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UPU quality of service certification methodology 2023–2025

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Berne 2023

Ash/Pro

I. Introduction

The UPU quality management certification system was developed in line with Beijing Congress resolution C 20/1999. It was launched worldwide in 2003, on the basis of a methodology and two questionnaires. The original goal was to raise designated operator (DO) awareness of quality management issues in order to improve postal services. The methodology was revised in 2005, 2007, 2010, 2014 and 2018.

With traditional mail on the decline, e-commerce volumes on the rise, and heavy competition in the postal market, DOs are facing new demands and need to achieve ever better performance. It has therefore been necessary to revise the UPU quality of service certification methodology, taking it from an initial phase aimed primarily at raising awareness to a more rigorous certification phase, based on industry and market needs.

II. Aims

The principal aim of this revised methodology is to evaluate not only the extent to which quality management procedures are applied in postal enterprise structures, but also the way in which postal operations are organized and carried out, as this forms the basis for the ongoing improvement of the international postal network.

DOs that have an internal quality of service assurance system for cross-border mail products and services can request that their system be assessed by engaging in the UPU certification process.

This UPU certification is a means of continuous quality of service improvement and allows DOs to evaluate the effectiveness of their end-to-end quality system and operational processes, as well as the management of their EDI messages, and the reliability of their transportation and distribution network.

Based on the satisfaction of end customers, this evaluation also examines the interface with internal customers (including the inquiry and complaint system and the involvement of staff), as well as with stakeholders such as airlines, Customs, and safety and security authorities.

III. Certification procedure

This certification applies to operational and quality management for the international service (letter post and parcels), and aims to provide a level playing field to assess DOs, regardless of a country's level of development.

As detailed below, the evaluation is based on the questionnaire responses (including prerequisites), performance results and on-site audit.

1 *Application – prerequisites and questionnaire*

Each year at the beginning of the last quarter, the International Bureau (IB) sends all DOs this methodology document, along with the certification questionnaire. A DO wishing to be certified first needs to assess whether it fulfils all the prerequisites (indicated in the questionnaire and listed below). It must then send the IB a request for certification, accompanied by a completed questionnaire and the required supporting documents.

The IB will analyze the request. The DO must meet the prerequisites and obtain a minimum of 43 points (out of a total of **115** points) in order to continue with the certification procedure. If the information provided in the questionnaire is unsatisfactory, the IB may request further details.

If a service does not apply to the DO concerned and is not a prerequisite, the related point(s) will be awarded.

The following are prerequisites to launching a certification process (questions requiring positive answers):

- Defined plan with collection times, handover times and quality targets for all collection points in the country (question 1.1.1)
- Quality standards for international products documented and published (post office, website, etc.) (question 1.1.2)
- OE critical entry time for outbound international mail defined in accordance with the domestic collection and processing system (question 1.2.1.1)

