

Certification Scheme S03

Customer Contact Centres ISO 18295-1

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1 Scope

This certification scheme specifies the procedure to certify the services of customer contact centres (CCC) with respect to their conformity with the International Standard ISO 18295-1¹.

Certification shall meet the requirements of ISO/IEC 17065².

2 Application

2.1 The applicant shall file an application using the form provided by the certification body.

2.2 The applicant shall appoint a contact person for the certification process.

2.3 The application shall specify the desired scope of certification in terms of business sites to be covered.

2.4 Together with the application the applicant CCC shall provide documentation on the services to be certified. This documentation shall contain the following:

- the general features of the applicant CCC, including its name and the address(es) of its physical location(s) where customer contact services are provided,
- description of the structure of the applicant, including company profile, any specializations, etc.
- outline of the CCC-related processes implemented
- average number (related to the past 12 months) of CC agents working in the relevant sites
- average number of contacts handled per month (related to the past 12 months) in the relevant sites
- description of the kind of services (e.g. hotlines, sales activities, inbound services, outbound services) provided in the relevant sites
- information concerning all outsourced processes, subcontractors etc. used by the CCC that will affect conformity to requirements of ISO 18295-1.

3 Application review

3.1 Before proceeding with the audit, the certification body will conduct a review of the application and supplementary documentation for certification to ensure that:

- the information about the CCC organization is sufficient for the conduct of the audit;
- any known difference in understanding between the certification body and the applicant CCC is resolved;
- the scope of certification sought, the location(s) of the CCCs operations, time required to complete audits and any other points influencing the certification activity are taken into account.

3.2 Based on this review, the certification body will determine the competences it needs to include in the audit team. The audit team shall be composed of a Lead Auditor and technical auditors, as necessary who, between them, have the totality of the competences identified by the certification body for the certification of the CCC organization.

¹ ISO 18295-1:2017-07-15 Customer Contact Centres - Requirements for service provision

² ISO/IEC 17065:2012-09 Conformity assessment -- Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services

4 Initial and recertification audit

4.1 Multi-site audits

In case that a service provider operates more than one site which are to be covered by the scope of the certificate, in order to keep the efforts of auditing at a reasonable level, it is permissible to select a sample amongst the sites covered by the certification process under the following conditions:

- a) there is a centralised quality management and process control function which covers all sites operated by the applicant. The site which provides this central quality management and control function shall be audited in any case;
- b) the technical prerequisites are met for remote auditing other sites of the service provider.

The certification body shall specify the number and location of the sites to be audited within the scope of the certification.

Sites operated by sub-contractors on behalf of the CCC shall be considered as sites of the CCC. Such sites shall be included in multi-site considerations.

4.2 Audit conduct

4.2.1 The certification audit shall audit all requirements specified in ISO 18295-1. The audit shall comprise of at least the following elements.

- Review of the CCCs management strategy and policy, the CCCs mission, objectives and quality targets. This review shall include interviews with the senior management of the CCC.
- Review of all the CCC-related processes.
- Review of the operational roles and responsibilities assigned in the CCC and relevant job descriptions. Interviews with the CCCs personnel in charge of human resources management.
- Review of the recruitments process for CC agents including checks of records of actual recruiting processes that took place during a period of 24 months preceding the audit. Interviews with the CCCs personnel in charge of human resources management and recruitment processes.
- Review of the CCCs training schemes and programmes, training materials for CC agents including initial training for new CC agents as well as for ongoing training and coaching. Checking of records of trainings conducted for CCCs during a period of 24 months preceding the audit. Interviews with the CCCs personnel in charge of human resources management and the conduction of training relevant of CC agents.
- Inspections of CC agents work places and watching CC agents handling contacts (calls, mail contacts etc.).
- Interviews with CC agents off their workplaces on all aspects of their recruitment, training, on-going training and on their tasks and duties.
- Review of the technical infrastructure of the CCC, its fitness for purpose as related to the CCC actual activities and communication channels. Assessment of the CCCs back-up systems, contingency and disaster recovery plans. Interviews with the CCCs personnel in charge of IT systems and infrastructure.
- Review of the CCCs procedures related to customer satisfaction, complaints handling and customer protection. Checking records of recent customer satisfaction surveys.
- Checking of documentation and review of the CCCs agreement(s) with its client organisation(s). Interviews with the CCC personnel in charge of managing relations to client organisation(s). Checking of reports of services conducted for client organisation(s) in the past 24 months towards the fulfilment of the service levels agreed.

