

MANAGEMENT OF IMPARTIALITY

Prepared by: SADCAS CEO	Approved by: SADCAS Board	Approval Date: 2022-02-16 Effective Date: 2022-02-16
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1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This document defines how SADCAS will ensure that the impartiality and objectivity of its operations are safeguarded.

The document is applicable throughout SADCAS operations and to all staff members, assessors, technical experts, related bodies and interested parties.

2. DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

2.1. Definitions

2.1.1. Impartiality means presence of objectivity.

2.1.2. Conflict of Interest means a situation that has the potential to undermine the impartiality of a person because of the possibility of a clash between the person's self-interest and professional interest or public interest.

2.1.3. Independence means freedom from the control, influence, support, aid, or the like, of others.

2.1.4. Interested Party is a person or organization with a direct or indirect interest in accreditation and can include conformity assessment bodies, their associations and their clients, industry services, trade associations, scheme owners, governmental regulatory bodies or other governmental services or non-governmental organizations including consumer organizations.

2.1.5. Objectivity means that conflicts of interest do not exist, or are resolved so as not to adversely influence subsequent activities of SADCAS.

2.1.6. Transparency implies openness, communication, and accountability. It means operating in such a way that it is easy for others to see what actions are performed.

2.1.7. Related Body is a separate legal entity that is linked by common ownership or contractual arrangements to SADCAS. Any SADC structures or associations are also considered to be related bodies.

2.2. Abbreviations

2.2.1. AAC - Accreditation Approvals Committee

2.2.2. AFRAC – African Accreditation Cooperation.

2.2.3. CEO – Chief Executive Officer

2.2.4. FOC – Frequency of Occurrences.

2.2.5. IAF – International Accreditation Forum.

- 2.2.6. IFRS - International Financial Reporting Standards
- 2.2.7. ILAC – International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation
- 2.2.8. IPAC – Portuguese Institute for Accreditation.
- 2.2.9. SADCA – Southern African Development Community Accreditation Cooperation.
- 2.2.10. SOI – Severity of impact.
- 2.2.11. TUNAC - Tunisian Accreditation Council.

3. GENERAL

Impartiality is one of the core values of SADCAS and the cornerstone of any accreditation service. SADCAS understands the importance of impartiality in carrying out its services and manages conflict of interest and any potential conflict of interest in order to safeguard objectivity and impartiality of accreditation services rendered. SADCAS adheres with the impartiality requirements as specified in ISO/IEC 17011:2017: Conformity assessment – requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies. SADCAS has documented its impartiality policy statement to demonstrate the Top Management's commitment for safeguarding impartiality in accreditation service delivery. The impartiality policy statement is posted on the SADCAS website www.sadcas.org.

4. RESPONSIBILITY

- 4.1. All SADCAS personnel, assessors/technical experts, Board and all other Committees shall act objectively and be free from undue commercial, financial and other pressures that could compromise impartiality.
- 4.2. The Quality Management Committee is responsible for the identification through the various processes, risks to impartiality which are listed in the SADCAS risk profiles. This is done during management reviews which are undertaken at least annually.
- 4.3. Because risk management is an essential element of good governance, the SADCAS Board of Directors which oversees the running of SADCAS and is accountable to the General Assembly, oversees the implementation of the risk management policy and reviewing the SADCAS risk profiles which contains the risk control measures and also considers any residual risks. The Board review shall be undertaken at least once a year.

5. PROCEDURES

- 5.1. Impartiality and objectivity in SADCAS' activities are assured at the organizational and personal level.

5.2. SADCAS recognizes the possibilities for conflicts of interests arising from relationships with persons, organizations and related bodies having an interface with SADCAS. Risks arise from SADCAS activities, relations or from relations of its personnel. The sources of risks are therefore identified as follows:

- Accreditation Approvals Committee members
- Members of the Board of Directors
- All SADCAS staff involved in the accreditation process
- Other staff of SADCAS
- Assessors/Technical Experts
- Advisory Committee members

5.3. Risk assessment is an ongoing process which involves interested parties through:

- Quality Management Committee's Management review;
- Finance Risk and Audit Committee review;
- Board of Directors review; and
- Participation of interested parties in SADCAS Advisory Committees.

