilled.

SQA Position:

To determine if switching may occur, we will look at the initial certification date and review the semi-annual surveillance assessment history. If we find that the equivalent of annual surveillances has been conducted, the switch may be made. (See sanction and effectiveness related issues - next paragraph.) However, if we find that switching would result in annual surveillance requirements not being met, the change to an annual frequency would have to await completion of that year's annual equivalent assessment.

For multi-site certifications that elect semi-annual certification, each site selected for inclusion in the sample must be audited at both semi-annual audits.

For clients that are currently on an annual surveillance frequency, certified to either QS-9000 or ISO/TS 16949 and your organization is subjected to any significant customer sanction, such as Q-1 Revocation, or, for all other standards, it becomes evident that your management system has lost effectiveness, you will be placed on a semi-annual surveillance frequency for a minimum of eighteen months. If your organization is on a semi-annual surveillance frequency, and it becomes evident that your management system has lost effectiveness, switching to an annual surveillance frequency will not be allowed until such time as system effectiveness can be demonstrated based on objective evidence.

We encourage our clients to utilize the semi-annual approach whenever practicable and warranted by high level performance metrics.