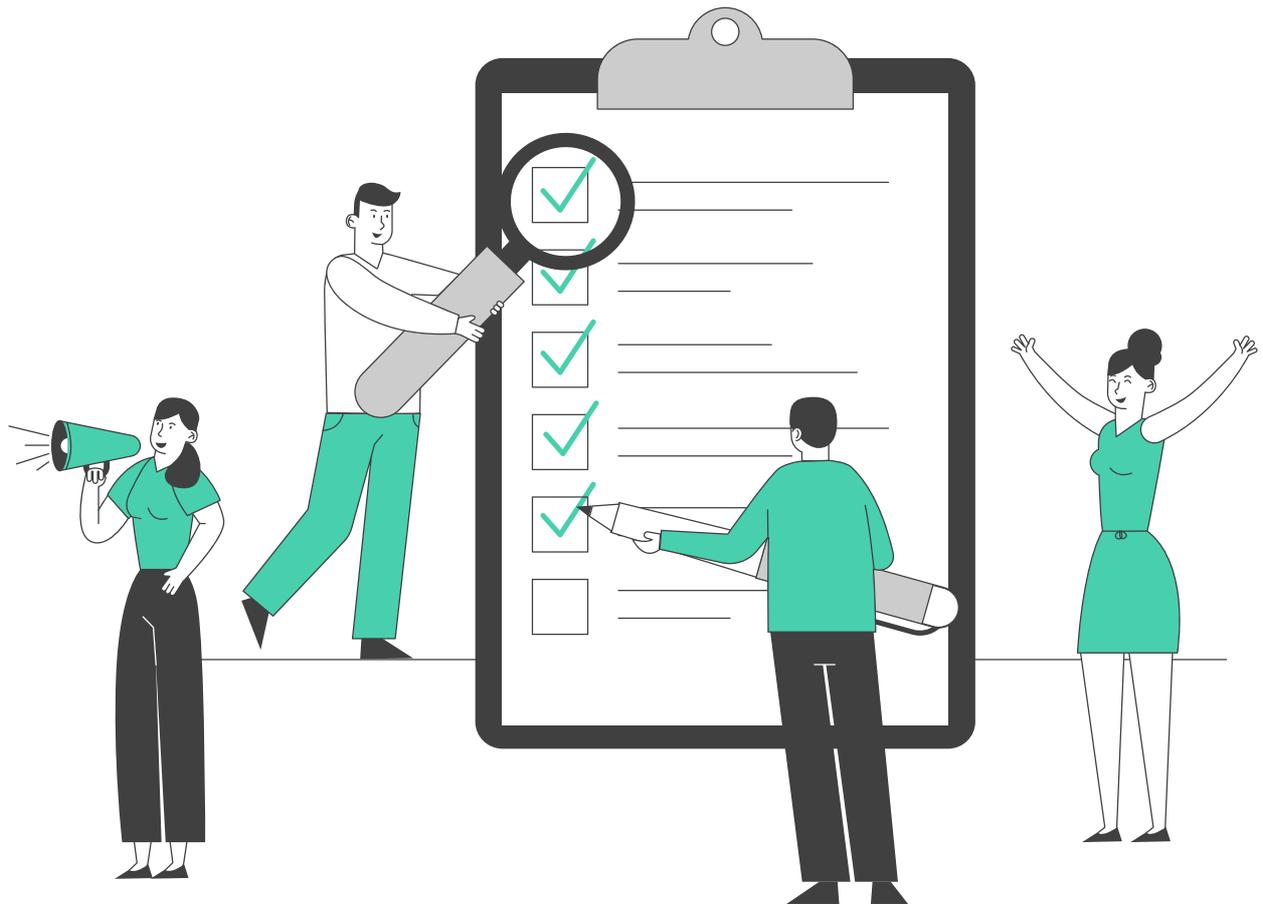


# Steps to Certification



# The Process

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To begin the process, your company will need to have a management system in place.

The steps for certification to most management system standards are very similar. A more detailed description of each of these steps is covered in [Orion's Certification Regulations](#).

# The Steps

## Request a Quote

**Begin the certification process by submitting your request for a quote [via our website](#).**

Orion will communicate with you to determine your company's individual certification needs which includes your specific locations or sites, your organization's products or services, your processes, the desired scope of certification, applicable SIC or IAF sector codes, standard or standards selected for certification, locations, number of personnel, number of shifts, and management representatives.

**Once we have the necessary information about your organisation, we will provide you with an obligation-free quote.**

Orion will provide you with a fixed-price quote for the optional Pre-Assessment, the Stage 1 and Stage 2 audits, and the first Surveillance audit. Travel will not be part of the quotation but will be charged at actual cost as explained on the quote. An estimate will be provided for the Surveillances and Recertifications using Orion's current daily charge schedule. Orion has no hidden fees and if there is an extra fee, it will be clearly listed in the quote.

