



GLOBAL VERITAS CERTIFICATION SERVICES

Suspension And Withdrawal Of Certification

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1. Purpose and Scope

This document describes the procedure to be followed when sanctions, such as suspension or withdrawal of accreditation or part thereof, are imposed on accredited organisations, including the procedures for reinstatement of suspended organisations.

2. Definitions and References

- PD 21 - Complaints and Appeals
- PD 31 - Use of Logo
- PD 35 - Certification Fees

3. General

In order to ensure compliance to the relevant accreditation and where applicable, regulatory requirements, safeguard the integrity of the accreditation system and the reliability of results produced by an accredited organisation, GVCS applies various sanctions to accredited organisations found to have contravened the relevant accreditation and / or regulatory requirements as specified in the various accreditation standards and requirements. Sanctions may include suspension of an organisation's accreditation or part thereof, or where warranted, withdrawal of an organisation's accreditation status or part thereof.

A decision to suspend and/or withdraw an organisation's accreditation can have a major impact on both its employer and employees and therefore GVCS does not take such decisions lightly. Both suspensions and withdrawals could either be self-imposing (voluntary) or imposed by GVCS, as described in sections 4 and 7 of this document.

GVCS procedure PD 21 "Handling of Complaints and Appeals" sets out the process that must be followed by a client wanting to appeal against a suspension or withdrawal of their accreditation.

4. Suspension of Accreditation

4.1 Suspension of accreditation means that accreditation is temporarily made invalid for the full scope of accreditation of an organisation, or part thereof. Suspension of an organisation may result from either:

4.1.1 Voluntary suspension for all or part of the scope of accreditation, which is normally requested by an organisation for reasons which includes, but is not limited to:

- Loss of all technical signatories or competent staff members;
- Relocation of the organisation, part thereof or movement/change of equipment that may have an impact on the results produced;
- Restructuring or changes that affects the organisation's ability to produce reliable results;
- A breakdown of the organisations quality management system;
- Any other reason that might compromise the integrity of the results produced by the organisation or compliance with the accreditation requirements;
- Where during an assessment or special investigation, GVCS finds that the organisation no longer complies with accreditation requirements; GVCS may give the organisation the opportunity to self-impose suspension;
- Any other circumstances that GVCS may deem appropriate warranting the suspension of an organisation.

The organisation must apply to the Scheme Manager in writing, with valid reasons and the effective date, to be placed under suspension. Organisations that are placed in voluntary suspension shall give an undertaking to adequately address the circumstances that caused the request for suspension within three months of the effective date of suspension.

The Scheme Manager may approve an organisation's written request, if received prior to the deadline and containing valid reasons, to extend the period for the clearance of non-conformances. (Refer to 6.1.2 (i)).

4.1.2 Suspension imposed by GVCS at any time, for all or part of the scope of accreditation, the reasons of which may include any or all of the above mentioned under 4.1.1, as well as, but not limited to:

- An organisation's failure to adequately address to the satisfaction of GVCS, all findings raised against the organisation;
- An organisation's failure to submit corrective actions within timelines as specified by GVCS;
- Misuse or misrepresentation of an organisations scope of accreditation e.g. where accreditation is claimed for scopes not covered by its approved schedule of accreditation;
- Non-payment of accreditation fees;
- Non-compliance with GVCS Accreditation requirements;
- Changes within the organisation;
- An organisation providing certification services against standard used by GVCS for accrediting an organisation;
- The negative outcome of a complaints investigation against the organisation;
- The organisation operates in a manner that brings accreditation or GVCS into disrepute;
- Any other circumstances that GVCS may deem appropriate warranting the suspension of an organisation.

5. Reasons for Suspension of Accreditation

5.1 Suspension for non-compliance with GVCS accreditation requirements

5.1.1 GVCCS has the right to place the accredited organisation under suspension with immediate effect for non-compliance with GVCS policies, relevant accreditation and / or regulatory requirements as specified in the various accreditation standards and requirements. The organisation shall be notified in writing of such suspension. Non-compliance with GVCS requirements includes but is not limited to:

- Misuse or misrepresentation of the GVCS Accreditation Symbol and/or combined IAS mark;
- Accredited organisations providing certification / accreditation services to any standard used as a basis for accrediting organisations (e.g. ISO/IEC 17024 or ISO 17021), as this behaviour of the accredited organisation will place GVCS, against its will, in the unacceptable situation of having to provide the same service that an accredited organisation performs.

Note: *It is accepted that an accredited organization (CB) may have to assess subcontractors to confirm that they meet the CBs' requirements, which may include accreditation standards such as e.g. ISO/IEC 17024 or ISO 17021. Documentation issued to subcontractors as a result of a successful assessment should clearly state that this is only for the purposes of the subcontract and is not certification or accreditation.*

- The organisation operates in any manner that brings accreditation and / or GVCS into disrepute.

