

# CHS Independent Verification Application Form

## Introduction

### 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 independent verification 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 independent verification.

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 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.

Core Humanitarian Standard

The CHS Alliance Verification Scheme

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

HQAI ADM104 – CHS certification 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 independent verification process entail?

Independent verification attests that an organisation is engaged in a process of on-going improvement in the application of the CHS. Unlike certification, this option assesses continuous improvement, according to an agreed upon action plan and is not a pass/fail test of compliance with the standard. Independent verification is conducted by HQAI's 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 independent verification process are:

### **Year 0 - Start of process**

- i. The organisation undertakes a self-assessment using HQAI tool.
- 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 2 weeks after the initial audit, the audit team produces an initial audit report identifying strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of the standard requirements.
- iv. HQAI, under the responsibility of its Executive Director, evaluates the report, its finding, and validate it.
- v. Within 5 weeks after the audit, the report is finalised. The organisation and HQAI approve the audit report. A public summary is published on HQAI website, upon approval of the organisation.
- vi. Within 3 months after the report is finalised, the organisation develops a 4-years work-plan for continuous improvement in the application of the standard requirements. This work-plan aims at the elimination of identified weaknesses in the implementation of the standard requirements.
- vii. With the organisation's prior consent, a public summary of the work-plan is published on HQAI website. The organisation is also encouraged to publish the summaries of the report and work-plan on its website.

### **Year 1 - Self Assessment**

- viii. Within 1 year after the initial audit report is finalised, the organisation undertakes a self-assessment using HQAI tool.
- ix. The organisation reports back to HQAI on the work-plan implementation and progress towards the application of the standard requirements.

### **Year 2 - Mid-Term Audit**

- x. Within 2 years after the initial audit report is finalised, a team<sup>1</sup> led by a lead Auditor undertakes a mid-term audit.

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

- xi. Within 2 weeks after the mid-term audit, the audit team produces a mid-term audit sreport, reporting on the work-plan implementation and elimination of identified weaknesses.
- xii. HQAI, under the responsibility of its Executive Director, evaluates the report, its finding, and validates it.
- xiii. Within 5 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.

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

xiv. Within 3 months after the report is finalised, the organisation amends as relevant the initial work-plan.

xv. With the organisation's prior consent, a public summary of the new version of the work-plan is published on HQAI website. The organisation is also encouraged to publish the summaries of the mid-term audit report and work-plan on its website.

### **Year 3 - Self Assessment**

xvi. Within 3 years after the initial audit report is finalised, the organisation undertakes a self-assessment using HQAI tools.

xvii. The organisation reports back to HQAI on the work-plan implementation and progress towards the application of the standard requirements.

### **Year 4 - Final Audit**

xviii. Within 4 years after the initial audit report is finalised, a team led by a lead auditor undertakes a final audit.

NOTE: This audit is similar to the mid-term audit.

xix. Within 2 weeks after the final audit, the audit team produces a final audit report, reporting on the work-plan implementation and elimination of identified weaknesses.

xx. HQAI, under the responsibility of its Executive Director, evaluates the report, its finding, and validates it.

xxi. Within 5 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.

NOTE: The process can be continued if the organisation desires so, developing a new (or renewed) improvement work-plan. In such a case, the final audit becomes the initial audit of the new cycle, and similarly the organisation alternates annually self-assessments and third-party audits.

NOTE: Independent verification is not a pass/fail test. However, except under justified exceptional circumstances, an organisation can be withdrawn from the programme if it significantly fails to implement the work-plan, fails to follow the verification process in due time or if major weaknesses have not been addressed within the 4 years cycle. Exceptionally the process can be extended 2 years, but not more.

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

A client organisation that follows the process can declare in organisational communication and public relations, including on its website, that its continuous improvement in the application of the CHS is independently verified by HQAI.

Any claim that would lead to misinterpretation and make believe, for example, that the client is 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 website, along with a summary of the improvement work-plan. The client is encouraged to make this also available on its own website.

## 6. What are the eligibility criteria?

To be eligible to independent verification, 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 independent verification programme can be clearly attributed;
- c. Declare an intention to enter the CHS independent verification programme and 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 independent verification 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 deduced from the final invoice if the organisation decides to go on with the independent verification process. The fees are as follows:

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 exorbitant 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.

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 below gives the approximative estimated number of country programme sites to be sampled for different categories of organisations.

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

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 independent verification programme, as described above.

**I, hereby, on behalf of  
confirm our application.**

**and duly authorised to do so,**

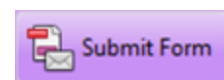
**Name**

**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).