

# CHS Certification Application Form

## I. The Humanitarian Quality Assurance Initiative

HQAI's objective is to help organisations progress and show their effectiveness in delivering to recognised humanitarian standards. Its quality assurance services are intended to build capacity in the sector and provide consistent measurable data in the delivery of quality action, thus improving principled, accountable, efficient provision of aid to populations affected by crises.

HQAI upholds the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence.

To all its stakeholders, HQAI is an accountable, open and trustworthy partner, which applies the internationally recognised ground rules of auditing that are impartiality, competence, responsibility, openness, confidentiality and responsiveness to complaints. Our policies, procedures and tools for independent quality assurance procedures follow relevant ISO standards requirements.

HQAI has developed robust tools to measure efficiently where an organisation stands in relation to the Core Humanitarian Standard. Tools related to other standards may be developed in the future.

## II. What is the Core Humanitarian Standard?

The [Core Humanitarian Standard \(CHS\) on Quality and Accountability](#) presents a set of Commitments to help humanitarian actors improve the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian assistance.

The CHS requires principled humanitarian action and the implementation of Nine Commitments and their related quality criteria:

1. Humanitarian assistance is appropriate and relevant;
2. Response is effective and timely;
3. Humanitarian action strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects;
4. Humanitarian action is based on communication, participation and feedback;
5. Complaints are welcomed and addressed;
6. Humanitarian action is coordinated and complementary;
7. Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve;
8. Staff are supported to do their job effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably;
9. Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose.

## 1. Scope

This form contains a description of the CHS certification process, in accordance to the Verification Scheme developed by the CHS Alliance. It is used to both inform the potential client organisation about the process and to provide basic information that will allow HQAI to make a technical and financial proposal for certification.

Filling in this form is not a formal enrolment in the programme, but a declaration of intention to follow the whole process described below. Nevertheless, the organisation is free to opt out, for any reason, until a specific contract is signed between the organisation and HQAI. This contract will be drawn up on the basis of the information provided in this form, plus any additional information that HQAI, through one of its registered auditors, obtains from the client.

## 2. References

The following referenced documents can usefully complement this document. For dated references, only the specific edition applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

The CHS Alliance Verification Scheme

ISO/IEC 17000:2004, Conformity assessment – Vocabulary and general principles

HQAI ADM105 – CHS independent verification application form

HQAI ADM106 – CHS benchmarking application form

HQAI PRO114 - Third-party quality assurance procedure

HQAI POL114 - Third-party quality assurance policy

## 3. Terms and definitions

The terms and definitions provided in the Core Humanitarian Standard and ISO/IEC 17000:2004, Conformity assessment, vocabulary and general principles apply, unless otherwise specified in the text.

## 4. What does the certification process entail?

Certification is a third-party assessment whether an organisation applies the CHS and, if relevant, the independent assurance that it meets the requirements of the standard. Although it entails some flexibility, certification is a pass/fail test of compliance with the CHS. Certification is conducted by HQAI specially trained and qualified registered auditors.

The process looks at documentation on the client's policies and processes, and information from stakeholders, including communities and people affected by crisis, through a feedback loop from headquarters to a sample of country programme(s) and on-the-field projects.

The main steps of the certification process are:

### Year 0 - Start of process

- i. The organisation undertakes a self-assessment using HQAI tool.

NOTE: A self-assessment undertaken within the framework of the CHS Alliance replaces this step, provided it is less than one year old.

- ii. A team<sup>1</sup> led by a lead auditor undertakes an initial audit. The initial audit includes site visits at the head office and at a sample of country programme(s). Each country programme visit also includes a visit to several projects where the team gets the feedback of affected people.
- iii. Within two weeks after the initial audit, the audit team produces an initial audit report, including scores of compliance with the standard requirements.
- iv. HQAI, under the responsibility of its Executive Director, evaluates the report, its finding, the recommendation on certification and decides whether to follow the recommendation; this decision cannot be outsourced.
- vi. Within five weeks after the audit, the report is finalised. The organisation and HQAI approve the report. A public summary is published on HQAI website, upon approval of the organisation. (see section on public report below).
- vii. As relevant, a certificate of conformity is granted, with the right to use the certification mark (logo) in organisational communications and public relations (e.g. web-site, letterheads).

