الوكالة الوطنية للأمن السيبراني
**National Cyber Security Agency**

# National Information Security Compliance Framework (NISCF) – General Policy for National Accreditation

## [NCSA-NISCF-ACCR-GPNA]

### Policy

### National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA)

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| **Abstract** | This document is the General Policy for National Accreditation developed by the National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA) with the intended usage in the operation of National Information Security Compliance Framework (NISCF) Accreditation Services. This document provides high-level direction for requirements definition for NISCF Accreditation Services. |

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National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA) has designed and created this publication, titled "National Information Security Compliance Framework (NISCF) – General Policy for National Accreditation" - V1.0 - Public, in order to provide high-level direction for requirements definition for NISCF Accreditation Services.

NCSA is responsible for the review and maintenance of this document.

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# LEGAL MANDATE(S)

Based on Emiri Decree No 1 of year 2021, National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA) – National Cyber Governance and Cyber Assurance Affairs (NCGAA) is the entity responsible for issuing certificates for Technology and Information Security service providers and certificates of compliance with National Information Security standards and policies.

This Policy has been prepared to take into consideration the current applicable laws of the State of Qatar. If a conflict arises between this document and the laws of Qatar, the latter shall take precedence. Any such term shall, to that extent be omitted from this Document, and the rest of the document shall stand without affecting the remaining provisions. Amendments, in that case, shall then be required to ensure compliance with the relevant applicable laws of the State of Qatar.

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# 1. Introduction

National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA) created its Accreditation Services to provide assurance that Service Providers have the capability and capacity to deliver cyber security related services in a specified subject or areas of expertise.

In effort to improve the Accreditation Services, NCSA developed this document, titled "National Information Security Compliance Framework (NISCF) – General Policy for National Accreditation" - V1.0 - Public, to provide the cyber space with high-level overview and direction of requirements for Accreditation Services.

# 2. Purpose and Scope

## 2.1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide high-level overview and direction of requirements for NISCF Accreditation Services and help Service Providers aiming to apply for multiple NISCF Accreditation Services understand the rules and processes of Accreditation.

## 2.2. Scope

The General Policy for National Accreditation applies to all Accreditation Services that are offered by NCSA under the NISCF.

NCSA defines which NISCF's Services this document applies to.

# 3. Key Definitions

The terminologies used in this policy are consistent with the definitions provided in the NCSA-NISCF-ACCR-GTXD (General Taxonomy Document for National Accreditation - Public).

# 4. Policy Statements

## 4.1. General

### 4.1.1. Accreditation Services Authority (Accreditation Body)

#### 4.1.1.1. Accreditation Services Accountability

4.1.1.1.1. National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA) is the Accreditation Body for NISCF's Accreditation Services and therefore, is solely responsible for, and remain fully accountable on related Accreditation decisions.

4.1.1.1.2. NCSA can authorize one or more defined part(s) of its structure to act as the Accreditation Body for NISCF's Accreditation Services.

4.1.1.1.3. The Accreditation Body is responsible and accountable for retaining and maintaining evidences to demonstrate conformance to the NISCF Accreditation Services requirements.

#### 4.1.1.2. Accreditation Services Fairness

4.1.1.2.1. The Accreditation Body commits to impartiality and objectivity of the NISCF Accreditation Services, through:

- Establishing a risk management system to identify, evaluate, mitigate and monitor potentially arising conflict of interests impacting the Accreditation Body itself, persons in charge with its governance and / or management, employees, sub-contractors and partners;

- Top management commitment to impartiality; and

- Implementing administrative, technical and financial safeguards.

#### 4.1.1.3. Accreditation Services Continuity

4.1.1.3.1. NISCF's Accreditation Services finances and resources are defined and managed by the Accreditation Body in order to guarantee their continuity in the light of its strategy and objectives.

