

Gulf Petrochemicals and Chemicals Association



GULF SUSTAINABILITY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE (GULF SQAS) ASSESSOR ACCREDITATION MANUAL

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GPCA Gulf SQAS Accreditation Manual

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1. Introduction:

1.1 Purpose

The scope and applicability of this manual is restricted to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries only. Accredited Assessors will be unable to perform in any other region except the GCC Region.

The Gulf “Sustainability and Quality Assessment System” (Gulf SQAS) Accreditation Manual defines the qualification requirements for the accreditation of ‘GPCA, Gulf SQAS Assessor’ and covers all Gulf SQAS modules. Maintaining a high and consistent quality of both the assessors and the assessment process will be essential in ensuring broad recognition that the system is reliable, trustworthy and that the results drive continuous improvement. This manual describes the assessor pre-qualification requirements, the training and accreditation processes, the mechanism for monitoring assessor performance and the process for maintaining accreditation.

The primary objectives of the Gulf SQAS Assessor Accreditation system are as follows:

- To ensure a consistent, high quality across all assessors;
- To ensure a uniform interpretation of the assessment questionnaires and associated guidelines by all Assessors, independent of their background or country;
- To provide training in the correct use of the electronic Gulf SQAS database;
- To provide an understanding of the relationship of GCC based chemical companies with the logistics industry;
- To provide insight into the activities, organizational structures and infrastructure of such typical partner companies (logistics companies).

2. Accreditation

General accreditation as a Gulf SQAS assessor will be obtained based on satisfying the pre-qualification requirements, basic training, a written examination and an interview. To be entitled to perform assessments, assessors must also obtain “Accreditation Titles” for each of the Gulf SQAS modules of interest by meeting the additional specific modular training and examination requirements specified in this document.

2.1 Assessor Pre-qualification Requirements

2.1.1 – Assessors Employed by Accreditation Bodies

Applicants for accreditation as a Gulf SQAS assessor shall meet the following requirements:

- Be full-time employees of an Accreditation Company approved by the GPCA to present assessor candidates
- Be registered as a quality lead auditor i.e.:
 - have a valid qualification with an accredited certification body; or
 - be registered with a recognized auditor registration organization (e.g. IRCA)

- Have performed, during the last 3 years, at least five ISO 9001, ISO 14001, RC 14001 or OHSAS audits or Gulf SQAS (equivalent) assessments at companies providing logistic services to the chemical industry;
- Be able to demonstrate knowledge of the requirements for the transportation and handling of dangerous goods, including but not limited to ADR. Note: There may be a future requirement for Dangerous Goods Training;
- Be fully independent from the logistics companies being assessed (no financial, commercial or advisory links with the company);
- Have a good working command of the English language. Working knowledge of the Arabic language is preferred.
- Preferred:
 - Dangerous Goods Safety Advisor (DGSA) training completed
 - NEBOSH IGC or equivalent

Pre-qualification requirements must be documented by the applicant in their application and supported by copies of certificates and other relevant documentation, where applicable.

2.1.2 – GCC Citizen Assessors

G.C.C citizen applicants for accreditation as a Gulf SQAS assessor shall meet the following requirements:

- Be employed by, or the owner of a GCC registered company permitted under articles of association/ company license to carry out services for assessments such as Gulf SQAS, and approved by GPCA to submit assessor candidates;
- Be registered as a quality lead auditor i.e.:
 - be registered with a recognized auditor registration organization (e.g. IRCA)
- Have performed, during the last 3 years, at least five ISO 9001, ISO 14001, RC 14001 or OHSAS audits or Gulf SQAS (equivalent) assessments at companies providing logistic services to the chemical industry;
- Be able to demonstrate knowledge of the requirements for the transportation and handling of dangerous goods, including but not limited to ADR. Note: There may be a future requirement for Dangerous Goods Training;
- Be fully independent from the logistics companies being assessed (no financial, commercial or advisory links with the company);
- Have a good working command of the English language. Working knowledge of the Arabic language is preferred.
- Preferred:
 - Dangerous Goods Safety Advisor (DGSA) training completed
 - NEBOSH IGC or equivalent

Pre-qualification requirements must be documented by the applicant in their application and supported by copies of certificates and other relevant documentation, where applicable.