4.2.2 At the end of the audit, the Lead Auditor or the audit team (if applicable) will analyse all information and audit evidence gathered during the audits to review the audit findings and agree on the audit conclusions. In case the audit is conducted by an audit team, decisions on audit conclusions shall be taken unanimously.

4.2.3 During the concluding meeting with the responsible management of the applicant, the Lead Auditor will present the audit conclusions to the applicant and will specify further steps to be taken.

4.3 Audit findings

In case that deviations from the requirements of the standard be found, appropriate corrective actions will be specified by the Lead Auditor. Deviations shall be classified as follows.

4.3.1 Minor deviation

Any nonconformity which does not adversely affect performance of the service will be classified as minor deviation.

Minor deviations may be corrected within a period of 8 weeks through appropriate corrective actions. The completion of such corrective actions shall be documented by the applicant and will be assessed by the auditor.

4.3.2 Major deviation

Any nonconformity, which may result in failure or reduce the usability of the service for the intended purpose or which puts customers at risk shall be classified as major deviation.

This type of deviation requires a partial or complete repetition of the audit.

4.3.3 Recommendations

The auditor may also give recommendations regarding quality aspects of the service provision and opportunities for improvement related to the operations of the service provider. Such recommendations are documented in the audit report but have no effect on the issue of the certificate.

4.4 Audit report for certification

The information provided by the Lead Auditor to the certification body for the certification decision will include, as a minimum:

- the audit report,
- comments on the nonconformities and, where applicable, the correction and corrective actions taken by the client,
- a recommendation whether or not to grant certification, together with any conditions or observations.

5 Issuing the certificate

5.1 Based on the audit conclusions and the recommendation of the Lead Auditor the certification body will decide on the issue of the certificate. A positive assessment of the audit pursuant to clause 4 is the prerequisite for the issuing of the certificate.

5.2 The certificate is valid for a period of 6 years subject that the conditions to maintain the certificate are met by the certificate holder.

6 Surveillance activities

6.1 In order to maintain the certificate, surveillance audits shall be carried out on a 2-year cycle. The date of surveillance audits following initial certification (or recertification) shall not be more than 24 months resp. 48 months from the date of the issue of the certificate.

6.2 Surveillance audits are on-site audits, but are not necessarily full system audits covering all requirements of ISO 18295-1. The purpose of the surveillance audit(s) is for the certification body to maintain confidence that the certified CCC continues to fulfil the requirements of ISO 18295-1 between recertification audits. The surveillance audit(s) programme shall include, at least the following items:

- recruitment, training and on-going training of CC agents,
- sample checking of competence of CC agents,
- checking of performance of the CCC towards the current service level agreements with client organisation(s),
- a review of actions taken on nonconformities identified and recommendations given during the previous audit,
- review of any changes introduced by the CCC affecting the compliance with ISO 18295-1, and
- use of marks and/or any other reference to certification.

6.3 In case the CCC operates more than one site and multi-site auditing was applied during the initial certification audit, the surveillance audit(s) shall be conducted at least at one site, preferably at a site which was not subject to an audit during the initial auditing process. Nevertheless it must be ensured that all items in accordance to sub clause 6.2 can be audited.

7 Recertification

In order to extend the validity of the certificate, a recertification audit in accordance with clause 4 shall be conducted.

8 Requirements for auditors

8.1 Audits shall be carried out by at least one Lead Auditor. Depending on the size of the CCC and the complexity of the audit(s) the Lead Auditor may be accompanied by one or more co-auditors.

8.2 A Lead Auditor shall be a formally trained auditor who has in-depth knowledge of ISO 18295-1.

8.3 Co-Auditors shall meet the following qualification requirements:

- have a minimum of 5 years experience in a CCC in a leading management position or
- have a proven record of minimum 5 years experience in consulting CCCs or
- have a proven record of minimum 5 years experience in training services with regards to CCC personnel.

9 Changes of normative documents

9.1 Changes of the underlying normative documents on which the certification is based on will be communicated by the certification body to certificate holders immediately.

9.2 The certificate holder will be granted a period of 12 months to adapt its services according to the changes in the normative document(s). Evidence of compliance with the new requirements shall be provided as part of a surveillance audit. Upon successful proof, the certificate will be re-issued with a new reference to the changed normative documents.

10 Amendments to the scope of certificates

10.1 Should the certificate holder wish to extend the scope of his certificate in relation to further organizational units or company sites, he must request this in writing to the certification body. The certification body will specify the necessary steps (examination of documents and / or supplementary audits) for the expansion of the scope.

