



The Certification Process

Congratulations on considering registration, an important step for your business! We understand that the certification process can seem daunting and intimidating. However, our years of working closely with clients have taught us how to make this experience transparent, pleasant and productive for everyone involved.

Below, you will find some information about how we do business and what you can expect if you work with us. If you want to learn more, please call us directly. We'll be happy to discuss your specific certification needs and provide real answers to your questions.

Identifying Your Individual Needs

We will begin with a data collection exercise to create an Agreement for certification. The information that we collect ensures that we understand your organization and are prepared and able to provide certification services. We can provide an accurate assessment of the time and cost of certification once we know:

- The Standards to which you wish to be certified
- Your organization size, structure, location and relationships
- Consultancies supporting your design and implementation
- Your organizational processes
- Outsourced processes
- The risks associated with your products and/or services
- Your requested certification scope
- The requirements of the Standard that you would like to exclude from the scope
- Your requested timeframe

Assuring Readiness

As your partner, we want to make sure that you are ready for your assessment.

Each initial assessment is made up of two assessments: **A Stage 1 Assessment and a Stage 2 Assessment.**

During the **Stage 1 Assessment**, we come on site to look at your documentation and operational processes to get a better understanding of your business structure and to validate your and our readiness for the Stage 2 Assessment as well as the resources allocated to that assessment. It is during the Stage 1 Assessment that we plan each step of your Stage 2 Assessment. If we decide together that you're ready, we confirm the schedule for the Stage 2 Assessment.

If you request an optional **pre-assessment**, we will provide an assessment in about half the required time to do the initial audit. We like to do these after the stage 1 so that our assessment tools are ready for the pre-assessment and for the Stage 2 assessment. The pre-assessment provides you



with detailed reports identifying processes that require attention and potential improvements that could be considered for even more confidence heading into a **Stage 2 Assessment**.

Assessment Schedules

At Platinum, we will always provide you with the names of your auditors and a schedule that accurately reflects every planned activity. You will know just what to expect, and you can trust that there will be no surprises. Your assessment schedule will reflect your business needs and follow the requirements specified by the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and the ANSI National Accreditation Board (ANAB).

Once you receive your schedule, you should review it with appropriate people within your organization to ensure that there are no conflicts with the auditors selected, that the schedule fits your organization's activities, and that the schedule is accurate and reasonable (e.g., it allows for enough time and does not present scheduling conflicts). If you discover any timetable issues or other concerns, please let us know; we'll gladly work to make the schedule convenient for your business.

Please let your personnel know that the schedule is somewhat fluid. During assessments, it is important that we follow audit trails and spend time where we need to spend it. We will communicate necessary audit schedule changes so that appropriate individuals are aware of any delays. It is also okay to change the audit schedules if any conflicts arise during the assessment, just communicate with your Lead Auditor.

What Your Auditors Will Need During the Assessment

Once the assessment begins, you can support your auditors by providing these necessary accommodations:

- A private room—so they can perform work and discuss findings without disruption.
- Lunch (and beverages) at the facility—so they can stay on schedule. Our allocated audit time does not allow for lunches so we try to stay on site and on schedule.
- Guides—to facilitate the audit process and to assure that the auditor is aware of and follows your organization's policies and safety procedures.

To ensure their independence, the audit team cannot accept gifts and other gratuities; please do not offer them.

What to Expect During an On-Site Assessment

We believe clear and ongoing communication is an essential part of any successful assessment activity. Your auditors will begin each audit with an opening meeting to review the scope and assessment plan, to inform management about the audit process and to answer any questions.



The assessment will cover the entire scope defined prior to the assessment. Your auditors will observe work activities, interview personnel and review documents and records. Please expect us to move around your facility – we like to be where the action is. Should our auditors discover nonconformities, they will immediately bring them to your attention to assure understanding and confirm that they have all of the information available. It's always best to get feedback from you as these findings are discovered.

Teamed audits require team communication, so if there is an audit team, you should expect them to hold private meetings to ensure that the Lead Auditor is informed of what the team is seeing and to be kept updated on the audit progress. Try to relax as our auditors meet, it is not an indicator that there is any issue.

Each evening of each assessment day, your auditors will hold briefing meetings to discuss the day's events and any nonconformances that were identified. All employees are welcome, but at least one member of management should be present.

At the conclusion of the assessment, the audit team will briefly review the findings identified during the entire audit with management and any other interested members of your team.

Assessment Reports

After each assessment your Lead Auditor will prepare a report summarizing the assessment and providing directions for future actions. These reports are generated as quickly as possible following the assessment and you should expect to receive them with will sent to you in 4 business days.