### 4.1.2. Accreditation Services requirements

4.1.2.1.1. The Accreditation Body defines and maintains the NISCF's Accreditation Services requirements.

4.1.2.1.2.      The Accreditation Body determines, solely or in collaboration with other entities, the means to document and communicate the NISCF's Accreditation Services requirements for the different stakeholders.

4.1.2.1.3.      The Accreditation Body determines the period of validity of a Certificate of Accreditation granted under the NISCF's Accreditation Services.

4.1.2.1.4.      The Accreditation Body determines the fees associated with NISCF's Accreditation Services, their applicability and payments methods and period.

### 4.1.3. Accreditation Services Agreements

4.1.3.1.1.      Relationships between stakeholders in NISCF's Accreditation Services are governed by legally enforceable agreements established between the different stakeholders, individually or collectively.

## 4.2.      Information

### 4.2.1. Public Information

4.2.1.1.1.      NISCF's Accreditation Services information are publicly made available by the Accreditation Body.

4.2.1.1.2.      The Accreditation Body can decide to provide certain NISCF's Accreditation Services information only upon request at the condition that the non-publicly available information does not significantly impact the NISCF's Accreditation Services understanding by the cyber space.

### 4.2.2. Accreditations records

4.2.2.1.1.      The Accreditation Body defines the content and format of NISCF's Accreditation records.

### 4.2.3. Accreditation reference and usage

4.2.3.1.1.      The Accreditation Body defines the terms and conditions for the usage of NISCF's Accreditation symbols, references or any other demarcation.

4.2.3.1.2.      The Accreditation Body owns the NISCF's Accreditation symbols, marks and logos.

4.2.3.1.3.    The Accreditation Body can license the use of the NISCF's Accreditation symbols, marks and logos to a third-party.

### 4.2.4. *Confidentiality*

4.2.4.1.1.    The Accreditation Body is solely accountable and responsible for the confidentiality of all information obtained directly from the data owner or created by the Accreditation Body during the operation of NISCF's Accreditation Services, at all organization's levels and individuals acting on its behalf.

4.2.4.1.2.    For information obtained during the operation of NISCF's Accreditation through a third-party, the Accreditation Body is jointly responsible, along with the third-party, of the confidentiality of such information.

### 4.2.5. *Communication with stakeholders*

4.2.5.1.1.    The Accreditation Body defines and provides the information that is deemed required to the NISCF's Accreditation stakeholders.

4.2.5.1.2.    The Accreditation Body determines communication methods and means, that are deemed adequate to communicate any change of the NISCF's Accreditation Services information to the stakeholders.

4.2.5.1.3.    The Accreditation Body defines the terms and conditions for NISCF Accreditation stakeholders to communicate changes to the Accreditation Body and / or other stakeholders.

### 4.2.6. *Security*

4.2.6.1.1.    The Accreditation Body defines and enforces information security requirements related to NISCF's Accreditation Services for all stakeholders.

## 4.3. Accreditation Operation

### 4.3.1. Application

#### 4.3.1.1. Request for Accreditation

4.3.1.1.1.     NISCF's Accreditation Services can only be provided after a formal request for Accreditation to the Accreditation Body.

4.3.1.1.2.     The Accreditation Body defines the requirements and information needed for requesting NISCF's Accreditation Services.

4.3.1.1.3.     The Service Provider applying to NISCF's Accreditation Services shall provide all the information and evidence demonstrating its conformance to policies and standards requirements related to the NISCF's Accreditation Services requested.

