

INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITATION PROGRAMME (IAP)

IAP-I-17 CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Scope

This Code of Conduct applies to all organisations that are clients of the International Accreditation Programme (IAP).

2. Commitment to undertake and adhere to ethical assessment, awarding, and business practices

a. It is a condition for accreditation under the IAP that all applicant organisations commit to undertake and adhere to ethical assessment, awarding, and business practices by adhering to this Code of Conduct.

b. This commitment shall be signed by the applicant organisation as part of the application process and reconfirmed in writing by an organisation whenever an ISQua EEA accreditation award has been achieved.

c. The award will be announced on the ISQua EEA website once the signed declaration has been received by ISQua EEA.

3. Ethical assessment, awarding, and business practices

a. The commitment to comply with ethical assessment, awarding, and business practices applies to:

- i. The commercial relationship between the external evaluation organisation and its clients.
- ii. Providing information, education, and consultancy services to clients.
- iii. Providing support for clients during preparation for and follow-up on external evaluations.
- iv. Managing potential conflicts of interest when assessing achievement against standards and making decisions on the awarding of accreditation.
- v. Relationships with other external accreditation bodies.

b. The commercial relationship between the external evaluation organisation and its clients:

- i. Shall be clearly understood by all parties and at all stages of the relationship that what is being offered is an external evaluation, not the achievement of a certificate or an award.
- ii. The external evaluation organisation's interest in retaining a client shall not influence the outcome of the external evaluation assessment and the decision whether or not to award accreditation.
- iii. While the external evaluation organisation may offer other services, the client's decision to procure such services or not shall not influence or reasonably be perceived as influencing the outcome of the external evaluation.

c. Other services provided to clients:

- i. The external evaluation organisation may offer training or education services, provided that advice or information related to standards or external evaluation is confined to generic information, meaning that no client-specific solutions should be provided.
- ii. Services shall be offered on equitable terms to all clients for whom they may be relevant.

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- iii. There is a defined separation between the external evaluation activities and any consultancy services offered, and this is communicated to all staff, clients and other stakeholders.
 - Examples of consultancy include preparing or producing documentation or procedures, and giving specific advice, instructions or solutions towards achieving compliance with the standards.
 - Advising on understanding of standards or the external evaluation process, arranging training and participating as a trainer is not considered consultancy, provided that, where the advice or course relates to standards or external evaluation, this is confined to the provision of generic information that is freely available in the public domain; i.e. the trainer or consultant should not provide client-specific solutions.
- iv. If consultancy services are offered by a related entity, that entity shall strictly avoid any statements that anticipate or could reasonably be understood as anticipating the outcome of the external evaluation assessment and the associated award decision.

d. Similar principles shall guide the approach to all types of support for clients during preparation for and follow-up on external evaluations.

e. The external evaluation organisation shall have mechanisms in place to ensure that accreditation or certification award decisions are independent and objective, conflicts of interest are avoided, and that the award decisions are based on the surveyors' findings regarding compliance with the standards.

f. Relationships with other external accreditation bodies:

- i. Competition shall be fair.
- ii. Intellectual property rights shall be upheld.
- iii. External evaluation bodies are expected to contribute to the development and promotion of health and social care accreditation by sharing experience and supporting research.

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Management by ISQua EEA of alleged violations of the Code of Conduct

The following outlines the process.

1. ISQua EEA encourages the reporting of conduct which violates this Code of Conduct to ISQua EEA directly.
2. Allegations that an external evaluation organisation has violated this Code of Conduct must be submitted to ISQua EEA in writing.
 - a. The submission must clearly describe what aspect of the Code of Conduct the allegation relates to and must include evidence for the actions in question.
 - b. The identity of the person/organisation reporting such violations of this code of conduct may be kept confidential if the ISQua EEA CEO believes it appropriate to do so, or it is required as a matter of law.
3. The external evaluation organisation in question will be given the opportunity to comment on this evidence and provide any evidence they deem to be relevant.
4. There will be an opportunity for the party who has submitted the allegation to comment on the response by the client and for the client to make any final comments or clarifications.
5. It is not the remit of ISQua EEA to determine or decide whether legislation, regulation, or contractual obligations have been violated. ISQua EEA will however, where applicable rely on final decisions made by relevant authorities, including national authorities in the respective jurisdiction in which a client organisation is based in or operating in, or courts of law in such jurisdictions to establish whether such transgressions have occurred.
6. ISQua EEA will not conduct any investigations but will base its decision on the information thus provided (as outlined in points 2-5).
7. The ISQua EEA Secretariat, led by the CEO and the Head of Operations, will manage the process. The Secretariat will collate the documentation collected as specified above and will present it with a summary and a recommendation to an Ethics Panel which will decide whether or not the Code of Conduct has been breached and, in case of a breach, on the sanction to apply.
8. An Ethics Panel will be established to review each case received. The Ethics Panel will comprise:
 - a. Two ISQua EEA Board Members, who are not representatives of an accrediting body.
 - b. The ISQua Board Parliamentarian.
 - c. Two Members of the ISQua EEA Accreditation Council. These members may not have a business relationship with or be affiliated in any manner with the organisation under investigation. They must also not be a direct competitor of the organisation in a specific jurisdiction.
9. ISQua EEA can:
 - a. Dismiss the allegation without imposing any sanctions.
 - b. Require that the IAP clients make reasonable and appropriate changes (that can be specified) to achieve compliance with the Code of Conduct. The timeframe for this work will be specified, and if the requested changes are not made within the timeframe, then one or more specified accreditations by ISQua EEA will be revoked.
 - c. Suspend one or more specified accreditations by ISQua EEA until specified reasonable and appropriate changes to achieve compliance with the Code of Conduct have been made.
 - d. Terminate the client relationship for a specified period or permanently.

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10. In no case will there be a refund of already paid or due fees.
11. The decision of the Ethics Panel is final.

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