5.4. There are many categories of business risks and SADCAS has considered the following categories of risks and identified the threats:

5.4.1. Strategic risks

- Corporate governance – The threat arising from non-recognition and non-acceptance of SADCAS as a subsidiary institution of SADC and set up to meet accreditation needs of SADC Member States without national accreditation bodies.
- Reputational risk – The threat arising from losing international recognition and the risk of not being registered with local authorities as relevant, for training activities.
- Change management risk -The threat presented when SADCAS fails to achieve transitions to revised/new key accreditation standards.

5.4.2. Financial risks

- Going concern risk - The threat presented when SADC Member States do not pay their contributions towards SADCAS sustainability on time.
- Capital availability/financial sustainability – The threat arising from SADCAS not being able to fund its business.

5.4.3. Operational risks

- Risk to impartiality such as:
 - Self-interest threats: Those arising from a person or organization acting in his/her own interest to benefit oneself;
 - Subjectivity threats: Those arising when personal bias overrules objective evidence;

- Familiarity Threats: Those arising from a person being familiar with or trusting of another person, e.g. an assessor or staff member developing a relationship with an applicant / accredited organization or trainee assessor that affects the ability to reach an objective judgement);
- Intimidation threats: Those that prevent person(s) from acting objectively due to fear of a person / organization / interested party; or
- Financial threats: Such as the source of revenue for SADCAS/its personnel/assessors.
- Inability to service in French and Portuguese – The threat presented if SADCAS is not able to sustain offering services in French and to offer services in Portuguese.
- Failure to meet service accreditation targets – The threat presented when SADCAS fails to meet operational targets.

5.4.4. Human resources risks

- Adequate and competent staff – The threats presented due to a thin staff establishment and recruitment of incompetent staff;
- Effectiveness of NAFPs – Threats due to ineffectiveness of NAFPs;
- Adequate and competent Assessors – The threats arising from inadequate pool of competent assessors to meet areas of demand or anticipated demand; and
- Talent management – The threats arising from failure to identify/retain talent and lack of succession planning.

5.5. Risk Assessment Process

5.5.1. SADCAS accreditation activities should not be harmed due to the possible threats that have been identified. This can be achieved by assessing the realistic frequency of occurrences and its severity of impacts.

- a) SADCAS shall evaluate and rank the risks.
- b) SADCAS shall determine the degree of assurance of how to eliminate or minimize such threats and determine the acceptable residual risk.
- c) SADCAS shall determine whether the risk is acceptable or otherwise accreditation shall not be provided.

5.5.2. Criteria

The following criteria shall be considered:

- Frequency of occurrences (FOC)
 - Those that occur at least once a year shall be scored High with a score of 3.
 - Those that occur once every 5 years shall be scored Medium with a score of 2.
 - Those that occur once every 10 years shall be scored Low with a score of 1.

- Severity of Impact (SOI)
 - Those that result in High impact shall be scored as 3.
 - Those that result in Medium impact shall be scored as 2.
 - Those that result in Low impact shall be scored as 1.

5.5.3. Measure of risk

Calculate the measure of risk by multiplying the FOC score to the SOI score.

Measure of risk matrix

		Frequency of Occurrence (FOC)			
		Score	3	2	1
Severity of Impact (SOI)	3	9	6	3	
	2	6	4	2	
	1	3	2	1	

5.5.4. Risk classification

• Serious	Frequency of occurrence is high
	Effect is high
	Measure of risk = 6 to 9
• Significant	Frequency of occurrence is high/medium
	Effect is medium or frequency low but effect is high
	Measure of risk = 3 to 4
• Insignificant	Frequency of occurrence is low
	Effect is low
	Measure of risk = 1 to 2

5.5.5. Risk treatment

Once analysed and measured appropriate risk treatment shall be effected as described below:

- Serious : To take action to reduce risk with highest priority,
- Significant : To take action as appropriate to reduce risk, and to monitor and inform management.
- Insignificant : Acceptable no risk

6. SAFEGUARDING IMPARTIALITY

6.1. SADCAS Policies and Procedures

SADCAS shall maintain up to date policies and procedures and ensure that they support impartiality. The SADCAS Board of Directors shall ensure that SADCAS Company values are addressed in policies whilst the SADCAS CEO shall ensure that company values are addressed in procedures and upheld in operations and service delivery.

6.2. SADCAS Services

SADCAS offers accreditation services and training in accreditation associated matters.