4.3.1.1.4.     The objective of the policies and standards requirements related to the NISCF's Accreditation Services requested shall ensure that the Service Provider applying to NISCF's Accreditation Services:

- The Service Provider shall be a legal entity such that it is legally authorized to operate in the State of Qatar;

- The Service Provider shall have adequate legal and financial instruments to provide its services to clients in conformance with the laws and regulations of the state of Qatar;

- The Service Provider shall have risk management system to identify, evaluate, mitigate and monitor risks related to the provision of NISCF's Accreditation Services;

- The Service Provider shall have clear organizational controls enabling the governance and management of duties, responsibilities, and authorities of management and other personnel involved in the provision of NISCF's Accreditation Services;

- The Service Provider shall demonstrate sufficient and adequate capacity, competency and capability the provision of Accreditation Service;

- The Service Provider shall manage all aspects related to outsourcing of third parties working on behalf of the Service Provider for the provision of NISCF's Accreditation Services;

⟲ The Service Provider shall have adequate information security mechanisms; and

⟲ The Service Provider shall have adequate and sufficient policies, processes, procedures, manuals, methodologies and tools for the delivery of the Accreditation Service from inception to the closure of the project/engagement in alignment with the relevant Accreditation Standards.

### 4.3.1.2. Request Review and Assessment

4.3.1.2.1.    The Accreditation Body reviews the request for NISCF's Accreditation Services to confirm the eligibility of the Service Provider to the NISCF's Accreditation Services requested.

4.3.1.2.2.    The Accreditation Body determines during the request review if physical visits to the Service Provider to the NISCF's Accreditation Services facilities is required.

4.3.1.2.3.    The Service Provider applying to the NISCF's Accreditation Services shall collaborate and facilitate the visits referred to in policy statement **4.3.1.2.2**.

4.3.1.2.4.    The Accreditation Body is to provide the Service Provider to a NISCF's Accreditation Services request with a formal acceptance or rejection and / or feedbacks on its NISCF's Accreditation Services request.

### 4.3.2. Request assessment

4.3.2.1.1.    The Accreditation Body develops an assessment plan for each accepted NISCF's Accreditation Services request.

4.3.2.1.2.    The Accreditation Body assesses the request for NISCF's Accreditation Services to confirm the Service Provider conformance to policies and standards requirements related to the NISCF's Accreditation Services requested.

### 4.3.3. Accreditation Decision

#### 4.3.3.1. Types of Accreditation Decision

4.3.3.1.1.    The Accreditation Body defines the Accreditation Decisions available to be taken, based on the NISCF's Accreditation Services lifecycle and the NISCF's Accreditation Services requested.

### 4.3.3.2. Responsibility of Accreditation Decision

4.3.3.2.1.	The Accreditation Body is responsible for the Accreditation Decisions related to the NISCF's Accreditation Services.

4.3.3.2.2.	The Accreditation Body cannot delegate Accreditation Decisions related to the NISCF's Accreditation Services.

4.3.3.2.3.	Accreditation Decisions related to the NISCF's Accreditation Services can be jointly made with other organizations, if the NISCF Accreditation Services in question have been jointly developed with the above-mentioned organizations.

4.3.3.2.4.	When the Accreditation Body is relying on an assessment already performed by another organization, it will ensure that the assessment was performed in conformance with the policy statements defined in this document.

### 4.3.3.3. Initial Accreditation Decision

4.3.3.3.1.	The Accreditation Body is responsible to provide the Service Provider for the NISCF's Accreditation Services with a formal Accreditation decision.

4.3.3.3.2.	The Accreditation Body is responsible to determine which information shall be made publicly available for Accredited Organization and NISCF's Certificate of Accreditation in conformance with policy statements defined in sections **4.2.1** and **4.2.2**.

### 4.3.4. Maintenance, Suspension, Reinstatement, Changes affecting the Accreditation, Accreditation reduction, Accreditation expansion, Termination, Withdrawal and Expiry

### 4.3.4.1. Maintenance

4.3.4.1.1.	The Accreditation Body is responsible for determining the maintenance requirements for NISCF's Accreditation Services.

4.3.4.1.2.	Certificate of Accreditation granted under the NISCF's Accreditation Services are subject to maintenance, unless specified otherwise by specific NISCF's Accreditation Services requirements in order to align and / or conform with best practices and standards in the cyber security area of expertise of the above-specified NISCF's Accreditation Services.