2.2 General Accreditation

2.2.1 Training Course

All applicants for accreditation as a Gulf SQAS assessor must fulfill all pre-qualification requirements and will then be required to attend a General Accreditation training course conducted in English and held in a location defined by GPCA. The training course will cover the following:

- The general features of the Gulf SQAS system;
- The assessment process and principles (preparation, fieldwork, evidence seeking, conformance with guidelines, administration, reporting);
- The topics which are relevant to all modules, such as risk assessment, security, safety at work, subcontracting, etc;
- The CORE questionnaire;
- Specific Module questionnaires.

2.2.2 Examination

2.2.2.1 Written examination

After attending the General Accreditation Training course, applicants must participate in a written examination to demonstrate their knowledge of the Gulf SQAS assessment system. The examination will be conducted as follows:

- The examination will be in English. During the examination, the English version of the Core, and/or Specific Module questionnaires may be used by the applicant;
- The questions will be chosen from a selection of questions approved by the Gulf SQAS sub-committee;
- The examination will be marked without the marker knowing the name of the applicant.

2.2.2.2 Interview

All applicants will be interviewed in English by a panel comprising of members of the Gulf SQAS Committee. The purpose of the interview will be to validate the applicants' technical knowledge, experience, communication skills and ability to carry out Gulf SQAS assessments.

2.2.2.3 Passing/ failing the examination

The applicant will be judged to have passed when the average score of the interview and the written examination is 70% or higher.

Candidates whose total average is greater than 60 % and less than 69% may re-sit (once) the written examination through an e-exam. They will pass if the total average of the initial assessment and the re-sit e-exam is 70% or higher.

Candidates who obtain less than 60% may apply to participate at the next Gulf SQAS General Accreditation Training and examination organized by GPCA.

2.2.2.4 Demonstration of Practical Competence

An assessor will be required to:

- a) Observe an assessment performed by a certified assessor;
- b) Lead an assessment, while being observed by a certified assessor, preferably the same assessor.

The process of verification will be completed by the certified assessor, who will prepare a letter to the Gulf SQAS sub-committee, recommending that the assessor is competent to be certified.

The Certified assessor will be requested to sign the relevant section of the assessor Certification Tracking Form.

2.3 Accreditation Titles for Gulf SQAS modules

Successful completion of the Gulf SQAS General Accreditation program will allow applicants to progress and obtain an Accreditation Title for each Gulf SQAS module. The Gulf SQAS sub-committee will define the training and examination requirements for each module and organizes regular examination opportunities. This training will be based on self-study and e-learning of the relevant subjects as well as an understanding of the reference documents posted on the Gulf SQAS website. When required, for example upon a significant revision of a module, a specific “in-class” training course may be organized by GPCA, dedicated to that module.

2.3.1 General Requirements

The requirements for being listed as an accredited assessor for a module are:

- To study the associated documents (questionnaire and specific guidelines);
- To study the defined literature and documents relevant to the industry or activity covered by the module, as defined by the Gulf SQAS sub-committee and posted on the Gulf SQAS website;
- To successfully pass an examination on the subject matter with a minimum score of 70%. Examination will be either classroom based or an e-exam, downloaded from the website or sent by email and submitted to GPCA before the requested due-date;
- If the applicant fails the exam at the first attempt, he/ she may re-sit the examination once;
- To be fluent in English and sufficiently proficient in the local language, when assessments will be conducted in a language different from the assessor’s native tongue. Alternatively, the assessor should be accompanied by a colleague, with local language skills but independent of the company to be assessed;
- To be knowledgeable of the relevant local regulations and guidelines provided by GPCA (e.g. ADR) to ensure that key documents and procedures (e.g. operating permits, training records, inspection certificates) can be interpreted correctly.