10.2 Should the certificate holder wish to reduce the scope of his certificate in relation to the certified organizational units, he shall inform the certification body in writing. The certification body will reduce the scope of the certificate accordingly. From this point, the organization must not make any statements in relation to those organizational units which have been removed from the scope of the certificate. The verification of the relevant obligations of the certificate holder will be part of the following surveillance audit.

10.3 Changes of certificates related to formal specifications of the certificate holder (such as changes in the company name or address) shall be notified in writing of the certification body. The certification body will issue an amended certificate without technical examination.

In case that the legal person who holds the certificate will be changed, a new certification procedure shall be carried out.

11 Withdrawal of certificates

11.1 The certificate becomes invalid immediately after termination of the contract by the certificate holder or withdrawal by the certification body.

11.2 The certificate is withdrawn by the certification body when

- the conditions for issuing the certificate are no longer met,
- the client refuses to accept the necessary surveillance activities in a timely manner,
- the client does not meet the requirements of corrective actions requested,
- the client refuses to accept audits to check on corrective actions if required by the certification body,
- the conformity mark is used by the certificate holder in an abusive manner,
- the client does not meet the requirements of the General Terms and Conditions of the certification body.

If the certificate is withdrawn, the certification body informs the certificate holder thereof in writing.

11.3 After withdrawal of a certificate any reference to the invalid certificate is not permitted.

Annex A Certification criteria

ISO 18295-1 – Clause 4 "Customer relationship requirements" Subclause 4.1 "General"

C4.1.1 The CCC has implemented processes to ensure that it is accessible, reliable and responsive to customer needs.

C4.1.2 The CCC has implemented a process to ensure that it handles all customer interactions consistently across its available communication channels.

ISO 18295-1 – Clause 4 "Customer relationship requirements" Subclause 4.2 "Communication of information to customers"

C4.2.1 The CCC has implemented a process/processes to ensure that all information it provides to customers is accurate, relevant and easily understood.

C4.2.2 The CCC takes customers' communication needs (e.g. language, literacy and impairments) into account and acts appropriately.

C4.2.3 The CCC has implemented a process to ensure that in case the CCC cannot immediately resolve a query, the customer is provided with appropriate information:

- a) the estimated time-frame for a response/resolution;
- b) the department/role/function that will be responsible for response/resolution;
- c) regular status updates;
- d) an amended time-frame and action plan when delays are incurred.

ISO 18295-1 – Clause 4 "Customer relationship requirements" Subclause 4.3 "Measuring and monitoring of customer experience"

C4.3.1 The CCC has implemented a process/processes to understand the experience customers have when interacting with the CCC. This includes overall customer satisfaction and satisfaction with how the agent handled their interaction.

C4.3.2 The CCC agrees with the client before undertaking any direct customer contact to gather their feedback.

ISO 18295-1 – Clause 4 "Customer relationship requirements" Subclause 4.4 "Complaints handling"

C4.4.1 The CCC has implemented a process for handling complaints about the CCC and about client-related product(s)/service(s). The process ensures that all complaints, as defined by the CCC and the client, are:

- a) acknowledged;
- b) logged and categorized correctly;
- c) investigated and acted on within the set resolution time-frames which are communicated at regular intervals;
- d) escalated, when necessary, within the set time-frames;
- e) closed with appropriate feedback provided to the customer on the resolution and outcome achieved.

C4.4.2 The CCC and the client have agreed the conditions under which the complaints handling process is to be applied.

C4.4.3 The CCC has provided customers with clear and readily available information about where and how to complain, and about how complaints are handled.

C4.4.4 The CCC has implemented a process to ensure that information from complaints is used to improve service delivery.

ISO 18295-1 – Clause 4 "Customer relationship requirements" Subclause 4.5 "Customer protection"

C4.5.1 The CCC ensures that the identity of the client is made clear in each interaction (unless the identity of the client could influence the purpose of the interaction e.g. market research).

C4.5.2 The CCC ensures that agents only share confidential information with the correct customer.

C4.5.3 The CCC proactively provides customers with clear information about any increased charges they could incur when interacting with the CCC. The CCC does not conceal any charges.

C4.5.4 The CCC ensures it deals with all customers ethically. It provides clear information about any financial, legal and contractual implications of decisions customers make related to interactions with the CCC.

C4.5.5 The CCC does not use pressure selling tactics and does not exploit customers. It does not disguise sales/marketing interactions as market research.

