



Accelerating ISO/IEC 17024 Accreditation by utilizing Third-Party Certification Schemes

IPC-SC-25-04

An IPC White Paper

Version 1.2

March 2025

Contents

Contents.....	2
Abstract.....	3
Scheme Validation Process.....	4
The Role of Third-Party Validated Schemes.....	6
The Strategic Value of Choosing an IAF-Endorsed Personnel Certification Scheme.....	7
Case Study: Leveraging the IPC MS Auditor Scheme to Streamline ISO/IEC 17024 Accreditation.....	8
References and Links.....	11
About the Author.....	11
About IPC.....	12

CLASSIFICATION

This document is classified as an IPC WHITE PAPER published by the authority of the Members of IPC.

AUTHORIZATION

IPC-SC-25-04, Issue No. 1.2,
Issued by IPC: October 21, 2022.
Revised: March 6, 2025.

AVAILABILITY

Copies of this document in English can be accessed on the IPC website at: www.ipcaweb.org. A printed copy of this document can be ordered by the IPC Secretariat for a minimal fee.

COPYRIGHT

Copyright – 2022 – This White Paper is published by the International Personnel Certification Association (IPC) and may be freely reproduced, distributed, and quoted for non-commercial purposes, provided that proper acknowledgment of the source is made. Any reproduction must include a clear reference to IPC as the issuer and maintain the integrity of the content without alteration or misrepresentation.

For citation purposes, please use:

International Personnel Certification Association (IPC), "Accelerating ISO/IEC 17024 Accreditation through the Use of Third-Party Certification Schemes," v1.2, March 2025, www.ipcaweb.org

ENQUIRIES

IPC Secretariat Email: secretary@ipcaweb.org

Accelerating ISO/IEC 17024 Accreditation by utilizing Third-Party Certification Schemes

by Dr. George Anastasopoulos

Technical and Intl. Business Development Manager, PJLA
General Secretary, IPC

Abstract

Achieving ISO/IEC 17024 accreditation is a critical objective for Personnel Certification Bodies (PCBs) seeking to demonstrate the quality, impartiality, and international relevance of their certification programs. However, one of the most demanding components of the accreditation process is the development and validation of a compliant certification scheme, a task that requires significant technical, financial, and organizational resources.

This white paper explores an effective solution: the adoption by a PCB of third-party validated certification schemes. It outlines how using such schemes, particularly those endorsed by the International Accreditation Forum (IAF), not only reduces the burden of scheme development, but also enhances global credibility, simplifies conformity with ISO/IEC 17024 requirements, and accelerates significantly the overall accreditation timeline.

Through a detailed case study, the paper illustrates how a PCB successfully implemented the Management System Auditor Scheme developed by the International Personnel Certification Association (IPC). Endorsed under the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA), the IPC scheme enabled the organization to achieve faster accreditation, reduce operational risks, and deliver globally recognized certifications.

This document also provides practical insights for PCBs, Accreditation Bodies, and regulators on the strategic advantages of integrating validated, IAF-endorsed certification schemes into their accreditation approach.

Scheme Validation Process

ISO/IEC 17024:2012 sets a rigorous framework for the certification of persons, requiring that Personnel Certification Bodies (PCBs) develop and maintain certification schemes that are technically sound, impartial, and aligned with market needs. However, the design and validation of such schemes—encompassing job analysis, competence requirements, assessment design, and surveillance mechanisms—can be an exhaustive and costly undertaking.

Validating a certification scheme in accordance with ISO/IEC 17024:2012 is widely recognized as a burdensome, complex, time-consuming, and costly process for any Personnel Certification Body (PCB). This is due to the comprehensive set of requirements imposed by the standard, particularly ISO/IEC 17024:12, clause 8 “*Certification schemes*” and clauses 3 and 4 of IAF MD 25:22, “*Criteria for Evaluation of Conformity Assessment Schemes*”, which mandate a high level of methodological rigor, technical expertise, and ongoing maintenance.

To meet these requirements, a certification scheme must clearly define the scope of certification, the required competence, assessment methods, prerequisites, surveillance, and recertification criteria. This process typically involves detailed job or role analysis, stakeholder consultations, psychometric design, pilot testing, and ongoing revision mechanisms — all of which must be robustly documented and justified to accreditation bodies.

