الوكالة الوطنية للأمن السيبراني
National Cyber Security Agency

National Information Security Compliance Framework (NISCF) – National Information Assurance (NIA) – Audit Team Selection

[NCSA-NISCF-ACCR-AUD-NIA-SOP-ATS]

Standard Operating Procedure

National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA)

Document Control

Document Details	
Document ID	NCSA-NISCF-ACCR-AUD-NIA-SOP-ATS
Version	V1.0
Classification & Type	C0 – Public / PS1 – Non-Personal Data (Non-PD)

DISCLAIMER / LEGAL RIGHTS

National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA) has designed and created this Standard Operating Procedure, titled "National Information Security Compliance Framework (NISCF) – National Information Assurance (NIA) – Audit Team Selection – Standard Operating Procedure" - V1.0 - C0 – Public / PS1 – Non-Personal Data (Non-PD) , in order to provide the required steps and actions to be performed by the Accredited Audit Service Providers for selecting the audit team for NIA Certification Audits, as part of National Information Security Compliance Framework (NISCF) Certification Services of the National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA).

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

National Cyber Security Agency
الوكالة الوطنية للأمن السيبراني

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 document 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.

Table of Contents

Table of Tables

1. Introduction

The National Information Security Compliance Framework (NISCF) helps to support the achievement of Qatar's National Cyber Security Strategy; it complements Qatar's National Information Assurance Framework (including wider applicable information security legislation, regulation, and standards) to establish safe and vibrant cyberspace.

NCSA offers Audit Service Accreditation for Service Providers that are willing to participate in the delivery of audits related to NISCF's Services.

National Information Assurance (NIA) Certification is one of the NISCF's services that requires the reliance on Audit Service Providers.

Accredited Audit Service Providers shall comply with the steps and rules defined in this document when performing NIA Certification Audit. Conformance to this procedure is considered in the maintenance of the Audit Service Providers Accreditation.

2. Purpose and Scope

2.1.   Purpose

This Standard Operating Procedure has been developed with the objective to instruct the Accredited Audit Service Providers for National Information Assurance (NIA) on the mandatory steps and method for selecting audit team members for National Information Assurance (NIA) audit(s).

This Standard Operating Procedure shall be read in conjunction with the NISCF Audit Standard (NCSA-NISCF-AUD-STND) and NIA Audit Accreditation Standard (NCSA-NISCF-ACCR-AUD-NIA-STND).

2.2.   Scope

This Standard Operating Procedure applies to all National Information Assurance (NIA) Certification Audits.

3. Terms and Definitions

The terminologies used in this document are consistent with the definitions provided in the NCSA-NISCF-ACCR-GTXD (General Taxonomy Document for National Accreditation - Public), NCSA-NISCF-CERT-GTXD (General Taxonomy Document for National Certification - Public), NCSA-NISCF-ACCR-NIA-AUD-STND (NIA Audit Accreditation Standard) and the NCSA-NISCF-AUD-STND (NISCF Audit Standard - Public).

For the purpose of this document, the following verbs indicate:

Appropriate	Suitable for or to.
Can	A modal verb that entail a possibility or capacity.
May	A modal verb that entail a permission.
Shall	A model verb that entail a requirement.
Should	A modal verb that entail a recommendation.

4. Standard Operating Procedure

4.1. Initial Selection of Audit Team

Step ID	Step Description	Inputs	Outputs
SOP-ATS-ISAT-01	As per requirement A.C.E.2.1.2.2. of the NISCF Audit Standard, the Accredited Service Provider for NIA Audit shall appoint a unique Engagement Lead for each NIA Certification audit, and thus after ensuring that the appointed person fulfilled all the impartiality and independence requirements defined in section A.C.E.2.3. Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct of the NISCF Audit Standard.	⟡ Selection of the Accredited Service Provider for NIA Audit by the auditee	⟡ Appointed Engagement Lead
SOP-ATS-ISAT-02	As per requirement A.C.E.2.1.3.2. of the NISCF Audit Standard, the Accredited Service Provider for NIA Audit shall appoint a unique Lead Auditor for each NIA Certification audit, and thus after ensuring that the appointed person fulfilled all the impartiality and independence requirements defined in section A.C.E.2.3. Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct of the NISCF Audit Standard.	⟡ Output of SOP-ATS-ISAT-01	⟡ Appointed Lead Auditor
SOP-ATS-ISAT-03	The Accredited Service Provider for NIA Audit shall select the Auditors that will participate for each NIA Certification audit after taking into consideration: ⟡ Audit objectives and scope. Please refer to the Technical Directive on Objectives and Audit Scope (NCSA-NISCF-NIA-TD-OAS-001);	⟡ Output of SOP-ATS-ISAT-02	⟡ Appointed Auditors