### 4.3.4.2. Suspension

4.3.4.2.1. Certificate of Accreditation granted under the NISCF's Accreditation Services can be subject to suspension by the Accreditation Body if certain conditions are met.

4.3.4.2.2. The Accreditation Body defines the conditions under which the Certificate of Accreditation granted under the NISCF's Accreditation Services can be suspended.

### 4.3.4.3. Reinstatement

4.3.4.3.1. Reinstatement of suspended Certificate of Accreditation under the NISCF's Accreditation Services can only be performed by the Accreditation Body if the conditions that led to the suspension has been resolved.

### 4.3.4.4. Changes affecting the Accreditation

4.3.4.4.1. The Accreditation Body can introduce changes (new or updated requirements) to existing NISCF's Accreditation Services that may affect active Certificates of Accreditation.

4.3.4.4.2. The Accreditation Body will communicate, through appropriate means, the changes introduced and the associated requirements to conform with the changes.

4.3.4.4.3. The Accreditation Body is responsible for ensuring that active Certificates of Accreditation conform with the changes.

4.3.4.4.4. The Accreditation Body is responsible for providing means for the Accredited Organization to report changes that may affect active Certificates of Accreditation.

4.3.4.4.5. The Accreditation Body is responsible for assessing the changes and defining the necessary actions.

4.3.4.4.6. The Accreditation Body is responsible for ensuring that necessary actions are implemented.

### 4.3.4.5. Accreditation reduction

4.3.4.5.1.     The Accreditation Body is responsible for determining conditions under which the boundaries of a NISCF's Certificate of Accreditation reduction is permissible for NISCF's Accreditation Services.

4.3.4.5.2.     The Accreditation Body defines if a specific NISCF's Accreditation Services allows for the boundaries of a NISCF's Certificate of Accreditation reduction in order to align and / or conform with best practices and standards in the cyber security area of expertise of the above-specified NISCF's Accreditation Services.

### 4.3.4.6. Accreditation expansion

4.3.4.6.1.     The Accreditation Body is responsible for determining conditions under which the boundaries of a NISCF's Certificate of Accreditation expansion is permissible for NISCF's Accreditation Services.

4.3.4.6.2.     The Accreditation Body defines if a specific NISCF's Accreditation Services allows for the boundaries of a NISCF's Certificate of Accreditation expansion in order to align and / or conform with best practices and standards in the cyber security area of expertise of the above-specified NISCF's Accreditation Services.

### 4.3.4.7. Termination

4.3.4.7.1.     The Accreditation Body is responsible for determining the means available for an Accredited Organization to request termination of a NISCF's Certificate of Accreditation.

4.3.4.7.2.     The Accreditation Body can request for a termination of NISCF's Certificate of Accreditation, only before the expiry of the period of validity of the NISCF's Certificate of Accreditation.

4.3.4.7.3.     The Accreditation Body shall conform to the Accredited Organization request and terminate the NISCF's Certificate of Accreditation.

### 4.3.4.8. Withdrawal

4.3.4.8.1.     Certificate of Accreditation granted under the NISCF's Accreditation Services can be subject to withdrawal by the Accreditation Body if certain conditions are met.

4.3.4.8.2. The Accreditation Body defines the conditions under which the Certificate of Accreditation granted under the NISCF's Accreditation Services can be withdrawn.

### 4.3.4.9. Expiry

4.3.4.9.1. Certificate of Accreditation granted under the NISCF's Accreditation Services have a defined period of validity when issued by the Accreditation Body.

4.3.4.9.2. The Accreditation Body defines the period of validity for NISCF's Accreditation Services.

4.3.4.9.3. Certificate of Accreditation granted under the NISCF's Accreditation Services that has not been subject to a request for re-Accreditation, by the Accredited Organization or did not conform with re-Accreditation requirement, expires at the end of the period of validity.