The process begins with the need for a comprehensive job or role analysis, as required by Clause 8.2. This entails identifying the functions, tasks, knowledge, skills, and personal attributes necessary for competent performance. Conducting such an analysis often requires the involvement of industry experts, occupational analysts, and a structured methodology such as DACUM (Developing a Curriculum), SCID (Systematic Curriculum and Instructional Development), PTD (Professional Tasks Development), Delphi Technique or functional analysis — all of which demand considerable time, planning, and cost.

Additionally, the scheme must demonstrate alignment with current industry practices and legal or regulatory frameworks, ensuring its continued relevance across jurisdictions. This requires extensive stakeholder consultations, labor market studies, and periodic reviews, thereby introducing a permanent resource burden on the PCB.

One of the most demanding aspects is the development of valid, reliable, and fair assessment mechanisms. Clause 9.2.4 requires the design of examinations — written, practical, or oral — that are objective and defensible. This involves psychometric expertise, examination security, assessor training, and statistical validation of results. Pilot testing is often necessary to confirm that the scheme can accurately and consistently measure candidate competence, further adding to the cost and complexity.

ISO/IEC 17024 also requires ongoing scheme maintenance. Schemes must be reviewed and updated regularly (clause 8.5) to reflect technological advances, market changes, or feedback from certified persons and employers. This necessitates the establishment of technical committees, structured change management, and continuous monitoring — creating a sustained operational load.

In parallel, the PCB must ensure extensive documentation and justification of every aspect of the scheme. Accreditation Bodies (ABs) will examine all procedures and supporting evidence during assessment, and any

failure to fully demonstrate conformity may result in nonconformities, delays, or even rejection of the scheme.

Compounding this challenge is the scarcity and cost of qualified personnel. Scheme development requires a rare combination of subject-matter expertise, ISO/IEC 17024 knowledge, and competence in educational or psychometric design. Assembling such a team represents a significant investment.

Ultimately, the risks associated with this process are high: many PCBs receive major nonconformities during their first accreditation attempt due to weaknesses in scheme design or validation. This leads to additional assessments, extended timelines, and unplanned expenses.

For these reasons, many PCBs opt to adopt a pre-validated, third-party certification scheme developed by a recognized scheme owner, as described in the chapter below.

The Role of Third-Party Validated Schemes

A practical and efficient approach to address the challenge introduced by the Scheme Validation Process is to adopt a validated certification scheme developed by a credible third-party scheme owner. These schemes are typically designed by recognized industry bodies, associations, or technical groups, and have already undergone formal validation through expert panels, job task analyses, and field testing.

When such a scheme is already aligned with ISO/IEC 17024 and widely accepted, it allows the PCB to accelerate its accreditation, minimize risk, reduce costs, and enter the market with a globally recognized framework.

By adopting such a validated scheme, a PCB can significantly accelerate the accreditation process and reduce the associated complexity and risk. Key Advantages include:

- a. **Simplified Scheme Development:** Using a pre-existing scheme eliminates the need to create all scheme elements from scratch. The job profile, competence criteria, and assessment structure are already defined, aligned with industry needs, and documented.
- b. **Pre-Validated Compliance:** Validated schemes are typically structured to fulfill the essential requirements of ISO/IEC 17024, including impartiality safeguards, competence definitions, examination methods, and certification processes. This minimizes the risk of nonconformities during the accreditation audit.
- c. **Reduced Resource Burden:** Developing a certification scheme in-house requires subject matter experts, instructional designers, and assessment specialists. By adopting an external scheme, the PCB saves significant time and cost in research, development, and validation.
- d. **Faster Time to Market:** Accreditation efforts can proceed more swiftly when the scheme is already mature and recognized. This allows the certification body to enter the market or expand its services more rapidly.
- e. **Increased Credibility and Acceptance:** Validated schemes — especially those with international recognition or industry backing — are often more readily accepted by employers, regulators, and end users. This improves the value and marketability of the certifications issued.

While using a third-party validated scheme offers many benefits, PCBs must ensure they:

- a. Obtain formal permission or a license from the scheme owner to use the validated scheme, ensuring legal clarity and proper application of the scheme requirements.
- b. Implement the scheme faithfully, including all required assessment, surveillance, and recertification components.
- c. Ensure assessors, invigilators, and decision-makers are trained and competent to apply the scheme.
- d. Maintain all documentation and records to demonstrate conformity to ISO/IEC 17024.

For PCBs aiming to achieve ISO/IEC 17024 accreditation efficiently, the use of an already validated certification scheme offers a practical path forward. It simplifies scheme development, enhances quality assurance, reduces operational burden, and facilitates faster access to the certification market. When combined with strong internal systems and a commitment to impartiality, this strategy provides a solid foundation for both successful accreditation and long-term certification value.

