

**IEC SYSTEM OF CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT SCHEMES FOR
ELECTROTECHNICAL EQUIPMENT AND COMPONENTS (IECEE)**

Subject:

Administrative Circular regarding guidance of remote QMS assessments of CBTLs/SPTLs, re-assessments of NCBs, CBTLs/SPTLs, and CTFs during coronavirus (COVID-19)

Background:

As described in Administrative Circular IECEE-CMC/2181/AC, the IECEE Officers decided to temporarily allow QMS assessments of CBTLs/SPTLs, re-assessments of NCBs, CBTLs/SPTLs, and CTFs to be conducted remotely.

The temporary remote assessment exception will be valid for the remainder of 2020 (currently under review). The IECEE Officers and Secretariat will monitor this on an ongoing basis and provide updates to the temporary exception, as applicable, or should travel restrictions due to coronavirus (COVID-19) continue beyond this period.

IECEE-CMC/2182A/AC (2020-11-02) is being issued to make editorial corrections and addition of Annex 3 - Additional Guidance for Remote Re-Assessments.

Action:

IECEE Members and assessors to note the annexed guidance documents for conducting remote QMS assessments of CBTLs/SPTLs, re-assessments of NCBs, CBTLs/SPTLs, and CTFs during coronavirus (COVID-19)

Annex 1 – Remote re-assessments for NCBs, CBTLs, SPTLs, Stage 4 CTFs, and QMS assessments

Annex 2 – Guidance for the handling of CTFs (Customer's Testing Facilities) during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Annex 3 – Additional Guidance for Remote Re-Assessments



Annex 1

Guidance for Remote IECEE Re-Assessments During the COVID-19 Pandemic

General Principles

This guideline describes a permissible **temporary** deviation from the existing IECEE procedure for the re-assessment of NCBs, CBTLs, SPTL and Stage 4 CTFs, due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Re-assessments for NCBs, CBTLs, SPTLs and Stage 4 CTFs, and QMS Assessments are permitted to be performed remotely until December 31, 2020 (currently under review).

All other types of assessment, such as **Initial, Scope Extension or Relocation Assessments must be performed onsite**, and therefore may need to be postponed until an onsite assessment is possible. The same applies to the first **IECEE assessments of non-accredited internal calibration laboratories**, as they are considered equivalent to an Initial Assessment.

The IECEE Secretariat will deal with **Follow-up Assessments on a case-by-case basis**.

The scope of this temporary deviation is summarized in Annex 1.

The use of appropriate teleconferencing and document sharing platform (e.g. Skype, Teams, Zoom, etc.) must be agreed upon in advance of the assessment.

Where the use of Live Stream Video (LSV) is required for remote witnessing of tests, the technology used for this purpose must be acceptable to the Assessment Team in terms of its audio/video capability and its mobility.

The participation of an NCB Representative in a Remote Re-assessment is required. However, depending on the time zones, it may be limited to participation in the Opening and Closing Meetings, and availability on request as agreed with the Assessment Team and the assessed organization.

Where an onsite assessment is possible, e.g. the assessment team can travel, the organization to be assessed has no visitation restrictions, and all parties agree to an onsite assessment, the normal onsite assessment procedures will apply.

The NCB/CBTL must assume full responsibility for the risks related to the transmission of Live Stream Video data and electronic documents.

*******Note:**
The guidance below uses **black font** to show the current IECEE assessment procedures (which must be followed in full, unless stated otherwise), and **red font** to show additional steps needed for remote re-assessments.

PART A: Organization of the Assessment – Assessment Plan

- 1.1 Due to the fact that for many of the currently scheduled re-assessments the members of the Assessment Team and the assessed organization may be in different time zones, a practical plan for a remote re-assessment must be developed early in the planning phase.
- 1.2 Specifically, where the time difference is greater than 3 hours, there should be an agreement to split the normal assessment time into a number of segments appropriate for the available time windows.

- 1.3 Separate remote assessment sessions may be arranged by individual members of the Assessment Team with the staff of the assessed organization - within the framework of the overall assessment plan and with overall coordination by the Lead Assessor.
- 1.4 It is generally intended that the total time of the assessment and the amounts invoiced to the assessed organization be consistent with the current rules and practice (with the exception of time/cost of travel and accommodations, which of course do not apply).
Nevertheless, the Assessment Team members have the right to request that an additional assessment time (half a day or one full day, depending on circumstances) be included in the invoice to the assessed organization, to cover the additional time needed for the additional preparation activities required for Remote Re-Assessment. This must be included in the initial cost estimate submitted to the assessed organization.

