



Prerequisites and levels of certification

| Methodology 2018–2020

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I. Introduction

In resolution C 20/1999, the Beijing Congress instructed:

- the Council of Administration (CA), in conjunction with the Postal Operations Council (POC), to promote the definition of rules and methods permitting evaluation of the quality of service standards attained by all postal administrations;
- the International Bureau (IB) to prepare and apply a common quality evaluation system, comprising follow-up programmes conducted by the UPU and the restricted unions as well as periodic publication of the results obtained by each postal administration.

As part of implementing this resolution, the POC carried out a project entitled “Postal administration certification – International postal service quality management”, designed to encourage designated operators (DOs) to improve quality of service.

Further, the Doha Congress, in resolution C 47/2012, recommended that designated operators use the ISO 9000 standard (fundamentals and vocabulary) within the framework of their quality policy, as a source of principles for quality management systems, and of definitions for terms relating to these systems.

Resolution C 47/2012 also instructed the POC, in conjunction with the International Bureau, to promote the incorporation of the ISO 9000 concepts and terminology into the activities of the Quality of Service Programme, particularly in those countries requiring greater development of their quality management system.

The 2016 Istanbul Congress, through work proposal 021 of its Business Plan for 2017–2020, also instructed the International Bureau to update the UPU quality of service certification system.

II. Definition and field of application

1 *Quality Management Principles*

To lead and operate an organization successfully, it is necessary to direct and control it in a systematic and transparent manner. Success can result from implementing and maintaining a management system that is designed to continually improve performance while addressing the needs of all interested parties. Managing an organization encompasses quality management, among other management disciplines.

ISO 9000 describes fundamentals of quality management systems and specifies the terminology for such systems. Eight identified quality management principles form the basis of the quality management system standards within the ISO 9000 family. The identified principles are:

- a Customer focus
- b Leadership
- c Involvement of people
- d Process approach
- e System approach to management
- f Continual improvement
- g Factual approach to decision making
- h Mutually beneficial supplier relationships

2 *Guiding principles for the postal sector*

In the specific case of the postal sector, the principles outlined below need to be applied, taking due account of the specificities of the postal business

a Customer focus

The designated operator should:

- Define delivery standards and targets for incoming letter-post items and end-to-end standards for priority and airmail letter-post items;
- Measure the degree of application of the quality of service standards;
- Regularly check whether international quality standards have been achieved;
- Publish quality of service standards and objectives together with the results;
- Have an online system for measuring end-to-end quality of service, such as the UPU's GMS or any other equivalent system;
- Provide customers with information on how to comply with customs formalities: (updating of UPU Customs Compendium);
- Have a recognized system for handling customer inquiries; and
- Have a compensation policy for cases where the service provided falls short of expectations.

b Leadership

The designated operator should:

- Define in writing its strategies for international postal service quality in terms of its policy (general guidelines and objectives of the organization in the area of quality) and its quality goals;
- Adopt and implement a proactive security strategy; and
- Have a permanent structure for managing the quality and security of the international service, with qualified human resources in the areas of quality of service and security.

The designated operator's national legislation should clearly define the function and powers of the postal regulator, particularly in the area of quality of service relating to universal postal service and those sections of the domestic and international postal market open to competition.

c Involvement of people

The designated operator should:

- Take communication initiatives aimed at educating and involving staff and management in key aspects of international quality (standards, targets, results, capacity building on the existing quality and security management systems);
- Involve staff in the setting of global objectives and production centre objectives;
- Publish quality of service standards within the business and create related discussion forums.

d Process approach

All work processes should be described and documented for distribution and use at the various work centres and positions concerned.

e System approach to management

The supply chain should be organized and managed as a set of interconnected systems functioning coherently in order to deliver the expected results in terms of quality of service.

f Continual improvement

The quality approach implies monitoring quality of service through reports provided by various monitoring tools (QCS, GMS, etc.) and implementing quality of service evaluation activities in the field. The results of quality monitoring and measurement activities are used to identify shortcomings in terms of organization, pre-established procedures and expected results, to enable the necessary corrective actions to be developed and implemented.

g Factual approach to decision making

All decisions taken to improve quality of service should be based on industry standards, factual elements and material evidence (results measured, and shortcomings observed and documented).

h Mutually beneficial supplier relationships

Relationships with partners (Customs, airlines, security) should be founded on contractual elements or a mutually agreed system of organization and processes.

III. Certification procedure

1 UPU certification system

The UPU certification system is intended to measure the degree of application in DOs' structures of quality management processes as well as their performance.

This certification applies to international service quality management (ordinary mail), and aims to provide a level playing field for assessing DOs, irrespective of the countries' level of development.