The Strategic Value of Choosing an IAF-Endorsed Personnel Certification Scheme

For any Personnel Certification Body (PCB) seeking to achieve or maintain ISO/IEC 17024 accreditation, selecting a certification scheme that has been endorsed by the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) offers significant strategic, operational, and market advantages.

Endorsement by IAF adds a powerful layer of global recognition and trust to a certification scheme. When a scheme is recognized under the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA), it signifies that the scheme meets globally harmonized competence and impartiality requirements and is accepted by accreditation bodies in more than 100 economies. This endorsement reflects a high level of technical rigor, impartiality, and international relevance in the design and implementation of the certification scheme.

For PCBs, using an IAF-endorsed scheme is a strategic decision that:

First and foremost, simplifies and accelerates the ISO/IEC 17024 accreditation process. Because the scheme has already been validated and peer-reviewed, Accreditation Bodies (ABs) are more likely to accept it without requiring full justification or additional technical evidence. This saves time, reduces the likelihood of nonconformities, and streamlines the path to accredited status.

Secondly, adopting such a scheme significantly reduces development and maintenance costs. As already explained in detail designing a certification scheme from the ground up requires job analysis, examination development, psychometric validation, and ongoing updates — a process that is both resource-intensive and expensive. An IAF-endorsed scheme comes with these elements pre-developed and maintained by the third-party scheme owner, allowing the PCB to focus on delivery, quality assurance, and client engagement.

In terms of compliance, the advantages are equally clear. IAF-endorsed schemes are structured to meet the technical and procedural requirements of ISO/IEC 17024, and IAF MD25, covering certification prerequisites, impartiality, competence criteria, and certification processes. This reduces risk during accreditation assessments and simplifies documentation and implementation.

From a market perspective, the use of an IAF-endorsed scheme enhances credibility and global recognition. Certifications issued under such schemes are more likely to be accepted by multinational employers, government agencies, and regulators, thus increasing the value of the certification to candidates and end-users alike. It also facilitates the international mobility of certified professionals and opens new market opportunities for the PCB.

Finally, choosing an IAF-endorsed scheme strengthens the PCB's competitive position. It signals a commitment to quality, international standards, and transparency, distinguishing the organization from competitors relying on unvalidated or proprietary schemes.

In conclusion, selecting an IAF-endorsed certification scheme is not only a matter of technical alignment, but a strategic decision that enhances efficiency, reduces risk, and reinforces global credibility — a powerful foundation for any PCB operating in today's internationally interconnected marketplace.

This white paper includes below a real-world case study involving the adoption of the Management System (MS) Auditor Certification Scheme developed by the IPC -International Personnel Certification Association (www.ipcaweb.org). This scheme, endorsed by the IAF under the MLA for personnel certification, has been used successfully by PCBs to accelerate their ISO/IEC 17024 accreditation process, avoid costly scheme development, and issue internationally credible certifications.

Case Study

Leveraging the IPC MS Auditor Scheme to Streamline ISO/IEC 17024 Accreditation

The case study illustrates how a PCB, by integrating the IPC scheme into its certification system with proper authorization, achieved faster accreditation, operational efficiency, and global market acceptance—demonstrating the practical benefits of using a trusted, validated scheme within a recognized international framework.

Background

A mid-sized Personnel Certification Body (PCB), operating across several regions and specializing in Management System auditor certifications, sought ISO/IEC 17024 accreditation to enhance its credibility, gain international recognition, and access regulated and global markets. However, during its preparation phase, the organization realized that designing a new certification scheme from scratch for Management System (MS) auditors was resource-intensive, slow, and carried a high risk of nonconformities during the accreditation audit.

About IPC and the IPC MS Auditor Scheme

The International Personnel Certification Association (IPC), formerly known as IATCA, is a global association of personnel certification and accreditation bodies that develops and maintains internationally recognized certification schemes aligned with ISO/IEC 17024. One of IPC's flagship schemes is the Management System (MS) Auditor Certification Scheme, which defines the competence, assessment, and certification criteria for auditors of standards such as ISO 9001, ISO 14001, ISO 45001, and others. This scheme is endorsed by the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) under the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA), ensuring global recognition and technical credibility.

The IPC MS Auditor Scheme is used by accredited personnel certification bodies across multiple continents and is periodically reviewed by technical experts and stakeholders to ensure ongoing relevance, quality, and compliance with evolving standards and industry needs.