- Clearly defined operational plan for processing outgoing international mail arriving at the OE (question 1.2.2.1)
- Label barcodes compliant with UPU standards (question 1.2.2.5)
- Structured quality control system and programme for performance established within the OE (question 1.2.2.8)
- Clearly defined operational plan for processing inbound international mail arriving at the OE (question 1.3.1.1)
- Use of specific defined times for inbound operations (latest arrival time, critical entry time, critical scan time, etc.) (question 1.3.1.3)
- Clear operational plan defined for the processing of mail (question 1.3.2.1)
- Delivery of letter-post items and parcels offered to customers through different channels (question 1.4.1)
- Use of EMSEVT V3.0 to provide track-and-trace capabilities for postal items that are barcoded according to UPU standards for parcels and letter-post items (question 2.1.1.1)
- Exchange of ITMATT (question 2.1.1.2)
- Exchange of PREDES (question 2.1.2.1)
- Exchange of RESDES (question 2.1.2.2)
- Sending of CARDIT (question 2.1.3.1)
- Use of the UPU's International Postal System or other (question 2.2.1.1)
- Use of the UPU's Customs Declaration System or other (question 2.2.1.2)
- Use of the UPU-agreed Internet-Based Inquiry System, Registered Articles Inquiry System, or other (question 2.2.1.3)
- Clearly defined customs clearance process for international mail (question 3.1.1)
- Customs sorting of inbound mail according to WCO recommendations (in compliance with the International Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures and Revised Kyoto Convention) (question 3.1.2)
- Provision of the timetable for the transport of mail between the airport and the postal operator's facilities (question 3.2.2)
- Provision of transport schedules (from all included countries) for inbound mail (all categories) (question 3.2.4)
- International mail processes defined, mapped and documented for all international products from posting to delivery (for outbound) and from arrival of the aircraft up to delivery (for inbound) (question 4.1.1)
- Quality of service objectives for international parcels and untracked letters defined (question 4.1.2)
- Structured quality control system and programme for quality performance in place (question 4.1.4)
- Results of the quality controls used as a basis for corrective actions or bonus payment systems (service-level agreement) with carriers (question 4.2.2)
- Updated data in UPU Letter Post and Parcel Post Compendia, EMS Operational Guide, PRIME standards manual, and other such publications (question 4.2.5)
- Written instructions available for staff on dispatch opening times, cut-off times, dispatch closing times, and transport loading and departure times (question 4.2.6)

2 *Quality of service performance results*

In addition to the responses provided in the questionnaire and in order to ascertain whether the DO is a viable candidate for certification, the IB will gather and review the DO's annual performance results from various sources: IB reports, electronic data interchange (EDI) messages, and performance measurement systems used by the UPU. This data will be summarized in a special document ("results sheet") presenting the DO's quality of service performance.

The maximum score attainable in the results sheet is **57** points.

Specifically, the performance measurement will include the following:

- The performance results obtained through measurement of outward mail (leg 1) and inward mail (leg 3), and from global monitoring systems (GMS STAR, QCS Mail, QCS Mail Big Data, IQRS or any other UPU-authorized systems compliant with the GMS Technical Design or other applicable system);
- EDI performance for different mail processes, including track and trace of accountable items, exchange of mail, and transfer of mail; and
- Internet-Based Inquiry System data.

3 *On-site audit*

If the DO is found to be a viable candidate for certification and meets all the prerequisites, the IB will ask the applicant to pay the fee required to launch the certification process. A UPU consultant will then be sent to the country to verify the information provided in the questionnaire and check operations on the ground.

The consultant's on-site audit will last three to five working days, depending on the results of the questionnaire. This audit is used to determine the extent to which the operational and quality management requirements are fulfilled. The audit findings are designed to assess the effectiveness of the operational processes and quality management, and to identify opportunities for improvement.

During this mission, the consultant will check the responses to the questionnaire and make any necessary corrections based on the information collected at all levels of the operator. The audit will include the DO's international sorting centre(s), office(s) of exchange and other relevant facilities.

IV. Obligations of the designated operator

- During the analysis of the questionnaire:
 - Appoint a national certification coordinator;
 - Answer any follow-up questions from the IB within one week.
- Before the consultant arrives for the on-site evaluation:
 - Prepare the documentation substantiating the replies to the questionnaire;
 - If the documentation is submitted in a language other than English or French, provide brief summaries of the documentation in one of those languages;
 - Choose the consultant's working language (English or French), appoint a counterpart with a good command of the chosen language, and notify the IB of his/her name and address;
 - Pay the IB an amount which covers the consultant's average mission expenses; if the consultant's mission does not produce the desired results owing to a lack of information or inadequate cooperation from the operator, the same amount must be paid if the operator requests a second mission;
 - Organize the consultant's trip in advance (book suitable hotel accommodation in agreement with the IB, prepare a local team to facilitate his/her work, make means of transport available for visits in the field, etc.).
- During the consultant's mission:
 - Meet the consultant on arrival and provide the local transport needed to accomplish the mission;
 - Allow access to all postal establishments, as requested by the consultant;
 - Provide the consultant with the necessary equipment for the mission (office, small office supplies, photocopying, Internet access, etc.).
- After the evaluation: As necessary, pay the mission expenses of its representative at the official certification award ceremony.

