REMOTE ASSESSMENTS – MANAGEMENT AND EXECUTION

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1. **Purpose and Scope**

Circumstances may exist where through unforeseen circumstances it may not be possible or feasible to conduct on-site assessments, and in such circumstances, assessments may be conducted remotely, without compromising the integrity of the accreditation granted by SANAS.

Circumstances may also exist where specific extensions to existing scopes of accreditation may be satisfactorily accomplished through a ‘desk top review’.

The purpose of this document is to define the requirements to conduct assessments remotely and is relevant to all SANAS accreditation programs.

The scope of this document is limited to:

- Extraordinary events or circumstances;
- Travel to a CAB or specific location is not permitted or possible (i.e., for safety reasons, travel restrictions, etc.);
- surveillance or reassessments.
- extensions to a non-critical scope;
- extensions not requiring a separate set of competencies;
- extensions within an existing scope;
- approval of personnel (meeting prerequisite recognition and approval requirements); or
- Follow-up assessments where only the management system is to be verified.

2. **Definitions and References**

2.1 **Definitions**

**Assessment technique:**
method used by an accreditation body to perform an assessment

Note 1 to entry: Assessment techniques, can include, but are not limited to:
— on-site assessment;
— remote assessment;
— witnessing;
— document review;
— file review;
— measurement audits;
— review of performance in proficiency testing and other interlaboratory comparisons;
— validation audits;
— unannounced visits;
— interviewing.

[ISO/IEC 17011:2017]

**Extraordinary event or circumstance:**
A circumstance beyond the control of the organization, commonly referred to as “Force Majeure” or “act of God”. Examples are war, strike, riot, political instability, geopolitical tension, terrorism, crime, pandemic, flooding, earthquake, malicious computer hacking, other natural or man-made disasters.

[IAF ID 3:2011]

**Residual risk:**
risk remaining after risk treatment

NOTE 1 Residual risk can contain unidentified risk.
NOTE 2 Residual risk can also be known as “retained risk”.

[ISO Guide 73]

**Remote assessment:**
assessment of the physical location or virtual site of a conformity assessment body, using electronic means.

Note 1 to entry: A virtual site is an online environment allowing persons to execute processes, e.g. in a cloud environment.

[ISO/IEC 17011:2017]
**Desktop review:**
An assessment technique used under circumstances of low risk or low residual risk, for example, where an extension of range is required to an existing method and equipment, or a new test method is requested using an existing measurement platform, or the approval of personnel is supported by a registration or certification scheme.

2.2 References

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3. Introduction

The assessment process is critical to ensuring the integrity of accreditation, and this is typically achieved through an on-site assessment activity of the accredited CAB.

ISO/IEC 17011:2017 makes provision for on-site assessments to be replaced with other assessment techniques where an on-site assessment is not applicable or may not be possible, and the information is available electronically, e.g. where there is no premises and the company is cloud-based.

A remote assessment has been defined in ISO/IEC 17011 as an assessment using electronic means, i.e. the collection and short term availability of assessment documentation and records through electronic means such as a ‘drop-box’, or similar technology, and the use of an electronic communications channel such as 'Skype', or similar.

A Desk-top review is a limited form of a remote assessment.

Due to extraordinary circumstances, SANAS may also determine that an on-site assessment is not possible, and in such cases resort to remote assessments.

The AM in consultation with the Accreditation Executive shall justify the use of remote assessments.

4. Prerequisite requirements for remote assessments

The following requirements must be in place in order to conduct assessments remotely, as applicable:

- Preferably and where possible a suitable private meeting room where the assessment team can all be present;
- where it is not possible for the assessors to meet in one location, they must be able to remain in regular contact with the TL;
- Access to the Internet through a fast, reliable internet connection, by all the team members as well as the CAB;
- Suitable video conferencing or communication software (E.g. Skye, Zoom, etc.), and associated computer network to enable communication with the CAB as necessary, including opening and closing meetings;
• Confirmation of confidentiality of information that will be accessed via the internet shall be obtained before the remote assessment may be scheduled;

• Where necessary a separate computer to run the communication channel, especially where the assessors are using their own laptops to access records and complete SANAS assessment forms;

• The standard SANAS assessment pack forms are to be made available electronically; and

• Team members must have access to CAB contact personal at all times, and the rest of the staff to be available, as far as possible, for interview purposes.