Step ID	Step Description	Inputs	Outputs
	◌ Audit criteria and other requirements; ◌ Audit calendar requirement. Please refer to the Technical Directive on Audit Calendar (NCSA-NISCF-NIA-TD-AC-001); ◌ Combined competencies and experience of the available personnel from the NIA audit team; and ◌ Language and culture of the NIA Certification Subject (Auditee). The appointed Auditor(s) shall fulfill the impartiality and independence requirements defined in section A.C.E.2.3. Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct of the NISCF Audit Standard. The Accredited Service Provider for NIA Audit shall deploy sufficient audit team members during a NIA audit engagement to allow the audit to be completed as per the audit calendar timelines.		
SOP-ATS-ISAT-04	The Accredited Service Provider for NIA Audit shall determine if there is a need to have Technical Expert within an NIA audit engagement to supplement the necessary knowledge and skills of the Lead Auditor and / or the Auditor(s).	◌ Output of SOP-ATS-ISAT-02 and SOP-ATS-ISAT-03	◌ Justified and documented engagement of Technical Expert
SOP-ATS-ISAT-05	The Accredited Service Provider for NIA Audit shall communicate the audit team members to the NIA Certification Subject (Auditee) and collect any objection it might have against the participation of any audit team member to the audit. The Accredited Service	◌ Output of SOP-ATS-ISAT-02, SOP-ATS-ISAT-	◌ Objection from NIA Certification Subject

Step ID	Step Description	Inputs	Outputs
	Provider for NIA Audit shall, when the objection is justified, change the audit team member(s) subject of the objection.	ISAT-03 and SOP-ATS-ISAT-04	(Auditee) on audit team members, if any
SOP-ATS-ISAT-06	The Lead Auditor, in consultation with the selected Auditor(s), shall assign specific audit activities and part of the scope to each audit team member.	○ Output of SOP-ATS-ISAT-02, SOP-ATS-ISAT-03 and SOP-ATS-ISAT-04	○ Assigned tasks for audit team members

Table 1: Initial Selection of Audit Team Standard Operating Procedure

4.2. Update of Audit Team During an Engagement

Step ID	Step Description	Inputs	Outputs
SOP-ATS-UATDE-01	If during a NIA audit engagement, situations arose that evidence that a specific audit team member independence or impartiality has been impaired or his / her performance during the audit does not align with expectation to the point that it jeopardizes the audit, the above-mentioned audit team member shall be excluded from the NIA audit team and should be replaced to allow the audit to be completed as per the audit calendar.	○ Identified independence or impartiality issues ○ Identified performance issues	○ Justified updated audit team members and assignments

Table 2: Audit Team Update During an Engagement Standard Operating Procedure

4.3.   Update of Audit Team During Subsequent Audit(s)

The Accredited Service Provider for NIA Audit may maintain the same audit team members for NIA subsequent audit(s), under the conditions that independence, impartiality and competencies requirements are fulfilled. However, it should instore rotation of assignments among the audit team members to avoid familiarity risks.

assurance.ncsa.gov.qa

Classification: C0 – Public / PS1 – Non-Personal Data (Non-PD)

5. Compliance and Enforcement

5.1.   Compliance Process

All applicants to NISCF's NIA Audit Accreditation Services and Accredited Service Provider for NIA Audit by NCSA shall conform with the rules defined in this Standard Operating Procedure.

5.2.   Roles and Responsibilities

National Cyber Governance and Assurance Affairs (NCGAA) is responsible for enforcing and monitoring conformance to this Standard Operating Procedure.

5.3.   Transitioning and effective date

5.3.1. *Effective date*

This Standard Operating Procedure is effective from January 1, 2025.

5.3.2. *Transition period*

The Accredited Service Provider for NIA Audit shall apply this Standard Operating Procedure for audit(s) related to new NISCF Certification requests submitted starting from January 1, 2025.

The Accredited Service Provider for NIA Audit shall apply this Standard Operating Procedure for Maintenance, Re-Certification audits and any other audit related to issued NISCF Certificate of Compliance, occurring after January 1, 2025.

Existing Accredited Audit Service Providers at the time of the publication of this Standard Operating Procedure shall make the necessary updates to conform with this Standard Operating Procedure before January 1, 2025.

Any new request for NISCF Audit Accreditation shall be in conformance with this Standard Operating Procedure from the date of publication.

5.4.   Exceptions and deviations

5.4.1. *Exceptions to Policy Statements*

Exceptions to this Standard Operating Procedure shall only be defined by the National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA) 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 Standard Operating Procedure steps shall be formally authorized in writing by the National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA).

5.4.3. Sanctions

National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA) reserves the right to not accept NISCF Accreditation Services requests and / or suspend or withdraw Certificates of Accreditation or any other Certificates, Credentials or Licenses provided by NCSA from applicants to NISCF's NIA Audit Accreditation Services and Accredited Service Provider for NIA Audit that do not conform with the requirements defined in this Standard Operating Procedure.

National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA) reserves the right to impose any monetary or procedural sanctions in virtue of the authority that has been granted to NCSA, through laws and regulations.

6. Annexes

6.1. Acronyms

NCGAA   National Cyber Governance and Assurance Affairs

NCSA   National Cyber Security Agency

NIA   National Information Assurance

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-CERT-GTXD (General Taxonomy Document for National Certification - Public)

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

NCSA-NISCF-ACCR-GPNA (General Policy for National Accreditation - Public)

NCSA-NISCF-CERT-GPNC (General Policy for National Certification - Public)

NCSA-NISCF-CERT-SMSC (Standard for Management Systems Certification - Public)

NCSA-NISCF-ACCR-SNA (Standard for National Accreditation - Public)

NCSA-NISCF-AUD-STND (NISCF Audit Standard - Public)

NCSA-NISCF-ACCR-AUD-NIA-STND (NIA Audit Accreditation Standard - Public)

End of Document