V. International Bureau obligations

The IB will comply with the following procedure and meet the given deadlines:

- Analyze and evaluate replies to the questionnaire and the appropriate documentation and, as necessary, request clarification if the information provided is considered inadequate: four weeks after receipt of the questionnaire.
- Complete the performance summary sheet (results sheet).
- Find and recruit a consultant: four weeks after analysis and audit of the questionnaire.
- Suggest the consultant and the mission dates to the DO requesting certification: one week after the consultant's acceptance of the mission.
- Provide administrative support for the consultant's mission.
- Analyze the mission report: two weeks after receiving it.
- Communicate the results of certification to the DO and, if necessary, to the Chairman of the Quality of Service Group if the DO disputes the findings.
- Prepare the certification diploma.
- Organize official presentation of the diploma.

VI. Financing of certification

4 UPU

Work on analyzing and auditing certification requests will be financed out of the UPU budget.

The Union will also partly finance the organization and implementation of consultants' missions, within the framework of the regional development plan, and notably the regional project on operational efficiency and readiness for e-commerce.

5 Designated operators

The DOs will finance work on preparing replies to the questionnaire, including the necessary documentation and any translations.

They will also contribute to consultants' mission costs. The operators concerned will finance the travel and living expenses of their representatives at the official certification award ceremony.

6 Operators' contribution to consultants' missions

The contribution is set at 7,000 CHF per mission.

To encourage participation by the DOs of the least developed countries, the mission contribution rate is set at 3,000 CHF for those countries.

Details of the account to which this contribution should be paid:

Credit Suisse
P.O. Box 5366
3001 BERNE
SWITZERLAND

Account number: 143996 61-10

SWIFT code: CRESCHZZ80A

IBAN: CH48 0483 5014 3996 6101 0

Clearing: 4835

VII. Levels of certification

The certification system comprises three levels: C (bronze), B (silver) and A (gold). Initial scoring is based on the responses to the questionnaire and the performance results.

7 Level C

The DO must achieve a score of at least 80% (137 out of 172 points) to attain level C (bronze) certification.

8 Level B

The DO must achieve a score of at least 90% (154 out of 172 points) to attain level B (silver) certification.

9 Level A

The DO must achieve a score of at least 95% (163 out of 172 points) to attain level A (gold) certification.

Certificates remain valid for three years. During this three-year period, there will be an annual validation based on actual performance, to ensure that the appropriate standards are maintained.

VIII. Awarding of certificates

On the basis of the consultant's mission report, the responses to the questionnaire and the annual performance results, the IB determines the level of certification and informs the DO and the consultant.

If the DO disputes the findings, it may appeal to the IB, providing material evidence to support its case. If the DO continues to contest the IB's response, the question will be referred to a committee made up of the Chair of the Quality of Service Group, the IB Quality of Service Coordinator, and three members chosen from the membership of the Quality of Service Group to definitively decide on the appropriate level of certification.

IX. Official certification

The IB will invite the DO receiving certification to an official award ceremony attended by senior staff from the DO and the UPU. This ceremony will be held during a CA or POC session or on any other suitable occasion. If the award ceremony cannot be held, the certificate will be presented to the DO by a UPU regional expert or by the local United Nations Development Programme office.

All other DOs will be informed of the certification results on the UPU website.

X. Languages of certification

To ensure a standard level of assessment by consultants, only English or French (as IB working languages) should be used for the certification documentation and by the consultant during the on-site audit (the choice between these two languages lies with the operator). For questionnaires and correspondence on this topic between DOs and the IB, the other UPU languages (Arabic, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish) may be used as usual.