The certification system comprises three levels: C (bronze), B (silver) and A (gold).

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

Designated operators awarded level A certification can apply for e-commerce certification. (The certification methodology for e-commerce will be developed following the adoption of this quality certification methodology.)

2 Certification procedure

The certification procedure comprises the following four stages:

i Application

Each year, the IB sends all DOs this methodology document and the two standard certification questionnaires. A DO wishing to be certified sends the IB a request for certification. This request must be accompanied by questionnaires 1 and 2, duly completed with all the required supporting documents annexed.

The questionnaires are scored, and a minimum number of points is required in order to apply for certification.

The maximum scores reachable in questionnaires 1 and 2 are as follows:

- Questionnaire 1: 1,200 points
- Questionnaire 2: 1,000 points

The International Bureau analyzes the request. The DO must meet the prerequisites listed in section IV below and obtain the minimum number of points required in order to continue with the certification procedure. If the information provided in the questionnaires is unsatisfactory, the International Bureau may request further details.

ii Gathering of data

In addition to the responses provided in the questionnaires, the performance results of the designated operator contained in the various IB reports, data from EDI messages relating to international mail and data gathered by other performance measurement systems used by the UPU will be used for the certification. This data is summarized in a special document presenting the DO's quality of service performance. The maximum score reachable in the result sheet is 1,000 points.

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, QCS, or any other systems compliant with the GMS technical design approved by the POC);
- 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 (IBIS) data.

iii Evaluation questionnaires

If the prerequisites are met and the minimum number of points is attained, the IB asks the applicant to pay the fee required to launch certification. A UPU consultant will then be sent to the country to verify the information provided in both questionnaires and check the operations on the ground.

iv Evaluation proper

In agreement with the DO concerned, the IB sends an expert to conduct an on-site audit lasting three to five working days, depending on the results of the questionnaires. This audit is used to determine the extent to which the quality management system requirements are fulfilled. The audit findings are designed to assess the effectiveness of the quality management system and identify opportunities for improvement.

During this mission, questionnaires 1 and 2 are checked by the expert and corrected as necessary following study of the information provided at all levels of the operator concerned. An audit of its international sorting centre(s)/office(s) of exchange is also carried out.

IV. Prerequisites and levels of certification

1 Prerequisites

A certification procedure can only be launched if the DO meets 10 of the following prerequisites:

a Standards and targets

The designated operator has:

- Defined, in written form, its international service quality strategies;
- Prepared delivery standards for inbound surface and priority (airmail) international letter-post items;
- Set end-to-end standards for priority letter-post items and postal parcels;
- Set a minimum of five service standards for end-to-end international surface and priority (airmail) letter-post items and had them published by the UPU; these standards should be for routes that are, or will be, subject to testing by the UPU's GMS or any other monitoring system compliant with the GMS technical design adopted by the POC; and
- Taken part, in the year in which certification is requested and the preceding year, in at least one international quality test organized by the UPU, by a restricted union, or bilaterally with another DO.

b Organization

The DO has a permanent structure responsible for the management of international service quality and security at headquarters level and at all management levels, including at the office of exchange.

The national legislation clearly defines the function and powers of the postal regulator, particularly in the area of quality of service relating to universal postal service and those sections of the domestic and international postal market open to competition.

c Operational process

The DO has formalized processes covering all processing activities from the posting of items through to the sending of dispatches to another country, and from receipt of dispatches through to final delivery or redirection of items.

d Quality of service monitoring and evaluation

The DO regularly checks that international performance standards have been met and the targets achieved by means of GMS or any other system compliant with the GMS technical design.

e Customer relationships

The designated operator:

- Publishes quality of service standards and targets in forms accessible to customers;
- Provides information on how to comply with customs formalities;
- Has a recognized system for handling customer inquiries (in writing, by phone, by e-mail or via the Internet); and
- Conducts customer satisfaction surveys.

f Relations with Customs, transport companies and airport authorities

The DO holds frequent meetings with customs authorities, transport companies and airport authorities.

2 Certification levels

A DO may be deemed to be fulfilling the conditions for certification if it meets the prerequisites listed below.

a Level C

The DO must be able to answer the following questions in the affirmative, and be prepared to provide the IB with documentary evidence:

- Questions to be answered in full:
 - Questionnaire 1: 1.4, 1.5, 2.1 (sub-questions 1 and 2), 2.2, 2.3, 2.8, 4.1, 4.6, 5.3, 5.6 (sub-question 1), 7.1.
 - Questionnaire 2: 1.1, 1.3 (sub-question 1), 2.1, 2.2, 2.9 (sub-questions 1 and 2), 2.10 (sub-question 1), 3.6, 3.9, 3.17 (sub-question 1), 3.18 (sub-question 1).
- Questions that can be answered partially:
 - Questionnaire 1: 1.1, 2.4, 2.16, 3.10, 4.5, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, 6.7, 7.3.
 - Questionnaire 2: 2.7, 2.8, 3.1 or 3.2, 3.3 (sub-questions 1 and 2), 3.17 (sub-questions 2 and 3).