C4.5.6 The CCC has implemented a process/processes to protect the privacy of customers, their information and data.

C4.5.7 The CCC has ensured that for outbound interactions it:

- a) follows national or local 'do not contact' rules and legislation and any opt-out requests;
- b) advises the client to remove the customer details from the database when the customer requests to be removed from the database;
- c) minimizes abandoned contacts by a dialler;
- d) ensures the correct customer has been contacted and gives them an option to continue the interaction;
- e) gives the purpose of the contact at the beginning of the interaction;
- f) terminates a contact the customer does not want, and does not contact the customer again;
- g) makes telephone contacts within nationally accepted time-frames, except where the customer has requested a different contact time (within agreed operating hours).

ISO 18295-1 – Clause 5 "Customer-focused leadership" **Subclause 5.1 "General"**

C5.1.1 The CCC leadership has implemented customer-focused strategies, taking into account the customer experience strategy of the client, that result in positive experiences for customers when they interact with the CCC.

ISO 18295-1 – Clause 5 "Customer-focused leadership" **Subclause 5.2 "Customer experience design and delivery"**

C5.2.1 The CCC leadership has implemented a process in order to determine, in consultation with the client, the desired customer experience to be delivered by the CCC.

C5.2.2 The CCC leadership and the client have agreed relevant performance measures for the CCC to monitor its performance and support it in delivering the desired customer experience.

C5.2.3 The CCC leadership has agreed with the client review frequencies for these measures.

ISO 18295-1 – Clause 5 "Customer-focused leadership" **Subclause 5.3 "Employee satisfaction"**

C5.3.1 The CCC leadership has created a working environment which encourages high levels of employee engagement in order to deliver the desired customer experience.

C5.3.2 The CCC has equipped its employees with the skills and resources needed to deliver the desired customer experience.

C5.3.3 The CCC integrates employee engagement in relevant CCC activities.

C5.3.4 The CCC periodically measures employee satisfaction/engagement to understand employee needs and take action to improve as necessary. This focuses on:

- a) overall employee satisfaction/engagement;
- b) agent experience in handling customer interactions.

ISO 18295-1 – Clause 6 "Human resources"
Subclause 6.1 "General"

C6.1.1 The CCC has implemented a human resources process/processes to ensure provision and scheduling of the right staff with the right competencies at the right time across interaction channels to fulfil the requirements defined with the client.

ISO 18295-1 – Clause 6 "Human resources"
Subclause 6.2 "Functions"

C6.2.1 The CCC has implemented a structure which provides for the following functions:

- a) leadership;
- b) human resource activities (recruitment, retention, employee satisfaction / engagement, well-being etc.);
- c) skills development;
- d) support systems - information, communication and technology management etc.;
- e) quality assurance;
- f) CCC operations management;
- g) client relationship management;
- h) compliance - knowledge of relevant legislation and regulation, including customer rights and data protection;
- i) capacity management - workforce planning, scheduling and monitoring;
- j) CCC management information systems and reporting;
- k) subject matter expertise related to the CCC service offering;
- l) product/service knowledge and content management

C6.2.2 The CCC has specified the requirements for all role functions.

C6.2.3 The CCC ensures that all employees understand the performance requirements of their role and that staff who deliver these functions are competent to do so.

ISO 18295-1 – Clause 6 "Human resources"
Subclause 6.3 "Agent competencies"

C6.3.1 The CCC ensures that agents are only assigned to deal with interaction types for which they are suitably competent and have an understanding of the performance requirements of their role in order to handle customer interactions.

C6.3.2 The CCC ensures that agents have the following communication and customer service competencies:

- a) customer-focused attitude;
- b) listening, communication and comprehension skills;
- c) adaptability in handling different situations and customers, including vulnerable customers;
- d) goal orientated attitude;
- e) problem solving skills;
- f) business-writing skills, where applicable.

C6.3.3 The CCC ensures that agents have the following technical competencies:

- a) systems and technical knowledge;

- b) data capture skills;
- c) CCC-specific process knowledge and skills.

C6.3.4 The CCC ensures together with the client that agents are competent to fulfil the tasks incurred by the client's mandate and to meet customer experience objectives related to it. This includes at least the following:

- a) product/service and brand knowledge;
- b) knowledge of and skills to handle the customer related processes;
- c) appropriate language skills;
- d) relevant knowledge of the regulations and legal requirements.