# The Steps

## Contract

**The signed Application for Certification becomes a legal contract to conduct the certification activities.**

The contract is the legal agreement to conduct the certification activities. It includes confidentiality requirements and the right of access to your company to conduct audit activities. After your company and Orion approve this document, it becomes a legal contract. During this time we will help you choose one of our qualified auditors and dates will be arranged for the audit activities. Our excellent customer service will follow you throughout the process.

You will receive contact from an Orion Scheduler to discuss available dates for your audit. When mutually satisfactory dates have been selected, you will receive a Client Activity Assignment Transmittal for each audit activity. If you wish, you may request your Lead Auditor's contact information at this time.

In order to confirm your selected audit dates, you must sign and date this document and follow the instructions provided to you. No audit dates will be confirmed until Orion receives the signed Transmittal. The signed form is your authorization for Orion's Auditor(s) to make any necessary travel arrangements, including non-refundable airline tickets. If you believe that the audit dates may change, do not sign the Transmittal and contact your Scheduler.

Payment is due after each audit activity. You will be asked to provide contact information for your company billing person/department. The auditor sends us their invoice for expenses and Orion will invoice you for the audit and audit expenses at that time. Your payment must be received prior to the issuance of your certificate.

# The Steps

## Pre-Assessment (optional)

**If you are unsure of your readiness, you may choose to have a Pre-Assessment to see if your company is ready to continue on to the Stage 1 and 2 audits.** A Pre-Assessment audit is optional and can be anywhere from 1 to 3 audit days (your choice). Your company may choose to have it cover the entire scope of your certification or you may select specific elements of the standard or areas of your company that you wish to have reviewed.

Pre-Assessments are conducted just like Certification or Surveillance audits, except that Orion's non-conformance clearance process is not applicable to Pre-Assessment audits.

### **What are the benefits of having a Pre-Assessment Audit?**

A Pre-Assessment audit has several advantages. It allows your company to understand exactly what Orion's auditors will review during the certification audit, and to eliminate any unpredictable surprises.

Although you may choose to limit the scope of the Pre-Assessment so as not to cover all areas of the standard or all the applicable departments in your company, the areas that are covered will have a chance to experience a third party audit with the knowledge that the audit is a practice or "dry run" audit. In addition to being an educational experience, the Pre-Assessment is useful for identifying nonconformities so that they can be addressed prior to the Certification audit.

# The Steps

## Stage 1 Assessment

**Certification is a 2-stage process. For the on-site Stage 1 audit, the auditor will check your company's manual and system level procedures.**

The purpose of the Stage 1 audit is to evaluate your location and site-specific conditions and to determine preparedness for the Stage 2 audit. In order to become certified, your company must demonstrate that its management system is functioning and the various control mechanisms are operable.

This will include a manual and procedure review, a review of your understanding and implementation of the standard and related statutory, regulatory, and compliance issues (e.g. quality, environmental, legal aspects of the operation, associated risks, etc.), verification of scope and other relevant information, a review of your internal audit and management review and planning for the Stage 2 audit.

The audit will identify any areas of concern that could become nonconformities – Nonconformity Reports (NCRs) during the Stage 2 audit. You will receive a written report detailing the audit findings.

# The Steps

## Stage 2 Assessment

**At this onsite Stage 2 audit (the Certification audit), your Orion auditor will conduct interviews, examine records, and observe your company's activities.**

The Stage 2 audit determines if your company has successfully documented and implemented all of the requirements of the specified standard. This is accomplished via an in-depth review of your manual and procedures and the confirmation of their implementation. The audit also verifies conformance to the identified standard. The Stage 2 audit will involve on-site interviews, examinations of documents and records, and observations to thoroughly determine the implementation of the standard. This audit also reviews any areas of concern identified in Stage 1.

**Any nonconformities – Nonconformity Reports (NCRs) will be documented and identified as major or minor.**

A major nonconformity is the absence or total breakdown of a system to meet a clause or sub-clause of a standard. A number of minor nonconformities against one clause or sub-clause can represent a total breakdown of the system and thus be considered a major nonconformity. A situation that raises significant doubt about the ability of the client's management system to achieve its intended outputs is also a major nonconformity.

A minor nonconformity will generally be addressed by you submitting a response to the Lead Auditor before you can be certified. Depending on the standard, the corrective action for a minor nonconformity may not necessarily be closed prior to certification. A written audit report, containing any nonconformities, is issued after the audit.

Although Orion is constrained from consulting, and therefore cannot advise you on how to react to a nonconformity, our auditors are often able to offer a range of examples of actions that would meet the requirements of the standard, or examples of compliant (and non-proprietary) systems from experience.