**NOTE:** A certificate of compliance has a 4 years validity from the report approval.

### Year 1 - Maintenance Audit

- viii. Within one year after the initial audit report approval, a registered lead auditor undertakes a maintenance audit that consists at least of a head office visit; this audit focuses on the non-conformities identified in the previous audit and the organisation's progress towards their resolution.
- ix. Within two weeks after the maintenance audit, the lead auditor produces a maintenance audit report, including scores of compliance with the standard requirements, as per 3.iii above.
- x. HQAI, under the responsibility of its Executive Director, evaluates the report, its findings and recommendations and decides whether to maintain the certificate; this decision cannot be outsourced.
- xi. Within one month after the audit, the report is finalised. The organisation and HQAI approve the report and its public summary, which is published on HQAI website.

### Year 2 - Mid-Term Audit

- xii. Within two years after the initial audit report publication, a team<sup>2</sup> led by a lead auditor undertakes a mid-term audit

**NOTE:** While factors such as the complexity of the organisation, the certification history or the rigour of internal control mechanisms can dictate otherwise, the mid-term audit consists at least of a visit to sampled country programme(s). The mid-term audit includes but is not limited to a review of the identified non-conformities and the measures taken to resolve them.

- xiii. Within two weeks after the mid-term audit, the audit team produces a mid-term audit report, including scores of compliance with the standard requirements, as per 3.iii above.
- xiv. HQAI, under the responsibility of its Executive Director, evaluates the report, its finding, the recommendation on certification and decides whether to follow the recommendation to maintain the certificate; this decision cannot be outsourced.

<sup>1</sup> Depending on circumstances (risk, complexity of the organisations, etc.) the team can be composed of only the Lead Auditor.

<sup>2</sup> Depending on circumstances (risk, complexity of the organisations, etc.) the team can be composed of only the Lead Auditor.

xv. Within five weeks after the audit, the report is finalised. The organisation and HQAI approve the report. A public summary is published on HQAI website, upon approval of the organisation.

### **Year 3 - Maintenance Audit**

xvi. Within three years after the initial audit report publication, the organisation undertakes a new maintenance audit, as per year 1. (see 3 vii to x for more details).

### **Year 4 - Re Certification Audit**

xvii. Within four years after the initial audit report publication, if the organisation wishes so, a new cycle of certification starts with a re-certification audit, normally lighter than the initial audit. The rest of the cycle follows the steps described above. The re-certification audit needs to happen before the end of validity of the certificate of conformity

A certificate is not granted until major non-conformities are eliminated, suspended if they appear during a maintenance audit and withdrawn if they are not corrected within a given resolution time. Failure to follow the certificate maintenance process leads to the withdrawal of the certificate.

## **5. What can be publicly declared?**

A client organisation that is granted a certificate can declare so in its public relation activities, on its website and other forms of communication, specifying that it is certified against the CHS. The organisation receives also the right to use the certification mark.

Any claim that would lead to misinterpretation and make believe, for example, that a specific project, or individual members of a certified network are certified in compliance with the standard is prohibited.

The initial and subsequent audit reports contain a section that is publicly shared (public summary) and is published on HQAI's website. The client organisation is also encouraged to make this available on its own website.

## **6. What are the eligibility criteria?**

To be eligible for a certification programme, an organisation must:

- a. Have a top management level public commitment to the Core Humanitarian Standard;
- b. Be a clearly identified entity to which the responsibility of adherence to the certification programme can be clearly attributed;
- c. Declare its intent to follow the whole process, as described in this document. This intent will need to be formally confirmed before the process starts through the establishment and signing of a contract between the organisation and HQAI.
- d. Meet the requirements for financial accountability under the law in the country or countries where it is legally registered and where it works, and have a reliable internal control system to ensure funds are used properly.

By signing this form, the organisation, declares that it meets the eligibility criteria.