SADCAS services are made accessible to all applicants whose request for accreditation falling within SADCAS' scope of activities, regardless of the size, geographical diversity, language diversity, number of conformity assessment bodies already accredited, or membership of any association or group. SADCAS being a subsidiarity institution of SADC is required to service in the 3 official languages of the region and efforts are still underway to service in French and Portuguese. Meanwhile any applications received in French for which SADCAS does not have competent assessors shall be referred to the Tunisian Accreditation Council (TUNAC) and processed under the Twinning Partnership Agreement. internationally recognized accreditation bodies that service in French. Applications received in Portuguese shall be referred to the Portuguese Institute for Accreditation (IPAC).

SADCAS provides external training services in accreditation associated activities. In order not to compromise its impartiality and status in training service delivery, SADCAS offers generic training courses and does not give specific advice for the development of an organization's operations. Furthermore, the training courses delivered or facilitated by SADCAS are not a precondition of accreditation neither do they guarantee accreditation by SADCAS.

6.3. Consultancy

SADCAS does not provide consultancy services to any organization that it offers accreditation. SADCAS does not offer or provide any conformity assessment services that conformity assessment bodies perform.

It is recognised that some contracted assessors consult in their private or personal capacities, however, an assessor shall not consult to an organisation where he/she acted as an assessor until all nonconformities have been cleared and a decision has been made by the Accreditation Approvals Committee for unconditional accreditation to be granted or maintained, or accreditation to be withdrawn.

An assessor that has provided consultancy services to an organization shall not be used to assess or make a decision as AAC member for that organization for a period of 2 years after their consultancy services have ceased.

The following are not considered as consultancy, as the information provided is generic and does not include specific and customised advisory activities, services and information:

- Assessor conclaves;
- Providing generic tools and guidance for applicant conformity assessment bodies;
- SADCAS training courses and workshops;
- Sharing information relating to the interpretation of accreditation standards/ guides/ requirements
- Pre-assessments aimed at gathering information, discussing documents and findings, and evaluating readiness for the initial assessment;
- Adding value during accreditation assessments, e.g. by identifying opportunities for improvement and without recommending specific solutions;
- Any other activities which are not considered as participation in an active creative manner in giving specific advice for the organization in obtaining and maintaining SADCAS accreditation.

SADCAS may provide assistance to other national, multi economy accreditation bodies, as needed, to assist them in obtaining their recognition with ILAC, IAF, AFRAC or SADCA. Such assistance is not considered as being in conflict with SADCAS services.

6.4. Governance

SADCAS is governed by a General Assembly which comprises of:

- Subscribers to the Memorandum and Articles of Association;
- Members of the Board of Directors;
- Appointed representatives of National Accreditation Focal Points (NAFPs) in each SADC Member State using the service of SADCAS; and
- Individuals or organizations who apply for admission as members of SADCAS.

Drawn out of the General Assembly is the Board of Directors which provides strategic direction, oversees the running of SADCAS and fulfills any function that the SADCAS General Assembly may delegate to it. The Board of Directors is responsible for the conduct of business and in their overriding duty act in the best interest of the Company and to avoid conflict of interest between themselves and the Company. All Board members share the responsibility for its decisions. The Board of Directors represent independent experts in their field of business administration and technical sciences from the private and public sectors.

The goals and nature of SADCAS operations require that the Board of Directors possess specific skills and expertise as well as attributes as outlined in SADCAS BP 07: Part 1 to lead and direct the Company so as to so as to effectively take decisions and monitor SADCAS performance thus ensure that SADCAS Strategic goals are achieved.

The SADCAS Board of Directors meets at least 4 times during the year and are attended by the CEO, the Finance and Administration Manager with the Technical Manager being invited as necessary. The Board oversees and regularly evaluates all aspects of SADCAS business activities to ensure its operations are carried out responsibly, openly, independently and objectively and that all

applicants for accreditation are treated alike. This guarantees that SADCAS maintains its credibility and integrity.

Upon appointment, and at every Board meeting, the Board of Directors are required to disclose any direct or indirect personal or private business interest that that member may have in any matter brought before the Board. SADCAS F 45 (d), SADCAS F 35-1, SADCAS F 35-2, SADCAS F 35-3 and SADCAS F 35-4,

6.5. SADCAS Permanent Staff

SADCAS permanent staff are required to sign a contract with SADCAS (SADCAS F 50) that specifies their agreement to impartiality and non-conflict of interest. In addition, SADCAS permanent staff are required to declare any potential conflict of interest be it commercial, financial, political or other pressures that could influence the accreditation process at the time that the conflict or possibility of conflict becomes evident [F 45 (c)].