# The Steps

## Corrective Action (if needed)

**At the conclusion of the Stage 2 audit, nonconformities (NCRs) will be documented and identified as either major or minor.**

If nonconformities are found which cannot be corrected electronically, an onsite corrective action audit might need to be scheduled to verify the implementation of the action(s) to resolve the nonconformity. The scope of the audit is limited to the clause or sub clause where major nonconformities were found. Nonconformances will need to be resolved in a timely fashion as per Orion's Certification Regulations. Once again, if you are in need of assistance please call the Orion office and we will provide you with guidance.

## Issue of Certificate

**Based upon the auditor's recommendation and the certifier's decision, the Certificate will be issued.**

The Lead Auditor's recommendation will be based upon the successful completion of the Stage 1 and Stage 2 audits and resolution of all nonconformities identified. The issuance of the certificate timeframe varies on a case-by-case basis (how many NCRs, how quickly you respond to NCRs, etc.) – you will receive your Certificate typically in 30-45 days. Certification is valid for three years, and is dependent upon your company's maintenance of your management system and upon your adherence to Orion's Certification Regulations. Payment will be required before the certificate is issued.

# The Steps

## Surveillance Audit

**A surveillance audit will be required annually or every 6 months whichever you choose.**

A surveillance audit is an on-site mini audit that reviews a portion of the standard to determine if your company has maintained its implementation of the standard. In addition, surveillance audits will review your use of Orion's and the accreditation body's certification mark, status and closure of audit nonconformities and your customers' complaints. For minor nonconformities, a response must be submitted. If nonconformities are found which cannot be corrected electronically, an onsite corrective action audit might need to be scheduled to verify the implementation of the action(s) to resolve the nonconformity.

The scope of the audit is limited to the clause or sub clause where major nonconformities were found. Nonconformances will need to be resolved in a timely fashion as per Orion's Certification Regulations. You will need to provide the scheduler with any changes that may have occurred at your facility (standard or standards selected for certification, locations, number of personnel, number of shifts, and management representatives, etc).

# The Steps

## Recertification Audit

**A recertification audit will be required every three years.**

The recertification is conducted three years after the Stage 2 audit, and at three-year intervals thereafter. This reassessment does not mean that you will be starting over with Orion Registrar's processes. Your company will have all the advantages and benefits that maintaining a long-term partnership with Orion can bring.

**Scheduling** – It is important to insure that your Recertification audit be conducted at least two months prior to the expiration of your certificate. This will allow for the necessary documentation processing, and give your organization time to respond to any Nonconformity Reports that are issued. This helps to insure that there is no lapse between the expiration of your old certificate and the distribution of your new certificate. You will need to provide the scheduler with any changes that may have occurred at your facility (standard or standards selected for certification, locations, number of personnel, number of shifts, and management representatives, etc).

Your auditor(s) will conduct the on-site audit in the same manner that your registration audit was conducted. As before, any nonconformities will be documented on Nonconformity Report forms and copies will be left with you at the end of the audit.

# The Steps

## Recertification Audit

This audit reviews the status of the applicable requirements and is conducted on-site. A documentation review will also be conducted if there have been major changes to the documentation since the previous document review. The Recertification audit must cover the interaction between all elements of the system, the overall effectiveness of the system, and commitment to maintain the effectiveness of the system. In practice, this means that the entire standard must be reviewed in a single audit at least once every three years, and that this shall be in addition to regularly scheduled surveillance audits. In general, a recertification requires less time than the original Stage 1 and Stage 2 audits.

You will have 30 days to address any Nonconformity Reports produced by your reassessment audit. During this time you must determine the root cause of the nonconformity, and develop plans to correct the nonconformity and to prevent its recurrence. The cause and the plans must be documented on Orion's Nonconformity Report. The time allowed for implementation of the plans is determined on a case-by-case basis. This applies to both major and minor nonconformities. If a major nonconformity cannot be downgraded during the audit, then a separate corrective action audit might be scheduled by the Orion office.

# The Steps

## When Your Certificate Expires

**Your company's certification agreement is on-going, and will last as long as you wish to continue your partnership with Orion Registrar.**

Your company's certificate, on the other hand, is generally effective for three years, after which it must be reissued. The three-year certification period begins on the date Orion certifies the audit report, not on the audit date. This reissuance is contingent upon your completion and closure of a recertification audit. If you wish to obtain a requote at this time, please contact your Scheduler.

## Restoring Certification

**Orion has the following processes for restoring certification after it has been suspended, withdrawn or lapses.**

**Suspension** – Orion shall restore the suspended certification if the issue that has resulted in the suspension has been resolved and evidence provided per Orion's requirements by the deadline. Failure to resolve the issues that have resulted in the suspension by the deadline shall result in withdrawal or reduction of the scope of certification.

**Withdrawal** – In order to resume certification, the client will need to begin the process with new Stage 1 and Stage 2 audits.

**Lapse Due to Certificate Expiration Prior to Recertification** – If the lapse is less than six months, when the client receives recertification, the client shall have all rights of certification. If the lapse is longer than six months, a new Stage 2 will be required for recertification.

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