The Challenge

ISO/IEC 17024 requires that certification schemes meet strict technical and procedural standards:

- a. Documented competence requirements (Clause 8.2)
- b. Job and task analysis (Clause 8.4)
- c. Valid, reliable, and fair assessment processes (Clause 8.3 and 9.2)
- d. Continuous scheme maintenance and stakeholder engagement (Clause 8.5)
- e. Surveillance and recertification mechanisms (Clause 9.6)

For the PCB, fulfilling these requirements with an internally developed scheme would mean:

- a. Hiring psychometricians and occupational analysts
- b. Conducting job task workshops
- c. Designing multi-part exams

- d. Piloting the assessment process
- e. Justifying the scheme to Accreditation Bodies from first principles

The estimated timeline in many cases exceeds 12 months, with considerable cost implications.

The Solution: Adopting the IPC MS Auditor Scheme

To overcome these challenges, the PCB opted to adopt the IPC certification scheme for Management System Auditors, a scheme that:

- a. Is endorsed by the IAF under the IAF MLA for personnel certification
- b. Has undergone international peer review
- c. Is already compliant with ISO/IEC 17024:2012
- d. Covers multiple MS standards (ISO 9001, ISO 14001, ISO 45001, etc.)
- e. Provides detailed documentation, including competence profiles, prerequisites, assessment methodology, and re-certification criteria

Implementation Steps

The PCB completed the following actions:

- a. Contacted IPC (secretary@ipcaweb.org), as the scheme owner, to grant the PCB formal authorization to implement the IPC scheme under license, in full conformity with IPC's rules and monitoring framework.
- b. By becoming an IPC member, the PCB has been provided with IPC permission to official use of the scheme.
- c. The PCB has adjusted its processes to align with the requirements of the IPC scheme.
- d. PCB included IPC scheme as part of its ISO/IEC 17024 scope in the accreditation application.

Results and Impact

Faster Accreditation Approval. The Accreditation Body accepted the IPC scheme without requiring the PCB to demonstrate the job analysis or assessment validation from scratch. The audit was completed in less than 6 months, with no major nonconformities related to the certification scheme.

Cost Savings. The organization avoided extensive development costs, reducing estimated expenditure by over 70% compared to building a new scheme.

International Recognition. Because the IPC scheme is endorsed by IAF, the PCB could issue certificates under a framework already recognized in over 100 economies — enhancing market acceptance and employability of certified individuals.

Operational Efficiency: IPC handles periodic updates, international benchmarking, and stakeholder review of the scheme. The PCB benefits from continuous improvement without bearing the full maintenance burden.

Strategic Credibility: Being a signatory to an IAF-recognized scheme elevated the PCB's standing with regulators, training providers, and multinational clients.

Participation in IPC MLA: By adopting and implementing the IPC Scheme, PCB not only benefits from a validated, internationally recognized certification framework, but also gains a direct pathway to becoming a signatory to the IPC Multilateral Agreement (IPC MLA). The IPC MLA is a global recognition framework for

personnel certification bodies operating in full compliance with ISO/IEC 17024 and using IPC-endorsed certification schemes. PCBs that are accredited by an IPC-recognized accreditation body and demonstrate proper implementation of the IPC scheme may apply to become MLA signatories. Upon successful peer evaluation, the PCB is granted IPC MLA signatory status. This recognition entitles the PCB to:

- a. Issue personnel certificates bearing the IPC logo, enhancing the international recognition and credibility of the certification.
- b. Participate in the IPC global network of certification bodies and experts.
- c. Be listed in IPC's official register of MLA signatories, used by regulators, employers, and industry stakeholders worldwide.

Key Takeaways

- a. Adopting a validated scheme like IPC's MS Auditor Scheme streamlines ISO/IEC 17024 accreditation.
- b. It significantly reduces validation workload, audit risk, and time-to-market.
- c. The IAF endorsement provides global recognition and credibility.
- d. Formal permission from the scheme owner is essential and ensures proper oversight and conformity.

Conclusion

This case study demonstrates that adopting a third-party validated and IAF-endorsed certification scheme is not just a compliance shortcut — it is a strategic decision that allows PCBs to focus on service delivery, quality assurance, and market growth.

In the case of the IPC MS Auditor Scheme, it provided a reliable, internationally accepted framework that allowed the PCB to achieve ISO/IEC 17024 accreditation faster, cheaper, and with greater confidence.

Using the IPC scheme thus not only accelerates ISO/IEC 17024 compliance but also strengthens the PCB's global positioning by aligning its certification practices with a harmonized, internationally endorsed framework.