PART B – Remote Re-assessment of NCB

1 Preparation for Remote Re-assessment

- 1.1 All required application documentation is submitted by the assessed NCB **six weeks in advance of the assessment**, in accordance with OD-2007, Section 6.
- 1.2 Additionally, and at the same time (six weeks in advance of the assessment), the NCB provides the following documentation, in English:
 - a) A document describing the NCB's current Quality Management documentation structure,
 - b) A list of Quality Management System documents relevant to CB Scheme operations, including completed form OD-2007 F1 (prev. OD-2016), Check List for NCBs.
 - i. The statement that there are no changes in quality system is not allowed for remote re-assessments.
 - ii. The list should highlight new and/or changed QMS documentation.
 - c) A list of changes to key management and certification personnel since the last IECEE re-assessment,
 - d) A list of internal assessors used to conduct NCB audits of CBTLs and CTFs (to allow selection of staff for review of training and potential interview).
- 1.3 NCB confirms that the Assessment Team will have online access to management system documentation, or provides the requested documents by email or FTP server, such as Dropbox, etc. (the issue of documentation language must be addressed here).
- 1.4 NCB confirms that a person fluent in English will be available to assist each member of the Assessment Team in their interactions with the NCB staff.
- 1.5 Assessment Team decides on the scope of re-assessment (a selection of product categories and standards) and informs the NCB.
- 1.6 NCB provides the number of completed projects (last 3 years) for each standard selected for re-assessment (Annex 1A in OD-2004) – in advance of the assessment.
- 1.7 NCB provides a list of certification projects completed over the last 3 years for each standard selected for re-assessment. The list must include for each project at least the project number, standard used, and the type of product.
 - i. Where the number of projects is very large, the NCB may choose to limit the list to 20 projects per standard - representative of the products tested to that standard over the last 3 years.
- 1.8 Assessment Team selects for review a total of 5-10 projects for the overall assessment scope, with a minimum of 1 project per standard selected for reassessment.



- i. These projects are provided to the Assessment Team by email in advance of the assessment (CBTC and CBTR) **and** the related certification files are made available for an online review during the assessment.
- ii. Where the CBTRs are not provided for review in advance, additional remote sessions may be required for online report. This may extend the total assessment time and result in additional assessment charges.

2. Remote Re-assessment

- 2.1 All interactive parts of the assessment may be conducted by Zoom, Teams, Skype or any other online meeting platform that will allow both screen-sharing and audio/video interactions with the staff of the NCB.
- 2.2 The assessment will consist of:
 - a) Opening meeting
 - b) Review of documentation – **either online or as provided by email in advance**
 - c) Interactive assessment activities – **each assessor opens a separate remote interface with the interviewed NCB staff.**
 - d) Closing meeting.

3. Completion of Assessment Report

- 3.1 Regular process and timing are followed.
- 3.2 The assessment report shall include the following statement on the title page:

“This assessment was conducted remotely and was subject to the limitations of a remote assessment. The facts, judgments and conclusions documented in the report are based on remote observations of the assessment team.”

4. NCR Resolution

Regular process and timing are followed.

Part C – Remote Re-assessment of CBTL, SPTL or Stage 4 CTF

(The term “CBTL” used below applies also to SPTLs and Stage 4 CTFs)

1. Preparation for Assessment

- 1.1 All required application documentation is submitted by the NCB of the assessed CBTL **six weeks in advance of the assessment**, in accordance with OD-2007, Section 6.
- 1.2 **Additionally, and at the same time (6 weeks in advance of the assessment), the NCB/CBTL provides the following documentation, in English:**
 - a) **A document describing the CBTL’s current quality management documentation structure,**
 - b) **A list of Quality Management System documents relevant to CB Scheme operations, including completed form OD-2007 F2b (prev. OD-2017), Check List for CBTLs.**
 - i. **The statement that there are no changes in quality system is not allowed. (This re-assessment is based on ISO/IEC 17025:2017.)**
 - ii. **The list should highlight new and/or changed QMS documentation.**
 - c) **A list of changes to key management, testing and engineering personnel since the last IECEE re-assessment,**

