



INTERNATIONAL SEED TESTING ASSOCIATION (ISTA)

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Directive ISTA internal policy to assign an auditor for a specific audit

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SCOPE

This document explains the policy and criteria defined by the ISTA Executive Committee on how to assign system and technical auditors to act on behalf of the Association and perform ISTA on-site assessment of the seed testing laboratories and sampling entities seeking ISTA accreditation.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Acc-D-07-ISTA Accreditation and Scope of Accreditation Policy

Acc-P-01-ISTA Auditors Qualification and Responsibilities

Acc-P-02-Procedure for ISTA auditors for the on-site assessment – audit

Acc-P-03-Travel refund regulations

Acc-F-11 Auditor Contract Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Code

RESPONSIBILITIES

HoAT: for communication the policy to the auditors and for monitoring that the policy is followed

SG: for supporting HoAT regarding any query related to this policy

ABBREVIATIONS

HoAT: Head of Accreditation and Technical Department

SG: Secretary General

PROCESS DESCRIPTION

The selection of an auditor for a specific audit is regulated in the ISTA Procedures and the individual Contract between an auditor and the ISTA Secretariat.

An audit team of two auditors, a system auditor and a technical auditor, usually conducts ISTA audits. The system auditor is the lead auditor and can be an ISTA Secretariat staff member or an ISTA contracted system auditor. The technical auditor is chosen for his/her expertise and familiarity with the area(s) of seed testing being undertaken in the laboratory/sampling entity being audited.

ISTA contracted auditors will copy Accreditation and Technical Department into any communication with the laboratories, during the re-accreditation process.

SYSTEM / LEAD AUDITORS

Qualifications

- Experience in quality assurance
- Training in quality management and auditing against relevant ISO and ISTA Standards
- Certification and registration as Quality System Auditor or Lead Auditor with an internationally recognized quality assurance body. For contracted lead auditors, registration under an internationally recognized scheme is desirable
- Ability to communicate effectively in English both in writing and orally
- Suitable language skills to lead an audit in a significant portion of laboratories represented in ISTA
- Preferably a MSc Degree or equivalent in agriculture/biology or other relevant subjects
- Preferably knowledge of seed sampling and testing

TECHNICAL AUDITORS

Qualifications

- Experience in managing the technical aspects of seed sampling and testing
- Experience in quality assurance
- Experience in auditing seed testing laboratories/sampling entities
- Demonstrate knowledge in applying the ISTA Rules
- Training in quality management
- Training in auditing by recognized organisations
- Ability to communicate effectively in English both in writing and orally

Ability to communicate effectively in languages different from their mother tongue and in addition to English is desirable.

Contracting ISTA Auditors

The experts are invited to apply to become an auditor as a first step in their collaboration with ISTA and ISTA Accreditation and Technical Department.

Prior to approval contracted auditors' applicants, having the necessary qualifications, are required to successfully complete ISTA auditor training and evaluation programme.

Approved auditors are listed in the Database of the Accreditation and Technical Department. The records in the database contain details on language knowledge and qualifications. This and other relevant information in the database are regularly updated.

Code of Conduct for ISTA Auditors

The ISTA auditors are obliged to notify ISTA on any conflict of interest that may affect their ability to perform an impartial and fair audit.

By accepting appointment for an ISTA audit, auditors confirm that they have not been involved in any previous consultancy related to this laboratory and that they will not provide consultancy to resolve the non-conformities of the laboratory.

Appointing of audit team members

The auditors are selected based on technical expertise, according to the needs of the specific audit/s.

The scope of accreditation claimed in the application form for (re)accreditation determines the technical expertise required.

If an auditor considers that he/she does not have the required technical expertise in relation to the laboratory/sampling entity's scope of accreditation, he/she will advise the ISTA Secretariat who will select a replacement.

Laboratories/sampling entities are informed about the composition of the audit team in advance and have the right to object to the appointment of the audit team. If possible, a new audit team will be appointed. If a suitable alternative cannot be identified, or the grounds for objection are unreasonable, the ISTA Secretariat reserves the right to appoint the auditors originally selected.

No auditor (system or technical) shall perform audits in the country in which he/she has been employed in the seed testing area. This policy is valid for 6 years after the employment in the country has ceased. After a 6 years' period, an audit can be planned in the specific area with the approval of the ECOM-AWG.

No auditor (system or technical) shall perform audits in seed testing organisations in which he/she was previously employed. This policy is valid for 6 years after the employment in the particular organisation has ceased. After a 6 years' period, an audit can be planned in the specific organisation with the approval of the ECOM-AWG.

