



RABQSA INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASE

ISO/IEC 17024:2003 *General requirements for bodies operating certification of persons*

the new era of personnel certification...

Following recent advice to our respective key stakeholders and customers regarding the merger of QSA International, the Quality Society of Australasia (QSA) with the US-based Registrar Accreditation Board (RAB), I am pleased to advise that our progress in the transition from independent organisations to '**RABQSA International**', the world's leading accredited personnel certification body, is moving rapidly to conclusion.

The new organisation will come into effect 1 January 2005. Principal offices will be located in Milwaukee and Sydney, with Joint Venture offices located in Tokyo, Taipei, Hanoi, Kuala Lumpur and Auckland. Expansion into Mexico and Canada is planned for 2005.

This is the first in a series of News Releases that will provide you with a progressive update on the merger transition plan, and the service profile and operations of RABQSA International in 2005.

Background....

ISO/IEC 17024:2003 *General Requirements for Bodies Operating Certification of Persons* was released 1 April 2003. The impact of this new Standard on the personnel certification industry has been profound.

The unique benefit of the Standard is that, for the first time, the issue of personnel competence has been taken seriously. At the core of the Standard is the requirement for the Accredited Personnel Certification Body (RABQSA) to determine Industry's requirements, then define, measure and objectively examine personnel competence. The down line benefits of clearly articulating industry's expectations of personnel performance, is that the alignment of the competence of the person to the achievement of defined business outcomes, is now the essential first step in the certification process.

Determining and examining competence is about the recognition of persons with the required knowledge, skills, personal attributes and qualifications, to satisfy industry's requirements. This will have a significant and positive impact on business performance, and the fundamental value and relevance of personnel certification.

Today....

To date the following outcomes have been achieved:

- **Governance.** The RAB and QSA Boards of Directors have approved the RABQSA 2005 Business Plan. Final endorsement by ASQ is expected 5 November 2004.

- **Stakeholder Engagement.** The establishment and operation of the RABQSA Scheme Committee representing key stakeholders specific to each personnel and training certification scheme. The Chairman is Mr. Peter Reeves. The Scheme Committee will be a standing committee formally established in the new organisation's structure, and will be supported by sub-committees established as required to facilitate the design and development of personnel and training certification schemes.

Initially, sub-committees will be established to engage the management and product certification bodies, certified training providers, and current scheme development; QMS, EMS, Food Safety etc.

- **Systems.** New data management, business management, finance, and personnel and training certification systems, based on the requirements of ISO9001:2000 and ISO17024:2003, have been established and are currently undergoing testing and validation.
- **Personnel Certification**

Examination of Knowledge. The release of the Training Provider and Examiner Certification Scheme (TPECS) Ed. 4, updated to reflect the requirements of ISO17024 and interfaced into the personnel and training certification systems. Forty (40) Asia Pacific-based Training Providers are now certified to TPECS. Refer to the QSA web site www.qsanet.com for information on TPECS.

Examination of Skill. The design and trial application of a competency-based Skill Examination (witnessed audit) developed for application in the workplace and interfaced into the personnel certification system.

Examination of Personal Attributes. The design and development of PAAS Master®, RABQSA's leading-edge psychometric assessment designed to examine the personal attributes specific to each scheme and scope, and interfaced into the personnel certification system.

The considerations of the Scheme Committee, in engaging key stakeholders and defining competence specific to the scheme under development, is the most important step in the new certification system and will replace the current examination panels and various certification boards established under EN45013:1989. Select representatives from Industry, certification bodies and certified training providers will be invited to join the Scheme Committee and/or to provide technical advice to the RABQSA Scheme Examiners as appropriate. Technical Advisors will be sourced worldwide and will operate through an innovative e based medium.

The establishment of the Scheme Committee (and sub-committees) will allow RABQSA to 'tailor' specific schemes for industry sectors and organisations. This is an innovative step in moving away from the generic auditing schemes we have in place today, to a certification system that will provide for industry's requirements and changing needs.

Examining Skill is about witnessing the performance of the person under realistic operational conditions ...

On the issue of examining skill, defining the required competency in measurable terms is relatively easy. The difficult task is the examination of the applicant against each competency under defined auditing conditions i.e., on site. The traditional approach under EN45013 was to rely on 'experience', 'number of audits', analysis of audit reports and reference/auditee verification, against QSA and RAB prescribed criteria. This methodology is at best subjective and at worst does not truly examine skill and the application of acquired knowledge, which by definition requires on-site examination of the auditor demonstrating specific competence.

RABQSA will engage the services of competent skill examiners (yes, we have to define not only the competence required of the certified person but also the competence required by the examiner!) to provide the examination of the applicant's performance against defined RABQSA competency standards.

Initially the examiners (using management system auditing as the example) will need to demonstrate RAB or QSA certification as a Lead Auditor in the appropriate scheme and scope, and Certificate IV Assessment and Workplace Training or equivalent. The competency requirement may increase to include RABQSA certified Business Improvement Auditor (refer TPECS) mid 2005. RABQSA will seek Expression of Interest (EOI) from suitable Lead Auditors in November.

Of the formal and informal complaints RAB and QSA receive each year, 90% relate, not to the auditor's knowledge and skill, but to his or her conduct on site!