- d) A list of internal assessors used to conduct audits of CTFs (to allow selection of staff for review of training and for a potential interview).
- 1.3 CBTL confirms that the Assessment Team will have online access to management system documentation, or provides the requested documents by email or FTP server, such as Dropbox, etc. (The issue of documentation language must be addressed here).
- 1.4 CBTL confirms that a person fluent in English will be available to assist each member of the Assessment Team in their interactions with the CBTL staff.
- 1.5 CBTL provides evidence that it possesses adequate LSV and audio capability to permit remote witnessing of tests by the Assessment Team, and provides the technical details.
- 1.6 Assessment Teams reviews the provided LSV/audio documentation, arranges for a brief online demonstration of this capability and accepts it (prior to the assessment).
- 1.7 Assessment Team decides on the scope of re-assessment (a selection of product categories and standards) and advises the organization to be assessed.
- 1.8 CBTL provides the number of completed projects (last 3 years) for each standard selected for re-assessment (i.e. in form of completed Annex 1A in OD-2005-2) – in advance of the assessment.
- 1.9 CBTL provides the actual list of projects completed over the last 3 years for each standard selected for re-assessment. The list must include for each project at least the project number, standard used, and the type of product.
 - i. Where the number of projects is very large, the CBTL may choose to limit the list to 20 projects per standard - representative of the products tested to that standard over the last 3 years.
- 1.10 Assessment Team selects for review a total of 5-10 projects for the overall assessment scope, including a minimum of 1 project for each standard selected for re-assessment.
 - i. These projects are provided to the Assessment Team by email in advance of the assessment (CBTRs only) **and** the related certification files are made available for an online review during the assessment.
 - ii. Where the CBTRs are not provided for review in advance, additional remote sessions may be required for online report review. This may extend the total assessment time and result in additional assessment charges.
- 1.11 At least one week before the assessment the Assessment Team prepares a List of Tests to be Witnessed during the remote assessment, and provides the list to the CBTL.
- 1.12 CBTL prepares to demonstrate the requested tests by LSV.

2. Remote Re-assessment

- 2.1 All one-on-one or group discussions of the assessment may be conducted by Zoom, Teams, Skype or any other online meeting platform that will allow both screen-sharing and audio/video interactions with the staff of the CBTL.
- 2.2 The assessment will consist of:
 - a) Opening meeting
 - b) Review of documentation – either online or as provided by email in advance
 - c) Interactive assessment activities – questions, interviews, witnessing of tests (by LSV), etc.
 - i. each assessor opens a separate remote interface with CBTL/SPTL staff to be interviewed,
 - ii. LSV witnessing of tests must allow sufficient visual detail and time for questions about the test equipment used and the test procedure.
 - d) Closing meeting.



3. Completion of Assessment Report

3.1 Regular process and timing are to be followed.

3.2 The assessment report shall include the following statement on the title page:

“This assessment was conducted remotely and was subject to the limitations of a remote assessment. The facts, judgments and conclusions documented in the report are based on remote observations of the assessment team.”

4. NCR Resolution

Regular process and timing are followed.

PART D – Remote QMS Assessment (CBTL/SPTL)

1. Preparation for Remote Assessment

1.1 All required application documentation submitted by the NCB of the assessed CBTL **six weeks in advance of the assessment**, in accordance with OD-2007, Section 10.

1.2 Additionally, and at the same time (six weeks in advance of the assessment), the NCB/CBTL provides the following documentation, in English:

- a) A document describing the CBTLs’s current Quality Management documentation structure,
- b) A list of Quality Management System documents relevant to CB Scheme operations, including completed form OD-2007 F2 (prev. OD-2017) - Check List for CBTLs/SPTLs – if there were changes.
- c) A list of changes to key management and technical personnel since the last IECEE assessment,

1.3 CBTL confirms that the Assessment Team will have online access to management system documentation, or provides the requested documents by email or FTP server, such as Dropbox, etc.

1.4 CBTL confirms that a person fluent in English will be available to assist each member of the Assessment Team in their interactions with the CBTL staff.