## 7. What does certification cost?

HQAI services cost is highly dependent on the organisations' size. The size of an organisation refers to the number of country where it operates or run activities (country programme). A country programme (also called country programme site) concerns agency's activities and operations taking place at the level of a specific country. For each country programme, an organisation usually runs more than one project in different locations.

An audit does not visit all country programmes as this would be unpractical and expensive. Instead a sample of representative programmes are chosen.

The larger an organisation, the more country programmes are sampled and the higher the cost. Audit costs thus largely depend on the sampling, but also on other elements such as the scope of the audit and the mandate(s) of the organisation as well as the third-party quality assurance.

For more information about the costs of an audit, you can consult HQAI website or contact the organisation at [contact@hqai.org](mailto:contact@hqai.org)

The processing of this application is conditioned to the payment of a non-refundable processing fee, which will be deducted from the final invoice if the organisation decides to continue with the certification process. Table 1 shows the fees structure.

Country Programmes	Fee (CHF)
National organisations	500.00
International org. 1 - 19	800.00
International org. 20 - 24	1'200.00
International org. 25 - 39	1'200.00
International org. 40 - 59	1'400.00
International org. 60 - 89	1'600.00

Table 1 - indicative registration fees

## 8. Sampling

HQAI does not use statistical or mathematical formulas to establish the adequate number of country programme sites for the audit as these would lead to a high sampling rate - and thus exhortative prices for the audit. Instead HQAI identifies a sampling rate that is adequate, in the sense that the number of samples is necessary and sufficient to give confidence that the application of the standard happens as described. The selection of the country programme sites is therefore crucial to ensure representativeness and robustness of the audit findings.

Country Programmes	PS sampled	
	Initial audit	MTA
National organisations	NA	NA
International org. 1 - 19	1	1
International org. 20 - 24	2	1
International org. 25 - 39	2	2
International org. 40 - 59	3	2
International org. 60 - 89	4	2
International org. > 90	5	3

Table 2 - indicative sampling rates

While sampling needs to be identified on a case by case basis, based on the information provided by the organisation, experience shows that the number of country programmes is a good variable from which to derive the necessary sampling rates. The table 2 gives the approximative estimated number of country programme sites to be sampled for different categories of organisations.

Name of organisation		Acronym	
Address of HO	Street	N°	
	City	Zip Code	State
Country			
Organisation Website			
Organisation main phone number			
Name of CEO	Name	Surname	
Email address of CEO			
Name of contact person	Name	Surname	
Position of contact person			
Email address of contact person			
Contact details of contact person	Phone Number	Skype ID	
Legal form	<input type="checkbox"/> Association	<input type="checkbox"/> Foundation	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Charity	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify below)	
Type of organisation <i>You may tick more than one box</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> National	<input type="checkbox"/> Membership/Network	
	<input type="checkbox"/> International	<input type="checkbox"/> Federated	
How does your organisation work? <i>Choose just one option</i>			<b>Please explain your choice</b>
Mandates <i>You may tick more than one box</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Advocacy	<input type="checkbox"/> Humanitarian	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Development	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)	
Scope of application <i>Please indicate if the scope is the whole or a subset of the organisation and what the sub-set may be, as relevant</i>			

<b>Desired period for audit</b> <i>(in months and year) (MM-YYYY)</i>	<b>From:</b>	<b>To:</b>	
<b>Organization size</b>	Total number of staff at head office	Total number of staff organisation wide	
	Total number of members/partners <i>(if applicable)</i>	Total number of country programmes	
	Current year's annual budget <i>(in US\$)</i>		

For any further information or questions please email us at [contact@hqai.org](mailto:contact@hqai.org)

I hereby declare that I have a copy of the Core Humanitarian Standard and that I have read it.

I further confirm that I have understood all requirements of the certification programme, as described above.

**I, hereby, on behalf of** \_\_\_\_\_ **and duly authorised to do so,**  
**confirm our application.**

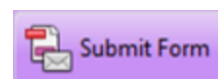
**Name**

**Function**

**Date**

**Signature**

Please fill out the following form. When finished, click



to return the completed form to [contact@hqai.org](mailto:contact@hqai.org).