No successive audit shall be performed by the same system or technical auditor, unless it is not possible to arrange different auditors. Auditors coming from the industry will be limited to auditing governmental laboratories only.

Travel arrangement

Travel arrangements must be made according to an economic evaluation of options that are considered reasonable and feasible. This shall consider required resources and due consideration of safety and comfort.

Prior to any flight or accommodation booking the proposal must be approved by the ISTA SG. The booking is made by the responsible for the audit's administration in collaboration with the travel agency selected by ISTA and after consultation with the auditor concerned.

Means of transport

Train: first class train tickets and seat reservation. Participation in schemes for reduced fares shall be taken into consideration (Halbtax, Bahncard). Although first class is accepted, auditors are invited to travel in a cheapest class, whenever this guarantees a good level of safety and comfort.

Air: Economy tickets are used for flights less than 6 hours, ≥ 6 hrs in one single flight Eco Premium can be used and ≥ 10 hrs business class can be used.

Other public transport: As required in specific situations. Preference may be given to rely on local counterparts to assist in on-site transport. The use of taxis shall be limited to short distances, or where/when other public transport is not available or appropriate, if there are safety concerns.

Private vehicle: The use of private vehicles is reimbursed at a fixed rate per kilometer travelled. The shortest reasonable journey shall be given preference. Parking expenses in relation with the official duty trip are reimbursed. Long term parking, e.g. at airports shall be limited to exceptional cases, where other alternatives are not in line with the principle above. They should be authorized in advance by the ISTA Secretariat.

As many as possible of the expenses for the contracted system auditors performing the audit (for example settling personal travel costs and hotel bills for technical auditors), will be paid by the ISTA Secretariat prior to the travel.

The other expenses paid by the contracted auditor will be reimbursed after the audit after completion of the appropriate expenses claim form and approval by the ISTA Secretariat.

Accommodation

Middle class hotels in the range of 3 stars are preferred.

Hotel booking is arranged by the ISTA Secretariat in close collaboration with the audited laboratory and the travel agency.

Any additional accommodation costs for activities not associated with the audit will be paid by the auditor.

Meals

Persons travelling for audits are entitled to three meals per day, equivalent in cost to that offered by the accommodation authorised for the audit stay. A glass of wine or a beer per meal is accepted.

Excessive costs must be avoided (e.g. very high-class restaurant, beverage).

Insurance

For System Auditors who are permanent employees of ISTA, ISTA provides travel cancellation insurance for long distance trips and covers the immediate costs arising from trips that cannot take place as scheduled. For contracted ISTA Auditors: the auditors are required to arrange the insurance independently and confirm with the Secretariat that insurance has been arranged.

Other costs

Other travel related expenses are refunded where their immediate relation to the audit trip can be evidenced or is obvious (visa fees, airport levies, tourist levies, road fees, medical prophylaxis, laundry when absolutely required etc.).

Audit duration

The audit duration depends on the laboratory/sampling entity's scope of accreditation. Usually the duration of an ISTA audit is 1 day (for laboratories with standard tests and sampling entities) or 1.5 day (e.g. for laboratories with standard tests and GMO testing, for laboratories with an extensive accreditation scope).

Audits tour

Usually two or more audits (maximum five) are undertaken together with the same auditors; the audits are planned as much as is possible in the same area of the world. There are well founded circumstances where a single audit only is performed.

Re-audits

In the case where auditors cannot collect enough evidence that proves the suitability of the quality management system and/or the competence of the laboratory/sampling entity and where auditors are not confident that the laboratory/sampling entity is able to address the non-conformities in an appropriate way, they may request to undergo a re-audit. A re-audit can be also requested by the ISTA Accreditation and Technical Department. Such requests will be submitted to the ISTA Executive Committee for approval prior to be being made.

The laboratory/sampling entity must cooperate in any pre - or post-accreditation audit or assessment, as required by the ISTA Executive Committee, and permit access to the premises, equipment, staff and records as required.

The re-audit is performed by a different auditors' team, unless it is not possible to arrange different auditors.

The ISTA auditors are not allowed to travel to perform ISTA audits in any country / distinct economy where they are advised against non-essential travel by the Swiss official site *Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA*, and/or the country which the ISTA auditors belong to due to unpredictable security situations.

ANNEX

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DISTRIBUTION LIST

Posted at the ISTA website

REVISION HISTORY

Version #	Changes
1.1	conditions defined for traveling to country/distinct economy where there are official advises against non-essential travel
1.2	Sampling entity added New policy for the auditor's travel