SADCAS staff have also committed to devote his/her entire productive time, ability and attention to the business of the Organization and to perform all duties in a professional, ethical and business-like manner. They have committed not to, during the term of this Agreement, directly or indirectly engage in any other business, either as an employee or employer, consultant, principal, officer, director, advisor or in any other capacity with or without compensation, without the prior consent of the SADCAS.

SADCAS personnel are required to declare in SADCAS F 27 any gifts or donations received, as this can be seen as a possible bribe. The CEO shall decide on the declared gift. Any gift, donation or sponsorship where the donor expects SADCAS or an employee to alter its business in any manner shall not be accepted.

6.6. Assessors/Technical Experts

SADCAS assessors/technical experts are required to sign a contract with SADCAS (SADCAS F 49) that specifies their agreement to impartiality and non-conflict of interest. When selecting assessment teams, the Scheme Coordinator is responsible to ensure that each team member is free from any interest that might cause them to act in other than an impartial and non-discriminatory manner. [F 45(a)]. Prior to the assessment, the assessment team members are obliged to disclose any existing, former or envisaged link between themselves and the organisation to be assessed. Assessment team members shall not have been engaged in such activities in the two years prior to the allocated assessment.

SADCAS requires its assessors / experts to conduct assessments in a manner that allows them to obtain and assess objective evidence fairly and remain true to a conclusion despite any pressures to change that is not based on objective evidence.

As a general principle, no gifts shall be accepted from SADCAS clients. The acceptance of dining invitations can be an area of concern. The provision of lunch by the conformity assessment body is an acceptable time and cost-effective business practice. Any dining invitation or gifts offered

while participating in an assessment should be viewed as a hospitality token. However, they are not an obligation of the accreditation assessment process. Under no circumstance should gifts and meals ever be suggested to or expected of an organization. Occasionally company souvenirs are given e.g. corporate mugs, caps, etc. and when travelling locally or out of the country evening meals may be offered. If provided and they are not excessive in value, these are acceptable. Small gifts may be given at the conclusion of an assessment as a token of appreciation for your time and effort. Often CAB staff will offer to take assessment team/members for evening meals or on local guided tours in spare time as a measure of hospitality and to allow you to experience more fully the richness of the local culture. Once again, provided these are not excessive in value they are in keeping with local business practices and thus acceptable.

It is up to individuals to make appropriate judgement when accepting or declining any gifts or dining invitations. Common sense and awareness of usual business practice within the culture is the best guide. If an assessment team member is in any way uncomfortable, they shall discuss it with the SADCAS Technical Manager/Scheme Coordinator or gracefully decline. Any monetary gifts may not be accepted. The receipt of all gifts must be disclosed to SADCAS.

6.7. Committee Members

SADCAS Advisory Committees advise SADCAS on technical matters within a specific field of expertise. The credibility of SADCAS accreditation processes hinges on the technical knowledge of the Advisory Committees. Advisory Committees only advise and make recommendations. All decision-making lies solely with SADCAS. (SADCAS AP 11).

The Advisory Committee composition and membership is the responsibility of SADCAS who ensures that not only appropriate technical expertise is available but also an appropriate balance of interests is maintained, as far as possible, for each of its Advisory Committees and that there is no conflict of interests and that their recommendations are not self-serving.

Upon appointment, members sign a nondisclosure and confidentiality form. Although information discussed at Advisory Committees would normally be already in the public domain, at every meeting, members are required to disclose any direct or indirect personal or private business interest that that member may have in any matter brought before the Advisory Committee. SADCAS F 45 (d).

SADCAS does not remunerate members for attendance to meetings, participation in working groups or the generation of Technical Documents. SADCAS may, from time to time, reimburse members for incidental costs such as travel costs, accommodation and subsistence allowance. Such incidental expenses must be approved by the CEO.

6.8. Decision-making

At the organizational level, impartiality and objectivity in decision-making are safeguarded through the induction training, approval and monitoring the performance of the Accreditation Approvals Committee (AAC) in line with SADCAS AP 14. The AAC members are approved by the CEO on the basis of their induction training in decision making procedures, and the demonstration

of their ability to remain objective in the decision- making process. The performance of AAC members is monitored at least once in every 3 years.

