

ISO/IEC 17067 Revisited: A Blueprint for Tomorrow's Conformity Assessment

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Introduction

On August 6th, 2025, an informative session was held to present the ongoing revision of ISO/IEC 17067, *"Conformity assessment — Fundamentals of product certification and guidelines for product certification schemes"*, currently at the Draft International Standard (DIS) stage. The session was led by Stefanie Vehring and Andrea Sandi, Co-Convenors of ISO/CASCO Working Group 65 (WG65), the team responsible for the development of this important standard. This session provided participants with an overview of the revised structure, key concepts, and strategic objectives of the standard, offering valuable insights into how it will support scheme owners, regulators, and conformity assessment bodies in the design, operation, and maintenance of robust and internationally recognized schemes.

The revision of ISO/IEC 17067 marks a significant milestone in the evolution of international conformity assessment guidance. Originally focused on product certification, ISO/IEC

17067 is being revised to address a much broader spectrum of conformity assessment schemes. This new direction reflects the growing complexity and diversity of assurance mechanisms in global markets, where conformity assessment now encompasses management systems, services, personnel certification, inspection, testing, validation and verification, accreditation, and other structured schemes.

Strategic Rationale for Revision

The revision aligns with the 2023 New Work Item Proposal (NWIP) that redefined the purpose and scope of ISO/IEC 17067 to go beyond product certification and address the foundational elements of **conformity assessment schemes** more generally. The revised document reflects a progression from ISO/IEC Guide 67 (2004) and ISO/IEC 17067 (2013) to a modern framework suited for an expanding array of conformity assessment applications. This transformation ensures consistency and interoperability across sectors and enhances the credibility of conformity claims in increasingly complex supply chains.

Broader ISO/CASCO Context

This revision is part of a synchronized effort involving multiple ISO/CASCO working groups:

- **WG64** is finalizing ISO/IEC 17007, which offers guidance for drafting normative documents suitable for use in conformity assessment (targeting standard developers and regulators).
- **WG65** is responsible for revising ISO/IEC 17067 to serve scheme owners by providing principles and operational guidance for conformity assessment schemes.
- **WG66** has developed ISO/IEC TS 17035, published in September 2024, which gives guidance on validation and verification programs for program owners and operators.

This coordinated approach ensures a harmonized and complementary suite of standards within the **CASCO Toolbox**, designed to support the full spectrum of conformity assessment functions.

Scope and Objectives of the Revised Standard

The DIS version of ISO/IEC 17067 describes the **fundamental principles and concepts** underpinning conformity assessment schemes. It provides structured guidance for scheme owners, regulators, and conformity assessment bodies involved in the **design**,

operation, evaluation, or maintenance of such schemes. The document supports understanding of the entire lifecycle of a conformity assessment scheme, from initial concept to discontinuation, and offers a flexible yet robust framework adaptable to various sectors and types of assessment. The revision relies heavily on ISO/IEC 17000:2020 as its normative reference, ensuring consistency with the established vocabulary and general principles for conformity assessment.

Core Definitions and Concepts

At the heart of the revision is the recognition that a **conformity assessment scheme** is a defined set of rules and procedures that:

- Describes the object(s) of conformity assessment (such as products, persons, systems, processes, or services),
- Identifies the specified requirements to which conformity is to be assessed,
- Provides a methodology for conducting the assessment activities.

The **scheme owner**, as defined in ISO/IEC 17000:2020, is the person or organization responsible for the **development, governance, and maintenance** of the conformity assessment scheme. This includes ensuring the scheme remains technically relevant, credible, and aligned with stakeholder needs.

A key enhancement in the DIS is the introduction of the concept of "**methodology**"—the overarching structure and sequence of assessment activities that connect the object, the requirements, and the conformity determination processes. This concept supports coherence in scheme design and operational execution.

Structure and Content of the DIS Document

Clause 3: Terms and Definitions

Extensively adopts and contextualizes terms from ISO/IEC 17000. The introduction of "methodology" (Clause 3.22) reflects the need for a logical, process-based structure in scheme development.

Clause 4: Fundamental Principles of Schemes and Systems

Establishes the foundational architecture of conformity assessment schemes by describing the relationship between objects of assessment, specified requirements, and methodologies.

Clause 5: Functional Approach to Conformity Assessment

Presents a process-based model outlining key functions in conformity assessment, including:

- **Selection** (choosing the sample or subject of assessment),
- **Determination** (evaluating conformity through testing, inspection, auditing, etc.),
- **Review and Decision** (evaluating results and determining conformity),
- **Attestation** (issuing statements or certificates of conformity),
- **Surveillance** (ongoing monitoring to maintain confidence over time).

It emphasizes that these functions may be fulfilled by different types of conformity assessment bodies (CABs) depending on the scheme structure (first-, second-, or third-party).

Clause 6: Content of a Scheme

Provides detailed guidance on structuring a conformity assessment scheme, including:

- The implementation of the functional approach
- Rules for the use of conformity statements
- Procedures for reporting to the scheme owner
- Management of complaints and appeals
- A comprehensive list of scheme elements, retained and expanded from ISO/IEC 17067:2013 (Clause 6.5)

Clause 7: Responsibilities of Scheme Owners

Clarifies the roles and obligations of scheme owners. This includes:

- Determining the applicable party context (first-, second-, or third-party schemes)
- Ensuring alignment with CASCO tools and relevant standards
- Managing the development, revision, and maintenance of the scheme

- Upholding the integrity, credibility, and transparency of the scheme across its lifecycle

Clause 8: Lifecycle of a Scheme

Describes the complete scheme lifecycle, addressing:

- How to assess the need for a new scheme
- The development and design phases
- Documentation and governance processes
- Structured discontinuation or sunseting of outdated schemes

This lifecycle approach promotes sustainable, responsive, and quality-driven scheme management.

Clause 9 and Annexes: Types and Categories of Schemes

Provides general guidance on how to categorize schemes, supported by detailed annexes that outline specific types of schemes, including:

- **Annex A** – Product, process, and service certification
- **Annex B** – Management system certification
- **Annex C** – Certification of persons
- **Annex D** – Validation and verification
- **Annex E** – Inspection
- **Annex F** – Testing
- **Annex G** – Accreditation
- **Annex H** – Peer assessment
- **Annex I** – Declaration of conformity
- **Annex J** offers guidance for schemes that involve multiple objects of assessment (e.g., persons and services, systems and products), and
- **Annex K** maps scheme characteristics to corresponding CASCO standards, helping scheme owners navigate the appropriate tools for their specific application.

Conclusion and Impact

The revised ISO/IEC 17067 represents a forward-looking standard that responds to the increasingly dynamic landscape of conformity assessment. It moves beyond product certification to embrace a full ecosystem of schemes used across industry sectors, regulatory frameworks, and assurance models.

By establishing a common foundation for scheme structure, methodology, and governance, the revised standard supports:

- Greater transparency and consistency in the operation of schemes
- Increased interoperability and mutual recognition across jurisdictions
- Stronger alignment with international best practices and the CASCO Toolbox

For scheme owners, regulators, certification bodies, and conformity assessment stakeholders, ISO/IEC 17067 DIS provides both strategic guidance and practical tools to design, operate, and evolve credible, trusted, and effective schemes.

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