



Heads Up

Issue: 145

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To: ANAB-Accredited and Applicant CBs and Accreditation Assessors

From: Randy Dougherty, Vice President ANAB

Re: Time Interval Between Stage 1 and Stage 2 Audits

What is the expected time period between the stages (stage 1 and stage 2) initial audits? Can these be done back to back? These are fairly common questions.

The expectation and intent is that there be a time period between the stage 1 and stage 2 audits, as specified in ISO/IEC 17021:2006, 9.2.3.1.3, which states: "In determining the interval between stage 1 and stage 2 audits, consideration shall be given to the needs of the client to resolve areas of concern identified during the stage 1 audit. The certification body may also need to revise its arrangements for stage 2."

The reason the time period is not specified is because it depends on the results of the stage 1 audit, and the capability of the client and the resources it has available to resolve any areas of concern.

Even though the intent is that there be some period of time between the stage 1 and stage 2 audits, a CB and its client may agree conduct these audits back to back.

ANAB expects a CB to fulfill the intent of the standard and have a process that normally provides for some period of time between the stage 1 and stage 2 audits, and to have reasonable justification for this period of time based on the results of the stage 1 audit.

It is ANAB's expectation, consistent with the intent of the standard, that back-to-back audits be the exception, not the rule. ANAB also expects a CB conducting stage 1 and stage 2 audits back to back to be able to demonstrate that it clearly communicated to the client the increased risk that the initial audit would not be successful because the audits were conducted back to back, and that the client accepted the risk.

Some CBs have informed ANAB that they must do back-to-back audits in some geographic regions to be competitive. This is not considered acceptable justification. (ANAB has heard the same statements about audit duration). ANAB will expect to see technical justification and evidence of agreement by a client for back-to-back audits.