5.2 *Suspension for exceeding the corrective action timeframe*

- 5.2.1 GVCS has the right to elect by means of written notification, to place the accredited organisation under suspension for exceeding the stipulated deadline for submitting corrective actions (by 51 working days). The Scheme Manager may approve an organisation's written request, if received prior to the deadline and containing valid reasons, to extend the period for the clearance of non-conformances.

5.3 *Suspension for inadequately addressing non-conformances to GVCS satisfaction*

- 5.3.1 GVCS has the right to elect by means of written notification, to place the accredited organisation under suspension for failing to provide satisfactory evidence that non-conformances were adequately addressed and corrective action implemented.

Evidence of this will be cleared by the assessment team, reviewed and if satisfied, endorsed by the Scheme Committee as may be required.

5.4 *Suspension for non-payment of fees*

- 5.4.1 GVCS has the right to elect by means of written notification, to place the accredited organisation under suspension for non-payment of accreditation fees or any portion thereof, unless alternative arrangement/s has been made with the Accounts Department within 60 days of the date of the original invoice.

- 5.4.2 GVCS shall re-instate the accreditation of an organisation upon receipt of payment of the outstanding amounts due to GVCS, within three months after being suspended.

5.5 *Suspension due to changes within the organisation*

- 5.5.1 Organisations that are due to undergo any significant changes that will affect their competency, such as a change in physical location, loss of approved technical signatories or significant revisions to their quality system, are required to notify GVCS in writing at least four (4) weeks prior to any such changes.

- 5.5.2 Failure to notify GVCS within the stated period may result in suspension, and possibly require an on-site assessment by GVCS, the costs of which will be for the account of the organisation.

- 5.5.3 A change in physical location may mean a change from one room to another or from one building to another. The organisation shall take into consideration the impact the change in location will have on its ability to produce reliable results.

- 5.5.4 In the case of change of location, the organisation will be required to go under suspension until they are able to verify their capability in line with their scope of accreditation. Validation records must contain evidence of acceptable comparative data from before and after the move. In addition, where environmental conditions such as temperature and humidity are critical for the accredited parameters, records of such conditions at the new premises shall be maintained and made available on request by GVCS. GVCS may decide to conduct an on-site assessment, to verify that the original accreditation requirements have been maintained, the costs of which shall be for the account of the organisation.

- 5.5.5 In the case of loss of all approved GVCS technical signatories, the organisation shall be placed immediately under suspension. In the case of loss of approved technical

signatories for a specific scope, that specific scope will be suspended. The organisation shall remain under suspension until such time that GVCS has verified the competence of any new proposed technical signatory for the relevant accredited scope(s).

5.6 *Suspension due to negative outcome of a complaint investigation*

- 5.6.1 GVCS has the right to elect by means of written notification, to place an accredited organisation under suspension in the case of a negative outcome of a complaint investigation, where the organisation cannot provide evidence to GVCS that they have satisfactorily addressed a complaint raised against them, in accordance with GVCS procedure PD21 "Handling of Complaints and Appeals".

6. **Withdrawal of Accreditation**

- 6.1 Withdrawal of accreditation means that accreditation is permanently made invalid for the full scope of accreditation of an organisation, or part thereof. Withdrawal of accreditation may result from either:

6.1.1 self-imposed (voluntary) withdrawal of all or part of the scope of accreditation;

6.1.2 withdrawal imposed by GVCS, the reasons of which include, but are not limited to:

- i) Failure of an organisation to request, in writing and with valid reason, that a period of suspension be extended, and this has been approved by the relevant Field Manager.
- ii) Failure of an organisation to adequately correct the issues which resulted in suspension of accreditation during the suspension period, and provide GVCS with evidence of the appropriate corrective action and implementation thereof.
- iii) Failure of an organisation to settle outstanding fees during a suspension period. In this case legal action will be taken and all associated costs involved will be for the account of the defaulting organisation.
- iv) Failure of an accredited organisation to comply with the "Terms and Conditions of Accreditation."
- v) The organisation is placed under provisional or final liquidation or sequestration or judicial management or business rescue proceedings.

- 6.2 In the case of Certification Bodies (CB), withdrawal of accreditation has consequences on the customers of the ATO/AQBs. GVCS requires the ATO/AQBs to provide their customers with information on the withdrawal of their accreditation and on its consequences.

7. **Process of Implementing a Suspension or Withdrawal**

7.1 The CEO may delegate the authority to suspend accreditation to the Scheme Manager.

7.2 Withdrawal of accreditation imposed by GVCS shall be authorised by the GVCS CEO on written recommendation and with valid reasons by the relevant Scheme Manager.

