

*To all accredited certification, inspection, verification and validation bodies  
Scheme managers*

*To the associations of CABs*

**Object: Department of Certification and Inspection – Technical circular N° 07/2019  
Dispositions for the use of innovative methodologies by ACCREDIA for the  
assessment of the conformity of accredited bodies**

## **Introduction**

The new edition of the standard UNI CEI EN ISO/IEC 17011:2018 “Conformity assessment – Requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies”, applicable to the activities of accreditation bodies, introduced new elements regarding methodologies (see § 3.24 of the standard) which an accreditation body may use in assessment activities.

The new assessment techniques were introduced in the revisions to the ACCREDIA General Regulation for accreditation, RG-01 (see § 0.4,1.1.3, 1.5.1.3 and 1.8.4) and in the accreditation agreement (CO) between ACCREDIA and bodies performing conformity assessments (CABs).

In accordance with the input received from the parties with an interest in accreditation and as expressed in ACCREDIA’s program approved by the Steering and Guarantee Committee, with the aim of ensuring greater effectiveness and efficiency of the accreditation processes, ACCREDIA is preparing a project which includes the use of unannounced assessments (VSP).

The objective of unannounced assessments is to assess in a continuous way the maintenance of conformity with the requirements of accreditation on the part of accredited bodies.

Unannounced assessments consist of an assessment visit which has not been agreed in advance at the site of the CAB (unannounced witness assessments are not included in the project) and therefore the assessment plan is not sent beforehand.

Unannounced assessments do not constitute or replace normal surveillance and renewal activities and therefore these assessments – decided by the Sector Accreditation Committee for verifying the closure of corrective actions deriving from criticalities analysed during the decision-taking phase – are not included in the project. They have already been performed in special cases such as after receipt by ACCREDIA of a remark or complaint, objectively motivated, which casts doubt upon the CAB’s conformity and/or competence.

Unannounced assessments are performed by all ACCREDIA’s departments. Below we present specific indications for the Department of Certification and Inspection.

The project envisages the performance of unannounced assessments also at CABs which have not presented evident criticalities, so as to test the organization and the management of these visits.

As is known, an accreditation body shall periodically carry out a risk analysis on each of the schemes for which the CAB is accredited. Therefore also the outcomes of unannounced assessments can be taken into consideration – together with other factors – for reviewing (increasing or decreasing) the surveillance activities conducted on a particular CAB.

Below we provide indications which the Steering and Guarantee Committee sent for the implementation of the project which will be implemented over a period of twelve months on a sample of about ten CABs and managed by the department in question.

### **Operative modalities**

<b>Criterion for selection of the CAB</b>	70/80% of the CABs are in the "high risk" category due both to criticalities which emerge from the assessment and to their complexity. The remaining 20/30% of CABs are in the "low risk" category.
<b>Assessment visit plan</b>	During the opening meeting the communication of the department management is given to the CAB informing it of the decision to perform the unannounced assessment with, attached, the plan (if this is considered important). The CAB is allowed to present well-motivated objections or modifications to the plan or regarding the assessors appointed. The CAB may also communicate any absences during the assessment of specific personnel, and thereby provide justification of any failures.  In cases of the total absence of interlocutors at the CAB on the day of the assessment, the assessment shall be annulled with a non-negative outcome.
<b>Assessment team</b>	The assessment team shall consist of two assessors, one of whom shall be an ACCREDIA dependent employee.
<b>Performance of the assessment</b>	The operative modalities are conducted using the normal procedures. The assessment is conducted both with regard to ongoing activities and to those already concluded by means of archive file sampling. With regard to the ongoing activities, the sampling requirements during the unannounced assessment, contained in the checklist, are indicatively identified from amongst the following activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- general review of the audits which the CAB is undertaking during the day of the performance of the unannounced assessment (e.g. composition of the audit team, verification of the actual presence of the indicated audit team, assessment of the status of the relative files including review of existing contracts with organisations and with auditors);</li> <li>- review of the decision-taking process concerning certification and the implementation of decisions; verification of the management of NCs, CAs and complaints.</li> </ul> Other requirements to be sampled and entered in the checklist are chosen in accordance with the scope of the assessment and the area of activities (voluntary or regulated).
<b>Duration</b>	The duration of the assessment shall not exceed one day.
<b>Costs</b>	The costs deriving from activities carried out for the project shall be met by ACCREDIA.
<b>Post assessment</b>	In accordance with ACCREDIA general regulation RG-01, rev.04, the results of the unannounced assessment are reviewed by ACCREDIA's technical staff and by the department management in order to obtain an objective evaluation of the possible need for further information or clarifications regarding matters which it was not possible to assess during the unannounced assessment. Subsequently, the outcomes shall be managed according to the regulations, including the presentation of the file to the relevant Sector Accreditation Committee where necessary (e.g. for the review of particularly critical cases).

## **OUTPUT OF THE PROJECT**

As specified above, the results of the unannounced assessment, together with those of other assessments, shall be taken into consideration with regard to the risk analysis for each CAB, with the resulting positive or negative consequences in terms of the subsequent surveillances.

At the conclusion of the project a review of the cases dealt with will be undertaken and the management of any problems to emerge, and the effectiveness of tools/methodologies with respect to the initial objectives will also be evaluated for the purpose of establishing modalities of operative use.

Please contact us for any clarifications.

With kind regards,

**Dott. Emanuele Riva**  
**Direttore Dipartimento**  
**Certificazione e Ispezione**