5. Records and Documentation to be submitted

5.1 The CAB is required to submit electronically (into a drop-box or similar) the following documents at least 2 weeks prior to the assessment:

• Management and Technical checklists completed by the CAB, e.g. F88, F48 and F49, or other checklists depending upon the accreditation program.
  Note: The CAB’s comments are to be comprehensive, and must include references to where in their own Manual / procedures/policies/work instructions the requirements listed in the checklists have been addressed;

• A copy of their Management System (Quality) Manual, policies, procedures, methods and work instructions;

• The Internal audit schedule;

• The latest Internal Audit Report/s (typically not older than 12 months);

• The names of all internal auditors, along with their competency records;

• A copy of the Management Review minutes or records, (typically not older than 12 months);

• A list of all records of appeals and complaints received and how these have been addressed since the CAB’s last assessment;

• A list of non-conformances and corrective actions taken;

• For all Medical, Testing and Calibration Labs, a comprehensively completed F 176 Proficiency Testing requirements checklist;

• A copy of the laboratory’s PT Participation Plan (where applicable);

• Copies of the PT, ILC and approved suitable alternative reports since the last assessment;

• A list & description of all Certificates or Reports issued since the last assessment; and

• The assessor/s would then select from the list a number of certificates and or reports issued by the CAB from which to conduct vertical assessments.

5.2 The CAB would be notified of those certificates and/or reports and records (and client files where applicable) that they are required to submit, for the purposes conducting of the vertical assessment/s:
• A copy of the reports or certificates to be evaluated, in the same format as that sent to their client, i.e. so that a full evaluation of all certificate/report including the use of the SANAS accreditation symbol can be evaluated;

• Copies of the raw data generated to perform the activity;

• A copy of the procedure / method / work instruction used to perform the activity;

• Personnel records of all staff involved in the preparation of the certificate / report, these records must include:
  i) a CV, if applicable;
  ii) a copy of their Job description / role description etc.,
  iii) a copy of the competence evaluation records; and
  iv) a copy of the authorization record for the individual.

• Traceability – copies of the calibration certificates / records for all equipment used to perform the test/calibration/inspection, etc.

• Identification of all equipment used to monitor the environment during the activity, along with the relevant calibration certificate / records (where applicable).

6. The Remote Assessment

6.1 Confidentiality

The Assessment team members shall complete and sign the SANAS F22 Confidentiality, impartiality and non-disclosure form.

On completion of the assessment the assessment team shall confirm deletion of any confidential documents, images, recordings, from personal computers where used.

6.2 The Opening Meeting

6.2.1 The opening meeting is facilitated using a suitable electronic communication channel (E.g. Skype, Zoom, etc).

6.2.3 The remote assessment opening meeting will be conducted using the standard assessment agenda F01 and is chaired by the assessment Team Leade.

6.2.4 The assessment team must complete the Attendance Register SANAS F 21, the CAB will also be requested to complete the attendance register and submit this to the assessment team via the drop box or email.

6.2.5 The Team Leader must establish the names of the personnel who will provide additional information, along with contact information should they not be available (over and above the records submitted prior to the assessment).

6.3 The Assessment

6.3.1 The assessment team members will review the records submitted and complete the applicable SANAS assessment forms.

6.3.2 The team shall interview the CAB staff as needed to seek additional clarifications and/or confirmations, using the established communication channel or channels.

6.3.3 Where non-conformities are identified, this must be discussed and verified with the CAB to ensure accuracy of information.

6.3.4 All findings must be submitted to the TL for his review, who will then seek any clarifications from the team members.
6.4 The Closing Meeting

6.4.1 The closing meeting will be held on conclusion of the remote assessment, using the standard SANAS Agenda F 01.

6.4.2 The TL will communicate with the CAB the recommendation reached by the assessment team, as well as the findings. CAB to be given the opportunity to seek clarification on any findings.

6.4.3 The copy of the recommendation form and all findings raised during the remote assessment must be signed by the assessment team, and then scanned and sent using electronic means to the CAB.

6.4.4 The CAB must then sign the recommendation form and findings raised and scan back to SANAS without delay.

7. Requirements for a Desk Top Review

7.1 A desk top review may be conducted in circumstances where a full assessment is not required, for example a scope extension or personnel evaluation, and where the residual risk is low.

7.2 Having a low residual risk may be as a result of the CAB already having accreditation in which a the same or similar measurement platform or method is the subject of the extension, where the CAB has participated in an ILC, PT or approved suitable alternative confirming their competence, or where personnel hold registration or certification from a relevant body such as the HPCSA, MetCert, the NRCS etc.