ISO 18295-1 – Clause 6 "Human resources" Subclause 6.4 "Skills development"

C6.4.1 The CCC reviews the competencies of agents at least annually and provides agents who are identified as being not fully competent with the appropriate skills development and learning interventions to address skill gaps.

C6.4.2 The CCC has implemented a process to provide all agents with continuous development so they are well equipped to deliver the expected customer experience and to meet the required competencies.

ISO 18295-1 – Clause 6 "Human resources" Subclause 6.5 "Communication of information to employees"

C6.5.1 The CCC has implemented a communication process to ensure that all relevant employees are provided with the information they need so they can deal with customers as required. The CCC ensures that employees understand this information.

C6.5.2 The communication process ensures that the information is:

- a) readily accessible;
- b) delivered in a timely and effective manner;
- c) consistent;
- d) communicated using appropriate methods across all CCC locations;
- e) up to date with only authorized information.

ISO 18295-1 – Clause 7 "Operational processes" Subclause 7.2 "Customer-related processes"

C7.2.1 The CCC has, in agreement with the client, defined the processes required to handle customer interactions and deliver the desired customer experience.

C7.2.2 The CCC has implemented the following processes:

- a) customer interaction handling;
- b) escalation;
- c) complaints handling;
- d) service recovery;

e) customer data and information handling.

ISO 18295-1 – Clause 7 "Operational processes"
Subclause 7.3 "Workforce planning"

C7.3.1 The CCC has implemented a forecast and scheduling process in order to deal with customer demands in a timely manner. The process is agreed with the client.

C7.3.2 The CCC bases its staffing requirements on the forecasted capacity planning and required competencies so it can deliver the requirements agreed with the client.

C7.3.3 The CCC has implemented a process to deal with unexpected peaks of workload or lower than forecast agent availability.

ISO 18295-1 – Clause 7 "Operational processes"
Subclause 7.4 "Quality assurance related to customer interactions"

C7.4.1 The CCC has implemented a quality assurance process to control and improve customer interactions. This process takes client requirements into account.

C7.4.2 The quality assurance process shall include measuring, monitoring, evaluating and action-planning.

C7.4.3 The CCC measures and monitors customer interactions for all channels and service types. This includes:

- a) adherence to customer-related processes;
- b) accuracy of data capture;
- c) ability to resolve customer interactions effectively and efficiently;
- d) agent competencies.

C7.4.4 The CCC ensures consistent assessment of service quality. It evaluates the results and takes appropriate action to improve customer experience and ensure it delivers the client's requirements.

ISO 18295-1 – Clause 8 "Service delivery infrastructure"
Subclause 8.1 "General"

C8.1.1 The CCC provides the infrastructure to meet the mandate of the client and customers' expectations.

ISO 18295-1 – Clause 8 "Service delivery infrastructure"
Subclause 8.2 "Handling customer interactions"

C8.2.1 The CCC has the appropriate resources/systems for handling customer interactions in place. This includes the following features:

- a) interaction history to capture and retain records of customer interactions;
- b) interaction details, which are easily accessible and available to agents;
- c) access to relevant data and information to enable agents to deal with customers effectively;
- d) data reporting to report the CCC customer contact-specific activities.

ISO 18295-1 – Clause 8 "Service delivery infrastructure"
Subclause 8.3 "Customer data"

C8.3.1 The CCC handles, stores and retrieves customer data in a secure, access controlled and monitored environment.

C8.3.2 The CCC has implemented a process/processes to keep customer data private and only share them with authorized parties. The CCC deletes data that are no longer required.

ISO 18295-1 – Clause 8 "Service delivery infrastructure"
Subclause 8.4 "Work environment"

C8.4.1 The CCC provides a suitable work environment, taking into account factors including ergonomics, noise, room size, seating layout and use of technology.

ISO 18295-1 – Clause 8 "Service delivery infrastructure"
Subclause 8.5 "Continuation of service"

C8.5.1 The CCC has implemented a process to ensure continuity of service, according to the terms it agrees with the client.

C8.5.2 If services are interrupted, the CCC informs the client and, where possible:

- a) informs customers;
- b) provides alternative contact channels;
- c) advises when the service will be reinstated.

ISO 18295-1 – Clause 9 "Client relationship"

C9.1 The CCC has implemented a process to ensure that the terms of the service are specified with the client indicating designated responsibilities.

C9.2 The CCC has implemented a process to monitor performance against the performance measures agreed with the client. The CCC analyses any deviations from the target in order to discover the cause, and takes relevant corrective actions. The CCC reports deviations and the action taken to the client.