7.3 GVCS will issue a letter of suspension or withdrawal, as is relevant, detailing amongst others:

- The effective date of the suspension / withdrawal;
- The reasons for suspension / withdrawal;
- The extent of the suspension / withdrawal;
- The implications and conditions during the suspension period / withdrawal;

- The conditions for re-instatement in the case of suspensions.
- 7.4 During the period of suspension the "Terms and Conditions of Accreditation" will remain valid subject to the conditions contained in this document as well as in GVCS document PD31 "Use of Logo and accreditation marks".
- 7.5 A record of the reasons for suspension or withdrawal, the duration of suspension and a record that all suspension and withdrawal procedures have been adhered to will be maintained by the Scheme Manager.

8. Conditions of Suspension or Withdrawal of Accreditation

- 8.1 An accredited organisation shall, upon suspension or withdrawal of GVCS accreditation, immediately cease to issue certificates and any other materials displaying the GVCS accreditation symbol, the IAS/GVCS or IAS/GVCS combined mark or containing references to GVCS accreditation. In the case of partial suspension, reports shall clearly identify the scopes for which accreditation cannot be claimed. Failure to comply with this requirement is a criminal offence and can result in prosecution. Refer to PD31 "Use of Logo and accreditation marks".
- 8.2 Once an organisation has been placed under suspension or its accreditation is withdrawn for any reason, the organisation's details will be removed from the GVCS website.
- 8.3 Where accreditation has been withdrawn, the organisation is required to return their certificate and schedule of accreditation to GVCS as soon as the withdrawal is effective.
- 8.4 An organisation may not be under suspension for longer than 3 months without the written authorisation of the Scheme Manager. It is the organisation's responsibility to apply, in writing, with valid reasons, and prior to the end of the 3 months period, to the Scheme Manager to extend their suspension for each additional one-month period, but for no longer than 9 additional months, after which accreditation will be withdrawn.
- 8.5 Where an application for extension of the suspension period has not been received, GVCS has the right to elect by means of written notification, to withdraw all or part of the organisation's scope of accreditation. Withdrawal of accreditation will result in the organisation having to re-apply for accreditation as a new applicant with the associated costs and penalties. (Refer to PD35 "GVCS Fees")
- 8.6 The organisation shall be responsible for all costs associated with a suspension or withdrawal, such as any additional on-site visits or re-instatement visits as required by GVCS, and any costs associated the handling of an appeal against such adverse decisions (refer to PD21 "Handling of Complaints and Appeals"). Organisations remain liable for all fees whilst in suspension. If withdrawal of accreditation has occurred then a pro-rata percentage of their annual fees are still due to GVCS for the financial year. If the organisation was assessed in the same financial year as their withdrawal, they will also be liable for the travel and subsistence costs of the assessment.

9. Re-instatement of Accreditation

- 9.1 *Re-instatement of suspended organisations*
- 9.1.1 An organisation under suspension is required to submit to GVCS evidence of appropriate corrective action taken, prior to the end of the suspension period.
- 9.1.2 GVCS shall evaluate the non-conformances/reasons that led to the suspension, during the re-instatement assessment and subsequent assessments if necessary.
- 9.1.3 Where an organisation has received Scheme Manager approval for a suspension period of longer than 6 months, the re-instatement visit will be treated as a full re-assessment.

- 9.1.4 Once an organisation has satisfactorily addressed the issues which resulted in suspension of accreditation, accreditation may be re-instated on approval by the Scheme Manager and, where a re-instatement visit was required, on approval by the Scheme Committee.
- 9.1.5 An organisation that is under suspension may be required to have an on-site assessment, at the discretion of the Scheme Manager, where the reasons for the suspension indicated that the competency of the organisation was affected. A positive recommendation by the assessment team is required prior to re-instatement of accreditation. The extent of such an assessment will be determined by the Scheme Manager based on the reasons for suspension, and the associated risk. All costs will be for the account of the organisation.
- 9.1.6 Notification of re-instatement of accreditation will be sent to the organisation, detailing the scope that the re-instatement applies to.
- 9.1.7 The organisation's details and accreditation certificate will be restored on the GVCS website once accreditation has been re-instated.
- 9.1.8 GVCS reserves the right not to reinstate accreditation of an organisation should GVCS successfully prosecute the organisation in terms of the Accreditation Act, or obtain any other judgement, order or restraint including an interdict against such an organisation that operates, amongst others, in a manner that brings accreditation or GVCS into disrepute.

9.2 *Re-application for Accreditation*

- 9.2.1 Once an organisation's accreditation has been withdrawn it cannot be re-instated. The organisation will have to re-apply for accreditation as a new applicant with the associated costs and shall be liable for all outstanding fees from their previous accreditation prior to its application being processed. The previous accreditation number will be made obsolete, and the organisation will be issued with a new GVCS accreditation number once accredited.