References and Links:

IPC-PL-11-006, “IPC Certification Scheme ‘IPC Management System Auditors,’” <https://bit.ly/4lXi0c2>

ISO/IEC 17024:2012, “Conformity assessment — General requirements for bodies operating certification of persons,” <https://www.iso.org/standard/52993.html>

IAF MD 25:22, “Criteria for Evaluation of Conformity Assessment Schemes,” <https://bit.ly/4m89TcP>

The International Personnel Certification Association (IPC) can be contacted at:

Web site: www.ipcaweb.org, Email IPC Secretariat: secretary@ipcaweb.org

About the Author:

Dr. George Anastasopoulos (ganast@pjlabs.com)

Dr. George Anastasopoulos is the Technical and International Business Development Manager of Michigan, USA, based Perry Johnson Laboratory Accreditation Inc. (PJLA), a globally recognized third-party accreditation body involved in technical and scientific conformity assessment activities in multiple industrial sectors. He is also the General Secretary of the International Personnel Certification Association (IPC).

He is a Mechanical Engineer with an MSc and a PhD in Applied Mechanics from Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. He is also a member of a series of technical committees such as ISO/TMBG, ASTM, IPC, ISO/TC176 and ISO/CASCO and he is also actively participating in global accreditation IAF and ILAC meetings.

Dr. George Anastasopoulos is awarded with the EOQ Presidential Georges Borel Award for international achievements being at the edge of the development, use and diffusion of quality at international level through his professional activities and behaviors, personally contributing to the development of the European Quality movement through his accomplishments with a global impact in the field of quality.

Dr. Anastasopoulos presented many papers in technical and financial conferences, magazines and newspapers and is the author of many articles and books. He is also a reviewer for Scientific Journals. Dr. Anastasopoulos presented many lectures as keynote speaker in topics such as Conformity Assessment, Management Systems, Business Process Reengineering, Telecoms-FTTH-IT, Quality Assurance and Process Auditing. He participated in numerous consulting and research projects sponsored by government and industry in the USA, European Union and many other countries worldwide.

About IPC

IPC was established as a non-for-profit organization, in 1995, by the name "International Auditor and Training Certification Association (IATCA)". To adapt to the market need for certification of professionals in a variety of categories, the role and name was changed in Chicago Annual General Meeting (2003) to "International Personnel Certification Association (IPC)". IPC's main activity is to develop certification schemes for professionals. Although the focus of IPC is personnel certification, recognition of training providers and training courses are also part of our activities.

IPC's objective is to promote the interests of our members (personnel certification bodies and other related interest parties) and serve the needs of society for competence of professionals. IPC is also a "Scheme owner", which means that IPC develops and owns Certification Schemes (normative documents used for accreditation/certification purposes). These schemes specify rules and frame requirements for competence, on which the personnel certification body, member of IPC, may elaborate. Vision To be the prime provider of personnel certification schemes and achieve recognition of IPC brand certificates worldwide.

Mission

To provide recognition to individuals who, having demonstrated competence to IPC approved schemes, can improve the performance of organizations. IPC develops certification schemes to provide recognition for personnel in a range of fields and disciplines; the implementation of those certification schemes through its member bodies; and the evaluation of scheme implementation through accreditation to ISO/IEC17024 and IPC criteria to establish confidence in the equivalence of IPC certifications. IPC members also evaluate training providers and training courses and recognize courses fulfilling the requirements of IPC certification schemes.

Values

Transparent: Be open to its members regarding IPC proceedings including minutes from the Annual General Meeting and Board of Directors meetings.

Informative: Provide information and news to its members and interested parties regarding personnel certification on the website and the "IPC in Touch" newsletter.

Inclusive: Create an "IPC family" with all members, sharing knowledge and acting like a team.

Competent: Elect Directors and administration that are competent within certification and areas of proficiency certified and attract new competent certification bodies as our members.

Brave: Have an offensive market approach, profiling IPC certification, through its member bodies.

Ambitious: Utilize its competence to achieve international recognition.

Reliable: Abide with its own rules and be predictable in its operation. Operate in a truthful manner.

Fair: Treat all members and applicants for certification in a fair manner and safeguard its impartiality.

THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



34841 Mound Rd., Ste no 268, Sterling Heights, MI 48310, USA

Tel: +1(562)6501941

Email: secretary@ipcaweb.org

Web: www.ipcaweb.org

Copyright – IPC International Personnel Certification Association