2. Remote Re-assessment

2.1 All interactive parts of the assessment may be conducted by Zoom, Teams, Skype or any other online meeting platform that will allow both screen-sharing and audio/video interactions with the staff of the CBTL/SPTL.

2.2 The assessment will consist of:

- a. Opening meeting
- b. Review of documentation – either online or as provided by email in advance
- c. Interactive assessment activities – questions, interviews, etc.
 - i. Remote discussions with individual staff
- d. Closing meeting.

3 Completion of Assessment Report

- 3.1 Regular process and timing are to be followed.
- 3.2 The assessment report shall include the following statement on the title page:
 “This assessment was conducted remotely and was subject to the limitations of a remote assessment. The facts, judgments and conclusions documented in the report are based on remote observations of the assessment team.”

4. NCR Resolution

Regular process and timing are followed.

Table 1
Is Remote Assessment Possible?

NCB Assessments		
Type of Assessment	Remote assessment possible?	
	Yes	No
Initial Assessment (IAR)		X
Extension of Scope (EAR)		X
Re-Assessment (RAR)	X	
Follow-up Assessment (FAR) ¹		X
Re-Location Assessment (RLAR) ²	N/A	N/A

Notes:

- 1. The IECEE Secretariat deals with Follow-up Assessments on a case-by-case basis.
- 2. The re-location of the NCB requires only an administrative assessment.

CBTL/SPTL Assessments		
Type of Assessment	Remote assessment possible?	
	Yes	No
Initial Assessment (IAR)		X
Extension of Scope (EAR)		X
Re-Assessment (RAR)	X	
Follow-up Assessment (FAR) ¹		X
Re-Location Assessment (RLAR)		X
QMS Assessment (RAR)	X	

Notes:

- 1. The IECEE Secretariat deals with Follow-up Assessments on a case-by-case basis.

CTF Stage 4 Assessments		
Type of Assessment	Remote assessment possible?	
	Yes	No
Initial Assessment (IAR)		X
Extension of Scope (EAR)		X
Re-Assessment (RAR)	X	



Annex 2

Guidance

for the handling of CTFs (Customer's Testing Facilities) during the COVID-19 Pandemic

General Principles

This guideline describes a permissible temporary deviation from the existing IECEE procedure for the **Re-Assessments and Annual Assessments** of CTFs due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Re-Assessments and Annual Assessments for CTF Stages 1, 2 and 3 are permitted to be performed remotely until December 31, 2020 (currently under review).

All other types of assessment, such as Initial, Follow-up, Scope Extension or Re-Location Assessments must be performed on-site, and therefore may need to be postponed until an on-site assessment is possible.

The use of appropriate teleconferencing and document sharing platforms (e.g. Skype, Teams, Zoom, etc.) must be agreed upon in advance of the assessment.

For CTF Stages 2 and 3, where the use of LSV (Live Stream Video) is considered to be an alternative to on-site witnessing, the technology used for this purpose must be acceptable to the Assessment Team in terms of its audio/video capability and its mobility (refer to Annex C of OD-2048).

Where an on-site Re-Assessment / Annual Assessment is possible, the normal assessment procedures will apply.

PART A: Stage specific Guidance

CTF Stage 1:

The main concept of this CTF Stage is the physical presence of CBTL staff or LTR in the client lab., whereby full testing is carried out by CBTL staff or an LTR. LSV can only be utilized from CTF Stage 2 onwards. Hence, if CBTL staff or an LTR cannot travel to the CTF, then there is also no testing possible. Once travel to a CTF Stage 1 becomes possible again, the assessment can be performed at the same time.

Nevertheless, a remote assessment acc. to PART B below could be conducted in case desired by any of the involved parties.

The "Valid" status on the IECEE Website can be maintained without re-validation (refer to OD-2048, clause 10.1) until December 31, 2020.



CTF Stage 2:

The main concept of this CTF Stage is the physical presence of CBTL/NCB staff or LTR in the client lab., whereby 100 per cent of the tests carried out by the CTF staff are witnessed by the CBTL/NCB qualified staff or a qualified LTR.

However, LSV can be utilized for the remote witnessing of testing projects even if the CTF Stage 2 was not previously assessed for LSV by the CBTL/NCB or LTR. Once travel to a CTF Stage 2 becomes possible again, the assessment can be performed at the same time and has to cover the LSV issues.