For both questionnaires and the result sheet taken together, a score of at least 1,600 points is required to achieve level C (bronze).

b Level B

The level C conditions must be met to qualify for the level B audit.

In addition, the DO must be able to answer the following questions in the affirmative, and be prepared to provide the IB with documentary evidence:

- Questions to be answered in full:
 - Questionnaire 1: 1.1, 1.2 (sub-question 1), 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 2.9, 2.10, 2.12, 2.14, 2.16, 3.1 (sub-question 1), 3.4 (sub-question 1), 3.6, 3.7, 4.3, 4.4, 4.7, 5.1 (sub-questions 1 and 2), 5.2 (sub-question 1), 5.5, 5.6, 6.4, 7.2, 7.3.

- Questionnaire 2: 1.2, 1.3 (sub-questions 1 and 2), 1.4, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 2.10, 3.4 (sub-question 1), 3.7, 3.8 (sub-question 1), 3.10, 3.11 (sub-question 1), 3.12, 3.14, 3.17 (sub-questions 1 to 3), 3.18.
- Questions that can be answered partially:
 - Questionnaire 1: 2.13, 2.15, 6.7 (sub-questions 2 and 3).
 - Questionnaire 2: 2.5, 3.3 (sub-questions 3 to 5).

| For both questionnaires and the result sheet taken together, a minimum score of 1,920 points is essential for level B (silver) certification.

| c *Level A*

All the requirements for the lower levels must be met to qualify for level A.

In addition, the DO must be able to answer the following questions in the affirmative, and be prepared to provide the IB with documentary evidence:

- Questions to be answered in full:
 - Questionnaire 1: 1.2 (sub-questions 1 and 2), 1.3, 1.5.3, 2.1, 2.4 (sub-question 3), 2.11, 3.1, 3.4, 3.10, 5.2, 5.4 (sub-question 3), 6.1, 6.2, 6.5, 6.7 (sub-question 3).
 - Questionnaire 2: 1.3, 2.3, 2.9, 3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.8, 3.11, 3.13, 3.15, 3.16, 3.17 (sub-questions 1 to 4).
- Questions that can be answered partially: Questionnaire 1: 3.3

| For both questionnaires and the result sheet taken together, a minimum score of 2,560 points is essential for level A (gold) certification.

| 3 *Awarding of certificates*

On the basis of the consultant's mission report and the performance measured by the IB in the operator performance report, 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.

4 *Official certification*

The International Bureau invites the DO receiving certification to attend an official award ceremony attended by senior staff from the DO and the UPU. This ceremony will be held at a session of the POC or CA or on any other suitable occasion. If the award ceremony cannot be held, the certificate is presented to the DO by the UPU regional project coordinator or by the local United Nations Development Programme office.

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

V. Languages of certification

To ensure a standard level of assessment by consultants, only French or English (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 International Bureau, the other UPU languages (Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic and Russian) may be used as usual.

VI. Obligations of the designated operator

a During the analysis of the first questionnaire:

- Appoint a national certification coordinator;
- Answer any follow-up questions from the International Bureau within one week.

b Before the consultant arrives for the on-site evaluation

- Prepare the documentation substantiating the replies to the two questionnaires;
- If the documentation is submitted in a language other than French or English, provide brief summaries of this documentation in one of these languages;
- Choose the consultant's working language (English or French), appoint a counterpart with a good command of the chosen language, and notify the International Bureau 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 or her work, make means of transport available for visits in the field, etc.).

c During the consultant's mission

- Meet the consultant on arrival and provide the local transport needed to accomplish his/her mission;
- Allow access to all postal establishments, as requested by the consultant;
- Provide the consultant with the necessary equipment for his/her mission (office, small office supplies, photocopying, Internet access, etc.).

d After the evaluation

As necessary, pay the mission expenses of its representative at the official certification award ceremony.

VII. International Bureau obligations

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

- Analyze and evaluate replies to the questionnaires 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 (operator's results).
- Find and recruit a consultant: four weeks after analysis and audit of the questionnaires.
- 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.

VIII. Financing of certification

a UPU

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

The Union will also finance the organization and implementation of consultants' missions, the average costs of which are borne by the DOs.

b Designated operators

The DOs will finance work on preparing replies to the questionnaires, 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.

c 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, these countries' mission contribution rate is set at 3,000 CHF.

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