



الوكالة الوطنية للأمن السيبراني
National Cyber Security Agency

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

[NCSA-NISCF-NIA-TD-AP-001]

Technical Directive

National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA)

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National Cyber Security Agency

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National Cyber Security Agency

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National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA) has designed and created this Technical Directive, titled “National Information Security Compliance Framework (NISCF) – National Information Assurance (NIA) – Audit Period – Technical Directive” - C0 – Public / PS1 – Non-Personal Data (Non-PD), in order to provide the specific rules and recommended guidelines to be observed by the Accredited Audit Service Providers and NIA Certification Service Applicant / NIA Certification subject (auditee) during NIA Certification Audits, in relation to audit period, as part of National Information Security Compliance Framework (NISCF) Certification Services of the National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA).

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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 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.



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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 rules defined in this document when performing NIA Certification Audit. Conformance to this directive is considered in the maintenance of the Audit Service Providers Accreditation.

NIA Certification Service Applicant, NIA Certified Organizations and NIA Certification Subject (auditee) shall comply with the rules defined in this document when performing NIA Certification Audit. Conformance to this directive, by the NIA Certification Service Applicant, NIA Certified Organizations and NIA Certification Subject (auditee) is considered in the acceptance / rejection of a NIA Certification Application, grant / denial of NIA Certificate of Compliance, its maintenance, expansion and renewal.



2. Purpose and Scope

2.1. Purpose

This Technical Directive has been developed with the objective to provide specific technical rules to be followed and recommendations to be observed by Accredited Audit Service Providers and NIA Certification Service Applicant / NIA Certification subject (auditee) in relation to NIA audit period.

This Technical Directive 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 Technical Directive applies to all National Information Assurance (NIA) Certification audits.

2.3. About Technical Directives

Technical Directives are documents developed to provide detailed technical requirements about a specific aspect. Unlike Standards and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), Technical Directives are designed to address a specific topic from all the stakeholders' perspectives (not just from the Accredited Service Provider for NIA Audit).

Technical Directives shall be read and understood by all stakeholders involved in the NIA Certification and shall be viewed as an extension and integrated part of the different policies, standards, processes and procedures documents related to the NISCF's NIA Certification Service and the associated NIA Audit Accreditation Service.

Technical Directives are designed for areas of the NIA Certification Service that have been identified as technically challenging for the Accredited Service Provider for NIA Audit and / or NIA Certification Service Applicant / NIA Certification subject (auditee).

Due to their technical nature and their main objective to overcome challenges faced in processed NIA Certification Service requests by NCSA, Technical Directives are more susceptible to change than Standards and Standard Operating Procedures and on more frequent basis. However, these changes would need to be introduced if it is noted that the original challenges that the Technical Directive was designed to address are not being overcome or when new challenges emerge.



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. Technical Directive

4.1. Audit Period for initial NIA Certification audit

- 4.1.1.1. The Accredited Service Provider for NIA Audit shall select and agree with the NIA Certification Subject (Auditee) on the audit period.
- 4.1.1.2. The audit period for initial NIA Certification audit shall:
 - Not be shorter than one (1) month; and
 - Not be longer than three (3) months.
- 4.1.1.3. The period between end date of the audit period and the kick-off meeting of the initial NIA Certification audit engagement shall not exceed three (3) months.

4.2. Audit Period for Maintenance

- 4.2.1.1. The audit period for maintenance shall be equivalent to one (1) month, where the end date of the audit period shall be the date of the relationship continuance confirmation by the Accredited Service Provider for NIA Audit (please refer to section A.P.6.1. Relationship Continuance Confirmation of the NISCF Audit Standard (NCSA-NISCF-AUD-STND)).

4.3. Audit Period for Scope Expansion

- 4.3.1.1. The audit period for scope expansion audit shall be determined in the same manner of the audit period for initial NIA Certification audit.

4.4. Audit Period for Reinstatement after Suspension

- 4.4.1.1. The audit period for reinstatement audit after suspension shall be determined in the same manner of the audit period for maintenance.

4.5. Audit Period for Re-Certification

- 4.5.1.1. The audit period for Re-Certification audit shall be determined in the same manner of the audit period for initial NIA Certification audit.

4.6. Special Considerations

4.6.1. *Unavailable audit evidence for the audit period*

- 4.6.1.1. In all audit(s) of NIA Certification lifecycle, and for NIA requirements that have predefined periodicity (e.g., BC 8. The BC Plan is periodically tested at



least on an annual basis or when significant changes take place in the business or legal/regulatory requirements.), the Accredited Service Provider for NIA Audit shall rely on the latest available evidence, if the periodicity of the execution of the NIA control for the scope does not coincide with the selected audit period.

- 4.6.1.2. For the NIA requirements referred to in requirement [4.6.1.1](#), the NIA Certification Subject (Auditee) shall operate these controls following the initial implementation of the requirement to allow to evidence the Operating Effectiveness (OE) during the initial NIA Certification audit regardless of the selected audit period.
- 4.6.1.3. For all NIA requirements for which not available occurrences exist during the audit period, the Accredited Service Provider for NIA Audit shall conclude on the NIA requirements (audit criteria) as Not Tested (and not as Conformity) as there was no available evidence to be able to conclude on the Operating Effectiveness (OE).

4.6.2. Special case of corrections assessment from previous Corrective Actions Plan (CAP)

- 4.6.2.1. During any subsequent audit, the assessment of corrections (please refer to the Technical Directive on Corrective Actions Plan (NCSA-NISCF-NIA-TD-CAP-001) for more information on corrections) is independent from the audit period, as the errors and exceptions that shall be verified for corrections occurred in the audit period of previous audit(s).



5. Compliance and Enforcement

5.1. Compliance Process

All applicants to NISCF's NIA Audit Accreditation Services, Accredited Service Provider for NIA Audit, NIA Certification Service Applicants / NIA Certification subject (auditee) by NCSA shall conform with the rules defined in this Technical Directive.

5.2. Roles and Responsibilities

National Cyber Governance and Assurance Affairs (NCGAA) is responsible for enforcing and monitoring conformance to this Technical Directive.

5.3. Transitioning and effective date

5.3.1. Effective date

This Technical Directive is effective from January 1, 2025.

5.3.2. Transition period

New NISCF Certification requests shall conform with this Technical Directive starting from January 1, 2025.

For NISCF Certification requests submitted before January 1, 2025, audits will be conducted as per the NISCF Audit Standard V1.1.

Maintenance, Re-Certification audits and any other audit related to issued NISCF Certificate of Compliance, occurring after January 1, 2025 shall be performed in compliance with this Technical Directive.

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

Any new request for NISCF Audit Accreditation shall be in conformance with this Technical Directive from the date of publication.

5.4. Exceptions and deviations

5.4.1. Exceptions to Policy Statements

Exceptions to this Technical Directive 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 Technical Directive rules 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 Technical Directive.

National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA) reserves also the right to not accept NIA Certification Service requests and / or suspend or withdraw Certificates of Compliance from applicants to NIA Certification Service Applicants and NIA Certified Organizations that do not conform with the requirements defined in this Technical Directive.

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
SoA	Statement of Applicability



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)



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