Nevertheless, a remote assessment acc. to PART B below could be conducted in case desired by any of the involved parties.

The "Valid" status on the IECEE Website can be maintained without re-validation (refer to OD-2048, clause 10.1) until December 31, 2020.

CTF Stage 3:

Refer to PART B below.

CTF Stage 4:

Since CTF Stage 4 assessments are conducted by an assessment team appointed by the IECEE, refer to the separate Guidance document provided by the IECEE.

Part B: Remote assessments

Separate remote assessment sessions may be arranged to individual members of the Assessment Team and staff of the assessed organization.

1. Preparation for Assessment

- 1.1 All required documentation shall be submitted by the assessed CTF in advance of the assessment, in accordance with OD-2048, clause 10.
- 1.2 Additionally, the CTF shall provide a list of changes to key management, testing and engineering personnel and staff in charge of calibration activities since the last assessment,
- 1.3 CTF prepares to provide the Assessment Team with online access to management system documentation, or to provide requested documents by email.
- 1.4 For CTF Stages 2 and 3, the CTF provides evidence that it possesses the full LSV and audio capability to permit remote witnessing of tests by the Assessment Team, and provides the technical details.
- 1.5 Assessment Teams reviews the provided LSV/audio documentation, arranges for a brief online demonstration of this capability and accepts it (prior to the assessment).
- 1.6 Assessment Team decides on the scope of assessment (a selection of standards and clauses) and advises the CTF.
- 1.7 CTF provides the number of completed projects (last 12 months) for each standard selected for the assessment (i.e. in form of completed Annex 1A in OD-2048-F2/F3) in advance of the assessment.

- 1.8 For CTF Stage 3, the Assessment Team selects for review a total of 3 projects for the overall assessment scope. These projects must be provided to the Assessment Team either by email in advance of the assessment, or must be made available for an online review during the assessment.
- 1.9 For CTF Stages 2 and 3, the Assessment Team prepares a List of Tests to be Witnessed during the remote assessment, and provides the list to the CTF at least one week before the assessment. The CTF prepares to demonstrate the requested tests by LSV.

2. Conduct of the Remote assessment

- 2.1 All one-on-one or group discussions of the assessment may be conducted by Zoom, Teams, Skype or any other online meeting platform that will allow both screen-sharing and audio/video interactions with the staff of the CTF.
- 2.2 The assessment will consist of:
 - a) Opening meeting
 - b) Review of documentation – either online or as provided by email in advance
 - c) Interactive assessment activities – questions, interviews, witnessing of tests (by LSV), etc.
 - d) Closing meeting.
- 2.3 Remote discussions with individual staff – each assessor to open a separate remote interface with CTF staff to be interviewed.
- 2.4 For CTF Stages 2 and 3, LSV witnessing of tests must allow sufficient visual detail and time for questions about the test equipment used and the test procedure.

3. Completion of Assessment Report

Regular process and timing are to be followed.

Annex 3

Additional Guidance for Remote Re-Assessments

Supplement to IECEE-CMC/2182A/AC

*Note: Where planned 2020 Re-assessments were to be combined with Scope Extension or Relocation Assessments, the Lead Assessor should notify the Secretariat to inform the organization to be assessed about their available options **when the onsite assessment cannot be performed.***

Initial Pre-Assessment Actions

- Follow the process and the timing given in IECEE-CMC/2182A/AC (existing Guidance for Remote Re-assessments)
- Provide a detailed description of the documentation required for re-assessment and follow-up with the NCB/CBTL/SPTL with sense of urgency
 - Convey a clear message to all parties (Technical Assessors and the organization to be assessed) that timely responses are critical during the preparation phase, and can influence the ultimate assessment time and cost.
 - It is crucial that key documents (QMS procedures, certificates, reports) are directly accessible to the assessment team before the assessment – rather than being shown to the assessment team online during the assessment.
 - Reviewing at least some of the provided documentation in advance can make up for the time limitation during the assessment, and will allow the assessors to prepare specific questions.
 - Where translation of some documents will be required, suitable provisions must be made for presenting them during the remote assessment and having a good interpreter available for the assessment team.
- Agree on the “assessment platform” to be used. Not all organizations accept Zoom, due to some security concerns in the past. A number of recently performed remote assessments successfully utilized Microsoft Teams.
 - Rarely used local communication tools with limited functionality should not be accepted as an assessment platform.
- Rather than sending a large number of documents by email, NCB/CBTL/SPTL can provide links to an internal or external site (e.g. internal SharePoint, or some cloud service such as DropBox) where these documents are placed.
 - Unrestricted access to this site must be provided and verified by the Assessment team, since it will be used at all times of day and night.
- Online pre-meetings (as many as necessary) between the assessment team and the NCB/CBTL should be held to:
 - Clarify documentation requirements
 - Verify the agreed on communication platforms
 - Check adequacy and stability of the WiFi connections and ability to communicate at all ends, in all areas where the assessment will be conducted, including the “virtual lab tour”.
 - Verify adequacy of the LSV and Audio capability at the CBTL/SPTL through actual online demonstrations for all areas where testing will be witnessed, not less than 2-3

