

UPDATE ON ISO/IEC 17025:2017 TRANSITION

By Shadrack Phophi

A lot has changed since our last communication in February 2018, about the ISO/IEC 17025:2017 transition process. Therefore, this article will highlight some new developments regarding the transition process and give more details on how SANAS will handle the transition.

As indicated in the February article, a three (3) year (36 months) transition period has been given for all accredited ISO/IEC 17025 Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) to successfully transition to the 2017 version. As the saying goes “time doesn’t wait for anybody”, we are already in the seven (7) months of the first transition year, thus only twenty-nine (29) months left for CABs to changeover to the 2017 version.

According to the original transition plan published in the February article, SANAS was to conduct all 2017/2018 assessments against the 2005 version and assessors were only expected to check CABs’ progress in implementing the new ISO/IEC 17025:2017 requirements. The article also indicated that non-conformances against the ISO/IEC 17025:2017 standard were to be regarded as observations. In other words, CABs were not going to be expected to send corrective actions to SANAS to clear the non-conformances.

However, due to the unavailability of the ISO/IEC 17025:2017 standard locally it was not possible for both SANAS and CABs to adhere to this plan. The good news is that the latest version of ISO/IEC 17025 “General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories”; has now been published as a South African National Standard. This version is identical to the ISO/IEC version and can be obtained from SABS Standards Division - Sales at www.sabs.co.za.

The availability of the standard locally has paved a way for SANAS to finalise the transition plan. The “new” plan has taken into account the time remaining for both SANAS and CABs to ensure that the new requirements have been fully implemented (see more details in the table below). The following are the changes to the previous transition plan:

1. All assessments scheduled to take place after **30 November 2018** will be conducted against ISO/IEC 17025:2017.
2. All findings raised against ISO/IEC 17025:2017 shall be handled as non-conformances, where the submission of corrective actions to SANAS will be required.
3. As from **01 December 2018**, SANAS will not accept applications of extension to scope to ISO/IEC 17025:2005.
4. As from **01 July 2018**, SANAS will not accept new applications to ISO/IEC 17025:2005.

5. CABs are no longer required to submit transition action plan to SANAS. However, all accredited CABs are encouraged to have a transition action plan to enable them to monitor and track progress regarding the implementation of the new requirements. The action plan should demonstrate how the CABs have analysed the new standard and its implications to their management system and operations. The action plan should also indicate how the CABs will effectively implement all the changes, system and technical, needed to comply before the transition date; and
6. All accredited CABs will be required to fully complete the transition template (as an MS Word document) and submit it to SANAS two (2) month prior to the on-site visit detailing the modifications made to their management systems following the gap analysis (self-assessment) between the 2005 and 2017 standards. It is the responsibility of the CAB to identify the impact of the changes between the two standards to their management

system and then make and implement any required alterations as necessary. Effective implementation of the alterations made to the management system will be assessed at the site visit. The transition template will be available on the SANAS website for downloading or a copy can be requested from the SANAS office.

As required by the SANAS P32 document (Transition to new standards procedure), a Technical Guidance document (TG 52) detailing how transition will be handled has been published and is available for download on the SANAS website – www.sanas.co.za. Furthermore, this technical guidance document identifies the clauses of ISO/IEC 17025:2017 and provides SANAS opinion on the broad extent of any changes in requirements from ISO/IEC 17025:2005. Granular details of the actual changes are not provided and accordingly the CAB will need to conduct a GAP analysis (self-assessment) done against the ISO/IEC 17025:2017 and ISO/IEC 17025:2005 as discussed above.

ISO/IEC 17025:2017 TRANSITION PLAN KEY DATES

| Activity | Date | Comment |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| Publication of the standard | 30 November 2017 | A three-year transition period commencing 01 December 2017 and ending 30 November 2020 |
| Cut-off date of receiving ISO/IEC 17025:2005 new applications | 30 June 2018 | From 01 July 2018, only ISO/IEC 17025:2017 new applications to be accepted |
| 2018/2019 Assessments | 01 April 2018 – 31 March 2019 | From 01 December 2018, all assessments to be done against ISO/IEC 17025:2017. Non-conformances against the new standard will be addressed as per the SANAS normal procedure. |
| 2019/2020 Assessments | 01 April 2019 – 31 March 2020 | All assessments to be done against ISO/IEC 17025:2017. Non-conformances against the new standard will be addressed as per the SANAS normal procedure. |
| Assessments for all accredited laboratories | 31 July 2020 | All assessments to have been conducted against ISO/IEC 17025:2017 for all accredited laboratories |
| Clearing backlog | 01 August 2020 – 30 November 2020 | The last four months of the transition period will be dedicated on clearing outstanding non-conformances and clearing any potential backlog. |
| Transition Cut-off date | 30 November 2020 | CABs that were unable to transit successfully will be automatically suspended after the 30 November 2020. Re-instatement will require onsite visit to confirm full compliance to the new standard and the cost for the visit will be borne by the CAB. |

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