2.3.2 Gulf SQAS Transport Services

In addition to the above general requirements, applicants for Gulf SQAS Transport Service need to demonstrate through their Continued Professional Development (CPD):

- Knowledge of national and international regulations related to road transport operations;
- When appropriate for the supply chain, knowledge of national and international regulations covering intermodal operations (e.g. IMDG, ADR, RID, ADN, etc.);
- Knowledge of basic technical issues concerning Transport.

2.3.3 Gulf SQAS Warehouse

In addition to the above general requirements, applicants for Gulf SQAS Warehouse need to demonstrate, through their Continued Professional Development (CPD):

- Knowledge of national regulations related to warehousing operations and permitting;
- Knowledge of basic technical issues concerning Warehousing.

2.3.4 Gulf SQAS Tank Cleaning

In addition to the above general requirements, applicants for Gulf SQAS Tank Cleaning need to demonstrate, through their Continued Professional Development (CPD):

- Knowledge of national regulations related to tank cleaning operations and permitting;
- Knowledge of basic technical issues concerning Tank Cleaning.

2.4 Granting the Accreditation

The Gulf SQAS sub-committee grants the Gulf SQAS accreditation if the candidate has:

- Demonstrated that he/ she has the requisite knowledge and experience;
- Attended the General Gulf SQAS training course;
- Successfully passed the written examination and the interview;
- Successfully obtained an Accreditation Title for one or more specific modules.

The applicant will receive a Gulf SQAS Accreditation Certificate, which is valid for 3 years.

In the event that an applicant considers that a decision made by the Gulf SQAS sub-committee is unreasonable, he/ she may appeal to the GPCA Secretary General. In this case, the procedure referred to in section 5 will be followed.

3. Evaluating Assessor Performance

Each assessor's performance will be monitored to ensure not only a high standard of individual work but also to ensure a consistent approach amongst the assessors. Performance feedback may be obtained from observers appointed by the Gulf SQAS sub-committee, present during the assessments. The performance criteria and the appraisal process are described below.

3.1 Performance Criteria

To ensure a consistently high quality of performance the assessor must have demonstrated the following:

- At least three complete Gulf SQAS assessments per year, any module(s);
- Efficient communication between the assessor and GPCA is important. The assessor must be accessible by e-mail and phone. If, after reasonable efforts to contact the Assessor, he/ she does not answer emails or phone calls, his/ her accreditation can be suspended, pending a final decision by the Gulf SQAS sub-committee;
- Compliance with all the requirements defined in Gulf SQAS.

3.2 Evaluating Performance

A minimum of two members of the Gulf SQAS sub-committee will undertake an Accredited Assessor evaluation. The evaluation of each Gulf SQAS assessor applicant will be carried out on a periodic basis depending on the performance of the assessor, but at least once every three years, based on:

- Review of recent assessments;
- Feedback from observers and assessed companies;
- Assessor interview, (if required).

The criteria, process and evaluation findings will be recorded on the Evaluation Form; Addendum 2.

The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Gulf SQAS sub-committee will act as the arbitrator where conflicting views are identified.

The completed Gulf SQAS Evaluation form, including scoring and highlighting specific comments and recommendations will be sent to the assessor. The assessor will be required to respond with proposed corrective actions, as appropriate.

3.3 Revoking Accreditation

Assessor accreditation may be withdrawn when performance does not meet the required standards, as defined solely by the Gulf SQAS sub-committee. Depending on the circumstances of the discrepancy, this may result in the withdrawal of one or more Accreditation Title(s) or in full revocation of the basic Gulf SQAS Accreditation.

When continued or repeated deviations from the required performance criteria are observed, the assessor may be called to an interview with a panel drawn from the Gulf SQAS sub-committee to discuss their specific concerns. The assessor can present his/ her case and will be formally informed of the outcome of such an interview by the Gulf SQAS sub-committee.

The applicant will have the opportunity to formally appeal the decision to the GPCA Secretary General. In this case, the procedure referred in section 6 will be followed.