### 4.3.5. Re-Accreditation

4.3.5.1.1. The Accreditation Body is responsible for determining the means available for an Accredited Organization to request a NISCF's Certificate of Accreditation extension of the period of validity through re-Accreditation.

4.3.5.1.2. The Accreditation Body is responsible for determining the re-Accreditation requirements for the NISCF's Accreditation Services.

## 4.4. Complaint and Appeal

### 4.4.1. Complaint

4.4.1.1.1.    The Accreditation Body is responsible for determining the means available for the NISCF's Accreditation Services stakeholders to complaint about the NISCF's Accreditation Services and its operation.

4.4.1.1.2.    The Accreditation Body determines the conditions of acceptance, review and communication of complaints related to the NISCF's Accreditation Services.

4.4.1.1.3.    The Accreditation Body is solely responsible for complaints' related decisions for the NISCF's Accreditation Services.

4.4.1.1.4.    The Accreditation Body ensures that complaints handling related to the NISCF's Accreditation Services conform to principles defined in section **4.1.1.2**.

### 4.4.2. Appeal

4.4.2.1.1.    The Accreditation Body is responsible for determining the means available for the NISCF's Accreditation Services stakeholders to appeal the NISCF's Accreditation Services decisions.

4.4.2.1.2.    The Accreditation Body determines the conditions of acceptance, review and communication of appeals related to the NISCF's Accreditation Services.

4.4.2.1.3.    The Accreditation Body is solely responsible for appeals' related decisions for the NISCF's Accreditation Services.

4.4.2.1.4.    The Accreditation Body ensures that appeals handling related to the NISCF's Accreditation Services conform to principles defined in section **4.1.1.2**.

# 5. Compliance and Enforcement

## 5.1. Compliance Process

All stakeholders to the NISCF's Accreditation Services shall comply with the requirements defined in this policy.

## 5.2. Roles and Responsibilities

National Cyber Governance and Assurance Affairs (NCGAA) is responsible for ensuring compliance to this policy.

## 5.3. Transitioning and effective date

### 5.3.1. Effective date

This policy is effective from January 1, 2024.

### 5.3.2. Transition period

NISCF's Accreditation Services requests made and NISCF's Certificate of Accreditation issued, before the effective date of this policy are not subject to this policy until the re-Accreditation stage.

Service Providers applying for NISCF's Accreditation Services and holders of NISCF's Certificate of Accreditation described in the previous paragraph can voluntarily comply with the requirements defined in this policy before the re-Accreditation stage.

## 5.4. Exceptions and deviations

### 5.4.1. Exceptions to Policy Statements

Exceptions to this policy shall only be defined by the National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA) through another policy and / or any NCSA's organizational structure that has been given the authority over the NISCF or the Accreditation Services.

### 5.4.2. Deviation process from Policy Statements

Deviation from policy statements shall be formally authorized in written by the National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA).

### 5.4.3. Sanctions

National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA) reserves the right to not accept NISCF's Accreditation Services requests and / or suspend or withdraw NISCF's Certificate of

Accreditation or Licenses provided by NCSA from NISCF's Accreditation Services stakeholders that do not conform with the requirements defined in this policy.

National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA) may impose appropriate procedural sanctions on Accredited Service Provider that do not conform with the requirements defined in this Policy, in virtue of the authority that has been granted to NCSA, though laws and regulations. Sanctions can also be imposed on non-Accredited Service Providers that misuse the Accreditation Symbols, Claims and Other demarcation.

# 6. Annexes

## 6.1.     Acronyms

**NCGAA**     National Cyber Governance and Assurance Affairs.

**NCSA**     National Cyber Security Agency.

**NISCF**     National Information Security Compliance Framework.

## 6.2.     Reference

Emiri Decree No 1 of year 2021.

President of National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA) Decision No 3 of year 2022.

NCSA-NISCF-ACCR-GTXD (General Taxonomy Document for National Accreditation - Public).

National Cyber Security Agency

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