Committee FAQs – Overall Policy and Process

Introduction

All of the EA Technical Committees have a process for answering questions placed by members (incl. from stakeholder representatives). While it is accepted that there may be differences in the process in each Committee, it is important to have a set of overall rules and an overall process to be followed.

Overall Rules for FAQs

- The question must be clearly stated.
- The question must refer to a subject matter under the responsibility of the Committee involved.
- The question must clearly refer to the related Conformity Assessment standards(s) and guidance
- Names of specific NABs or stakeholders (except the one raising the question) , CABs and individuals should not be included.
- The FAQ must not be "politically motivated" i.e. raised in order to settle a dispute between 2 parties, FAQs should be for the benefit of the EA community. In particular, a question coming from a particular situation encountered in a specific country should be first discussed with the National Accreditation Body before submission to the EA TC .
- If the question has already been answered at IAF or ILAC via a decision or resolution or FAQ-lists of IAF or ILAC, the EA answer should refer to that.
- If the question is related to common characteristics of conformity assessment standards such as impartiality and management system requirements, this should be coordinated among the TC Chairs.

Process Steps

The Technical Committee shall state a period of time prior to a Committee meeting by which questions must be submitted; such a time should allow time for the Review group to consider and for members to form an opinion prior to the meeting.

- Each Committee will appoint a review panel responsible for first consideration of the questions raised.
- The review panel will appoint a convenor to take control of processing the questions, with support for the Secretariat.
- The Review Panel convenor will check to ensure the question have not already been raised and answered on a previous occasion.
- The Review Panel convenor will highlight to the TC Chair any Questions which are considered not relevant to that Committee; the TC Chair will then discuss with other Technical Committee Chairs as relevant.
- The review panel convenor will allocate questions to review panel members according to their knowledge and expertise; members may have to consult with AB colleagues where additional expertise is required.

- Once the Review Panel have finished their deliberations, and offered a first draft answer, the questions will be reviewed by the TC Chair / Vice-Chair, who will authorise the secretariat to circulate them to members.
- Members will be given at least 14 days to consider the questions so that they can input at the Technical Committee meeting
- The questions will be reviewed at the next Technical Committee meeting with the intention of reaching consensus.
- Questions with "simple", clear answers do not necessarily need to be debated by the TC members, time spent in debating issues should concentrate on the more complex questions.
- If consensus is not reached, the Chair and Vice-Chair will consider next steps, which may include raising the question at IAF/ILAC, consulting regulators or seeking CASCO clarification.

It is considered that the EA Forums would provide a suitable platform for processing FAQs.

Publishing FAQs

All FAQs will be made available internally within the EA system, the Chair and Vice-Chair of each Technical Committee will make the decision on whether to publish any FAQs or specific individual FAQs in the public domain.

When considering this, the Technical Committee should consider the need for the discussions to reach a wider audience including those not present at the Technical Committee meetings. The original raiser of the question must be happy for the answer to be published in the public domain.

FAQs published in the public domain must be clear and anonymous with no names or organisations referenced.

Maintenance of published FAQs

At least every 2 years, the Review Panel will check previous questions to ensure they are still valid. Any non-relevant FAQs shall then be removed. The above procedure for agreeing FAQs also applies to reviewed and removed FAQs.

During the transition period for any relevant Conformity Assessment standard, the Review Panel will check to see if the new version standard affects previous published FAQs.