weeks before the assessment. That will still allow time to address any identified issues.

- The LSV capability must include the following:
 - The TA should be able to give “live directions” to the person behind the camera
 - The camera should be properly mounted to allow both stability and mobility where needed. Use of a tripod is recommended.
 - Ensure that the camera works in shielded areas where there may be no cellular or WiFi signal.
 - Camera must have the ability to focus and to provide sharp close up views where needed. Assessors must be able to inspect the setup, see and read calibration labels, readings on measuring instruments and raw data sheets.

Assessment Plan (should include)

Note: Use all relevant parts of the IECEE Assessment Plan Template (OD-2006-F2)

- Detailed description of the assessment activities and their (expected) timing for the full duration of the assessment, taking into account the time differences and other assessment logistics, such as:
 - Need to have separate online meetings for each assessor and the people he/she will interact with
 - Scheduled consultations between assessment team members,
 - Breaks, e.g. lunch
 - It needs to be clear who will send the online meeting invitations
 - Clear indication of which sessions on the agenda are online and which are offline (e.g. document check)
- Where the online assessment window is reduced due to time differences, the number of assessment days should be adjusted accordingly to allow for the completion of all required assessment activities.
- Consider different starting times for assessors in different time zones.
- Consider opening and closing meetings on a different day than a day of the assessment.
- Tasks for technical assessors must be very clear and the main contact persons must be named
- The list of tests to be witnessed should be provided as part of the Assessment Plan

Final Preparation for the Assessment

- It is very important to review in advance the assessment documentation provided by the NCB/CBTL/SPTL, as well as the additional documents provided by the Secretariat, such as the Particular Points to be Checked, the previous Assessment Reports, and the IFM report on PTP participation.
- Review at least the top level QMS documents and as many as possible of the previously issued CBTCs and/or CBTRs provided by the organization. This will allow you to prepare specific questions for the assessment.
- The Lead Assessor should ensure that all individual communications channels are established and meeting invitations are sent, including any planned separate meetings between the assessment team members.
- The assessment team members should also agree on the methods to call for unscheduled consultation meeting.
- Request the NCB/CBTL/SPTL to reduce background noise during the assessment days.
- The Assessment Team members conducting the remote re-assessment from home must ensure the stability of their own WiFi networks and environment (e.g. background noise, etc.) before the assessment.



The Assessment

- Where the assessment team members start the assessment at different time, e.g. if the time difference among the team members exceeds 3 hours, the Opening Meeting may be conducted a day before (or Friday of the week before) the start of the assessment activities.
- The Opening Meeting should emphasize the remote aspects of the assessment and the need to have rapid continuous access to the assessed organization's staff and documentation.
- The time needed for the Opening Meeting should be optimized so that it does not impact the time required for the assessment.
- The main challenge for the Lead Assessor is to decide where to focus the limited time during the online portion of the assessment. That is why it is important to have a prepared checklist and specific questions from the documentation review.
- Frequent sharing of assessment observations, at least on a daily basis, is recommended.
- It is important to summarize the assessment findings, NCRs and recommendations at the Closing Meeting. The assessment report can be prepared subsequently and emailed to the assessed organization for signatures shortly after the assessment.
- Electronic signatures in a Word document are the preferred signing method unless the need for signatures is waived.
- When sending a Word version of the Assessment Report to the assessed organization for signatures, the Assessment Team is responsible for verifying all of the information in the report.