



Policy on claims related to quality assurance

POL103 – Claims Policy 2017-06-09

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HQAI is constantly developing and improving its tools and procedures. Depending on feedback and learning from experience, these may change. Please make sure you're using the latest version, which can be found in HQAI web-site.

How to give feedback or contribute to the process?

If you would like to provide comments on this, document or any aspect of our work, please send your feedback to: contact@hqai.org.



0. 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 the ISO relevant requirements for certification bodies.

HQAI has developed robust tools to measure efficiently where an organisation stands in relation to the [Core Humanitarian Standard \(CHS\) on Quality and Accountability](#). Tools related to other standards may be developed in the future.

II. Scope

This document describes the correct use of HQAI certification mark and the claims that an organisation can make when in a process of independent verification, benchmarking or certification.

III. References

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

ISO/IEC 17021-1:2005, Conformity assessment - Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems Part 1: Requirements

HQAI ADM 104 - Certification Application Form

HQAI ADM105 – Independent verification Application Form

HQAI ADM 106 - Independent benchmarking Application form

HQAI GUI101 – Guide to certification

PRO114- Third party quality assurance procedure

IV. Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply (based on ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015(E)) and the humanitarian principles.

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| Auditor | Person who conducts an audit. |
| Certification audit | Audit carried out by an auditing organisation independent of the client and the parties that rely on certification, for the purpose of certifying the client's management system. |
| Certification scheme | Conformity assessment system related to management systems to which the same specified requirements, specific rules and procedures apply. |
| Client | Organisation that is being audited for quality assurance purposes. |
| Confidentiality | Strict non-disclosure of any confidential information. |
| Impartiality | Presence of objectivity, making no distinction on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions. |
| Independence | Being autonomous from the political, economic, military or other objectives that might put pressure on a decision by the certification or verification body |
| Major nonconformity | Nonconformity that affects the capability of the organisation to achieve the intended results. |
| Minor nonconformity | Nonconformity that does not affect the capability of the management system to achieve the intended results. |
| Neutrality | Not taking sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature. |
| Nonconformity | Non-fulfilment of a requirement. |
| Openness | Disclosure of appropriate and timely information about the audit, verification and certifications processes and about the verification or certification status (i.e. the granting, maintaining of quality assurance, expanding or reducing the scope of quality assurance, renewing, suspending or restoring, or withdrawing of quality assurance) of any organisation. |
| Principle of Humanity | Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found. The purpose of humanitarian action is to protect life and health and ensure respect for human beings. |
| Responsibility | Assessment of sufficient objective evidence upon which to base a certification or verification decision. Note: The client, not HQAI, has the responsibility for consistently achieving the intended results of application of the referenced standard Note: Any audit is based on sampling within an organisation's management system and therefore is not a guarantee of 100 % conformity with requirements |
| Verification audit | Audit carried out by an auditing organisation independent of the client and the parties that rely on verification, for the purpose of verifying the client's continuous improvement in the application of a standard. |

1. Claims related to HQAI schemes

1.1 Benchmarking

- 1.1.1 An organisation that has been benchmarked can share the results publicly, with the details it deems necessary, being clear about the date of the audit and the fact it is not a process, but a one time off assessment.
- 1.1.2 Any intentionally or unintentionally misleading and/or false claim that the client is certified in compliance with the standard or verified by HQAI for continuously improving in the application of the standard is prohibited.
- 1.1.3 At the request of the client, HQAI will publish the public summary of the report on its website. The client is encouraged to also make this available on its own website.

1.2 Independent verification

- 1.2.1 An organisation that follows the process of Independent Verification 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.
- 1.2.2 Any intentionally or unintentionally misleading and/or false claim that the client is certified in compliance with the standard is prohibited.

Note: For example, a claim that the organisation's continuous improvement in the application of the CHS is independently verified by HQAI, accompanied with a logo either representing the standard or HQAI would be considered misleading as it would create the impression that the organisation is certified.

- 1.2.3 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 also make this available on its own website.

1.3 Certification

- 1.3.1 An organisation that is granted a certificate can declare in organisational communication and public relations, including on its website, that it is certified against the CHS. It also receives the right to use a certification mark.

- 1.3.2 Any intentionally or unintentionally misleading and/or false claim is prohibited

Note: For example, claims implying that that a specific project, or individual members of a certified network (if the scope of the certificate does not include the members of the network) or partners would be considered false claims as the scope of the certificate would not cover them.

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

2. Use of the certificate and certification mark

- 2.1 The certification mark or certificate shall not be used to reflect a guarantee of products, reports or deliverables.
- 2.2 Reference to the scope covered by the certification (e.g. limitations to a particular country or operation) is essential in all communications concerning the certificate or the certification mark. This includes usage in all geographical locations covered by the certificate. Partners and affiliates of a certified agency shall not use the certification mark or the certificate in any way.
- 2.3 The certification mark and certificate must be removed immediately once the certification period is completed, or the certificate is suspended or withdrawn. It shall be replaced (as appropriate) if the organisation has undergone re-certification.
- 2.4 HQAI reserves the right to undertake legal procedures for serious and persistent misuse of claims or whenever an organisation falsely declare using its services while not being a client.[procedure]

End of policy

[procedure]

- x.1 Certified organisations receive a paper certificate and electronic copies confirming that they have demonstrated compliance with the CHS. The certificate include a unique identification number
- x.2 They also receive the right to use a unique certification mark, which number corresponds to the one on the certificate.
- x.3 They may use the certificate and the certification mark at all offices where the organisation staff operate worldwide, unless a more limited audit scope is shown on the certificate, in which case the use is restricted to the parts of the organisation that is covered by the certificate.
- x.4 The certification mark and certificate can be used in the following ways:
 - i. Certified organisations may use the terms "certified" or "certification".
 - ii. The certification mark must always be reproduced using approved artwork provided by HQAI. If HQAI certified agencies are in doubt about how to use it correctly, they should first contact HQAI Secretariat for guidance.
 - iii. Certified organisations can change the size of the certification mark, ensuring the text remains legible, but shall not alter the certification mark in any other way, including changing proportions or colours.

X. Misuse [procedure]

- x.1 HQAI checks on an ongoing basis the right use of claims, particularly the use of the certification mark amongst its client organisations.
- x.2 Whenever HQAI identifies misuse, it shall inform the client and request a correction, with a deadline of 15 days for implementing the change.
- x.3 The client shall inform HQAI when the correction has been made.
- x.4 If the client does not operate the change in the requested timeframe, sanction will be implemented, that can lead to the delisting of the organisation from HQAI website and withdrawal of the certificate.
- x.6 Whenever a client organisation identifies a misuse of the claims that can be made in relation to HQAI quality assurance processes, they shall inform HQAI as soon as realistically possible. This includes claims made within or outside their own organisation.