QSA has been examining personal attributes since the release of ISO19011:2002. The Standard details those attributes; *open-minded, perceptive* etc, that effective and efficient auditors should be capable of demonstrating. Late 2003, QSA reviewed a number of international psychometric HR models to determine a simple e based product that could be shaped to achieve the examination requirement. Culture Map Limited New Zealand was selected as the preferred supplier and over the following three months worked with QSA in designing an appropriate examination. The result was the Personal Attribute Assessment System (PAAS Master®).

PAAS Master® is a simple e-based on line examination consisting of 85 psychometric questions, which examine 12 personal attributes. The attributes were determined following extensive national and international research and interview with the aim of determining what, in terms of personal attributes, separates the more effective and efficient auditors. Software matrix-analysis of each answer determines whether the applicant has the potential to demonstrate the required attributes. Essentially, the first six attributes are 'shall have's' with attributes 7 – 12 'should have's'. The latter attributes being generally accepted as an indication of the applicant's potential to add value to his or her performance in terms of their approach, conduct and application to a given situation. The first attribute; *Ethical*, will remain subject to the new RABQSA Code of Conduct

PAAS Master® is not a 'go/no-go' evaluation. Simply, it will indicate to RABQSA where an applicant may experience difficulty in terms of demonstrating specific attributes and will be considered in relation to the other competencies of skill, knowledge and qualification. Where RABQSA may have a concern, the applicant will be required to attend an interview with a RABQSA scheme examiner. The examiner will validate the PAAS Master® result and recommend appropriate professional development. It may be a simple case of the applicant misreading the examination! In the most extreme case RABQSA may decline certification.

PAAS Master® was formally trialled throughout March and April with the first commercial application (AgriQuality New Zealand) completed in July. The system has proven to be very accurate.

The new Criteria ...

Designing new criteria and examination methodology is one thing, transitioning 10000+ certified persons from the combined RAB and QSA certification programs to the new accredited 17024 schemes is another matter!

Initial points to note

- Pending the successful completion of the merger transition plan and final executive approval, the new accredited (ISO17024) certification criteria; QMS, EMS, OH&S and Food Safety, and TPECS Ed. 5, will be introduced 1 January 2005.
- RABQSA will continue to offer the non-accredited schemes, QMS, EMS, OH&S, and Food Safety, and Aged Care, Waste, HVAS, B-Qual, and Consultant etc, until YE2006 at which time all schemes will transition to the accredited competency based schemes.
- Pending Industry's requirement, all new scheme design and development from 1 January 2005 will be against the accredited ISO17024 model. The Japanese Government (JFFIC), Sydney Airports Corporation and AgriQuality New Zealand have moved quickly to engage RABQSA on scheme development projects.
- The certification period for the accredited schemes will be four years. Throughout this period RABQSA will conduct surveillance examinations (an e-based knowledge examination as appropriate to each scheme) to ensure that, in terms of knowledge, the certified persons remain competent.
- Essentially, applicants seeking certification or recertification from 1 January 2005, to one or more of the accredited schemes, will be required to achieve the appropriate competency requirements specific to the scheme, including the examination of:

Knowledge. Certificate of Attainment from a RABQSA Certified Training Provider. Certificates of Attainment from RAB accredited training providers will be recognised as meeting the knowledge-based competency with the addition of a 'gap' examination. The 'gap' (the difference in the competency profile against the requirements of TPECS) will be developed by the RABQSA Training Provider sub-scheme committee. All Training Providers seeking agreement to examine knowledge will be required to transition to the TPECS no later than YE2006.

Skill. Certificate of Attainment from an RABQSA Certified Skill Examiner

Personal Attributes. Successful completion of PAAS Master®, specific to the appropriate scheme.

Qualification. Recognised qualifications reflecting the additional competencies required for the scheme and/scope of certification.

Agreement to the RABQSA Code of Conduct and related administrative requirements.

- In situations where an applicant has applied for certification to an accredited scheme and RABQSA is unable to examine Skill, the applicant will be certified (non-accredited), pending the Skill examination.

The new application, criteria and related administrative requirements, will be available as read only documents for your consideration, on the RAB and QSA web sites from 1 December 2004.

The above profile is constantly being reviewed and will be amended as appropriate to ensure a smooth international transition that will not disadvantage your current certification.

The fee structure ...

The current fee structures are under consideration. Fees will be prescribed specific to each accredited and non-accredited scheme internationally by region and/or country. It is expected that the skill and personal attribute examination will add an additional cost to the Application Fee for each accredited scheme, adjusted to reflect local economic conditions around the world.

While the Application Fee will increase, there will no longer be a requirement to attend costly CPD courses and conferences, and the amount of documentation required to maintain certification will be nearly non-existent, saving time and expense.

There remains considerable work to be completed in the development and rollout of the transition plan. QSA's and RAB's investment in the process of change and innovation is considerable. The outcome in terms of improved personnel performance, designed to achieve Industry's expectations, will provide a substantial contribution to business improvement.

Meetings; management system and product certification bodies, and training provider sub-scheme committees, are being programmed for December 2004. Details to be advised.

Further detail to follow in the next update.

RABQSA International, a non-profit (not-for-profit) organisation, is one of the world's leading certification organisations for the provision of personnel certification and professional development. A wide variety of businesses employ our certified persons for the purposes of improving performance.

For further information regarding the Standard and RABQSA's transition plan, please contact Ms. Toni Smith on tsmith@qsanet.com or +61 2 88336408.