4. Accreditation Renewal

4.1 Refresher Accreditation Training

Regular refresher training will be held by GPCA to ensure the continual high quality of the assessors and to facilitate the general accreditation renewal process. All certified assessors must attend refresher training once every 3 years.

The refresher training will cover the following aspects:

- A general update on the status and content of all modules, including regulatory changes;
- Selected topics chosen from all modules, where Assessors experienced difficulties or where the Gulf SQAS sub-committee noticed inconsistencies;
- An exchange of learning. The sessions will allow sufficient time for discussion with and amongst assessors in order to address concerns and to capture opportunities for improvement.

4.2 Continued Professional Development (CPD)

In order to maintain accreditation, assessors must ensure they stay abreast of technical and legislative developments relevant to the subjects covered in Gulf SQAS and applicable to the countries where the assessments are to take place. For that purpose, assessors shall engage in the required regular training and self-study. They shall self-monitor their professional development and provide a periodical status/ progress report to the Gulf SQAS sub-committee.

4.3 Granting the Accreditation extension

In order to renew the Gulf SQAS Accreditation for the subsequent 3 years, the Gulf SQAS assessor shall:

- Complete at least 5 Gulf SQAS assessments within the last 3 years;
- Maintain the ISO Lead Auditor qualification (documentary proof has to be sent);

- Maintain current knowledge of the requirements for the transportation and handling of dangerous goods, including but not limited to ADR;
- Ensure that he/ she is up-to-date on the changing regulations regarding the carriage and handling of dangerous goods. (i.e. the 2 yearly cycle of ADR/ RID changes);
- Submit to the Gulf SQAS sub-committee prior to an evaluation, a report summarizing key observations and recommendations to improve the Gulf SQAS program e.g. content of questionnaires;
- Successfully complete applicable refresher training.

Formal notification of extension will be provided to the assessor, by the Gulf SQAS sub-committee.

5. Ethics

Gulf SQAS assessors require access to sensitive information of assessed companies. The assessor is also the face of the GPCA in the region. At all times, assessors must uphold the highest standards of Ethical Compliance. The Gulf SQAS sub-committee will monitor assessors and assessment for compliance with the program standards and ethical compliance and may take action against infringements according to section 3.

Ethical compliance shall mean compliance with regional ethical compliance laws, including but not limited to:

- Acts of bribery are strictly prohibited in all forms. The acceptance or giving of any form of payment, whether in cash or kind, for improper advantage is considered bribery. Breach of Anti Bribery laws may be considered to have been committed whether an actual payment was given;
- Avoidance of conflicts of interest;
- Ensuring the protection of sensitive information;
- Upholding the reputation of the GPCA, and Gulf SQAS program.

For concerns relating to ethics, assessors or companies may contact mohamed@gpca.org.ae.

6. Appeal Procedure

In the event that an applicant considers that a decision made by the Gulf SQAS sub-committee is unreasonable, he/ she may appeal to the GPCA Secretary General.

- The applicant should write to the GPCA Secretary General indicating, in detail, the reasons why he/ she believes that a decision taken by the Gulf SQAS sub-committee is unreasonable or not in accordance with the Gulf SQAS Accreditation Manual;
- The Gulf SQAS Representative will be notified of receipt of an appeal notice by the Secretary General and then collect the relevant information that may be helpful in reviewing the case and convene an Appeal Panel. The Appeal Panel will consist of a minimum of three members, none being member of the Gulf SQAS sub-committee panel who interviewed the Assessor;

- The Gulf SQAS Representative will provide the Appeal Panel with the necessary background information on the decision;
- The applicant shall be entitled to be heard by the Appeal Panel.

If the majority of the Appeal Panel decides that the original decision should not be upheld or the applicant should be given another opportunity to succeed, the applicant will be informed in writing by the GPCA Secretary General with a copy sent to the Gulf SQAS sub-committee. Otherwise, the original decision will be upheld and the applicant informed in writing accordingly by the GPCA Secretary General with a copy sent to the Gulf SQAS sub-committee.