Accreditation Approvals Committee (AAC) members shall not evaluate an assessment pack of which the member was part of the assessment team or where he/she may have any other conflict of interest with the matter under review. Such declaration shall be made on F 75/F 77.

6.9. Related Bodies

SADCAS maintains a list of related bodies whose relations are analysed and reviewed annually by the Quality Management Committee, Finance Risk and Audit Committee and then the Board of Directors to determine the potential for conflict of interest. (SADCAS BP 09).

7. MONITORING ACTIVITIES

SADCAS identifies, analyses, evaluates, threats and monitors potential risks to impartiality on an ongoing basis through:

- Internal audits;
- Management reviews;
- External financial audits;
- Customer satisfaction surveys; and
- SADCAS also operates an impartial complaints and appeals procedure which is open to all stakeholders.

7.1. Internal Audits are arranged at least annually to confirm continued compliance to all the requirements of the SADCAS Quality Management System, ISO/IEC 17011 and the mandatory requirements of ILAC/IAF /AFRAC /SADCA, and to ensure an effective and efficient implementation of our policies and procedures;

7.2. External Auditors provide an independent, objective and reasonable assurance on whether the financial statements comply with relevant accounting standards and present fairly the financial position and performance of SADCAS. The directors are responsible for preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

The annual evaluation of the internal control measures and risk profile.

7.3. Customer surveys with SADCAS' clients conducted on an ongoing basis at service provision. (F 51(a), F 51(b) and F 99).

7.4. Impartial complaints and appeals procedure (SADCAS AP 08 and BP 05). For the complaints system independent and competent investigators are appointed to investigate validated complaints. Appeals against SADCAS decisions are submitted investigated by an Appeals Committee set up by the SADCAS Board of Directors.

8. RECORDS

SADCAS keeps records of its risk assessments. (BP 09 and BP 06).

9. REFERENCES

• PM 01	:	SADCAS Policy Manual
• AP 08	:	Customer Feedback Handling Procedure
• AP 11	:	Terms of Reference, Registration and Responsibilities of Advisory Committees
• AP 14	:	Accreditation Decision Making Process
• BP 05	:	Terms of Reference Appeals Committee
• BP 06	:	SADCAS Risk Profile
• BP 07: Part 1	:	SADCAS Board of Directors Skills and Expertise Requirements
• BP 09	:	SADCAS Related Bodies Risk Profile
• ISO/IEC 17011: 2017	:	Conformity Assessment – Requirements for Accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies
• F 27	:	Gift Register
• F 35-1	:	SADCAS Board Meeting Attendance Register
• F 35-2	:	SADCAS FRAC Attendance Register
• F 35-3	:	SADCAS HRRC Attendance Register
• F 35-4	:	SADCAS Board Virtual Meetings Attendance Register
• F 45 (a)	:	Nondisclosure/Confidentiality Statement – Assessors / Technical Experts
• F 45 (c)	:	Nondisclosure/Confidentiality Statement – SADCAS Staff members
• F 45 (d)	:	Nondisclosure/Confidentiality Statement – SADCAS Board/ Committee members
• F 49	:	Independent Contractor Agreement Between SADCAS and Assessor / Technical expert
• F 50	:	Employment Contract
• F 51(a)	:	Training Services Evaluation Form
• F 51(b)	:	Training Services Evaluation Form - Online Training
• F 75	:	Accreditation Approvals Committee Evaluation of Assessment Packs - Initial Assessments, Reassessments and Extensions to New Scopes
• F 77	:	AAC Member's Review of Assessment Packs – Periodic On- site Assessments, Extension and Reduction of Existing Scopes and Additional Signatories to Existing Accredited Facilities
• F 99	:	Customer Satisfaction Survey – Accreditation Services

APPENDIX – AMENDMENT RECORD

Revision Status	Change			Approved by	Effective Date
	Page	Clause/ Subclause	Description of Change		
Issue 1	-	-	-	SADCAS Board of Directors	2018-11-19
Issue 1	13	9	Referenced SADCAS F 35-1, F 35-2, F 35-3 and F 35-4. F 51(a) and F 51(b)	SADCAS Board of Directors	2022-02-16