Corrective Action

Nonconformities happen. They are a natural part of any assessment process and will likely occur in yours. These issues need not derail certification; they are simply part of the process but they must be addressed with formal corrective action following directions in your assessment report and in the closing meeting. Once you take action, we will review your adjustments to ensure that they have effectively addressed the nonconformity observed.

Granting Certification and Certificate Issuance

Once your corrective actions and objective evidence of completion have been reviewed and accepted by our auditors, you will be *recommended for certification* and your assessment package will be submitted to our review process. Our independent Reviewers ensure that the assessment data is complete and that together, you and the audit team have demonstrated conformance the applicable standards. Only then can the Reviewer grant certification. After the Reviewer grants certification, our office team will issue your three-year certificate.



Issuance of Symbols

When you receive your certificate, you will also receive a password to access relevant certification symbols from Platinum and our Accreditation Body under the Client tab on our website. Instructions and restrictions for the use of these symbols are found in the Certification Requirements document that is provided with your certification agreement. The most current version of this document is also maintained within the Client section of website. We want to encourage you to use these symbols to market your certification. Buyers that understand certification use these identifiers to validate your accredited certification.

Refusing Certification

A certification can be **refused** if your organization does not demonstrate conformance with the requirements of the Standard and your own management system. Because the process is accredited, it is formal and operates on a timeline. Failure to meet the timelines can result in a situation where certification cannot be issued without additional audits.

Maintaining Certification

Once your certification has been granted, you must continue to implement, maintain and improve your management system and be assessed each year to maintain your certification. At a minimum, Platinum must conduct conformance assessments each calendar year following certification. These assessments are usually smaller in duration and allow us to really dig a little deeper into the selected processes. This is a requirement for continued certification (i.e., maintenance of certification).

Renewing Certification

Every three years your certificate will expire and it will need to be renewed. To renew your certification, we are required to conduct a recertification assessment where we review your management system in its entirety. Once conformance is demonstrated and your assessment data is reviewed, recertification certification may be recommended and your certificate may be issued. This certificate is another three-year certificate.

Scope Modifications

If you would like to adjust your certification scope (the description of what your organization does) because you have added or removed locations, process, products and/or services, we can help validate the conformance of these new processes for you so that they can be included on your certificate. We validate these changes either as a special visit or during an upcoming assessment.



Suspension of Certification

Your certificate can be suspended (made temporarily invalid) upon your request, if contractual obligations are not met (e.g., unpaid invoice), maintenance audits do not occur within the calendar year or if your system persistently fails to meet certification requirements. Suspension means that your certification cannot be marketed and that your customers may require notification.

Restoring Certification

Your certificate may be restored if Issues that resulted in suspension are resolved within the timeframe established by Platinum in writing.

Withdrawal of Certification

Your certificate can be withdrawn upon your request or if issues that resulted in suspension are not resolved within the timeframe established by Platinum in writing. Once a certification is withdrawn, it cannot be restored without a successful initial assessment.

Appeals

We have an easy appeals process to help you if you disagree with a nonconformance. We ask that you first address your concern with your Lead Auditor during or after the assessment. If you cannot find common ground, then you may appeal the nonconformance with our office. A certification decision may also be appealed by contacting our office.

Client Feedback and Complaints

Occasionally, we send surveys to our clients to gather knowledge about perceptions of our services. We use information provided to improve our processes so that we can provide the best and most client-focused certification services available. We really appreciate your participation in our survey process.

If you have a complaint you need only contact the office through our website, by phone or email. We will enter it into our complaints system and work to resolve it for you.

Complaints Regarding Certified Clients

Should you have a complaint about a certified client, we ask that you first address your complaint directly with the client. They will have a formal process for addressing the complaint. If the complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction, feel free to reach out to us and we will perform an investigation.



Platinum Name and Symbols

Platinum Registration, Inc. is a registered legal entity. Our company name, logos and certification symbols are controlled owned by Platinum Registration, Inc. Specific controls are described in a document within the Client's tab on our website.

Requests for Information, Questions and Answers

We're always thrilled to help our partners achieve certification and maintain the competitive edge it offers. If you would like to learn more about working with Platinum Registration, we encourage you to call us today. We believe our experience, attention to detail, industry-expert auditors and positive, supportive attitude make us a value-added partner for businesses like yours.

You can reach us through the contact tab on our website or if you prefer, via email: info@platinumregistration.com or phone: 303-639-9001.