



GULF SUSTAINABILITY AND QUALITY ASSESSMENT SYSTEM (GULF SQAS)

ASSESSOR'S ACCREDITATION MANUAL

Document Number	Original Issue	Re-Issue Date
GPCA-SQ-P01	MARCH 03, 2014	AUG 25, 2025
Revision Number	Prepared/ Reviewed By	Ownership
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GPCA Gulf SQAS Accreditation Manual

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1. Introduction:

1.1. Purpose

The Gulf "Sustainability and Quality Assessment System" (Gulf SQAS) Accreditation Manual is an essential document exclusively applicable to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. This manual specifies that accredited assessors are permitted to conduct Gulf SQAS assessments solely within the GCC region, ensuring that the scope and jurisdiction of the accreditation are delineated.

This manual defines the qualification criteria for "GPCA, Gulf SQAS Assessors" accreditation and encompasses all Gulf SQAS modules. It aims to maintain a high and consistent standard of quality among assessors and the assessment process, thereby ensuring that the system is recognized as reliable and effective in driving continuous improvement.

1.2. Contents of the Accreditation Manual include:

I. Assessor Pre-Qualification Requirements

- Criteria must be met before assessors can participate in the accreditation process.

II. Training and Accreditation Processes

- Detailed training programs equip assessors with the necessary skills and knowledge to perform assessments accurately and effectively.

III. Performing an Assessment

- Guidelines and standards for conducting assessments to ensure uniformity and precision.

IV. Monitoring Assessor Performance

- Mechanisms are in place to regularly evaluate assessors' performance and integrity.

V. Maintaining Accreditation

- Procedures for validating an assessor's credentials and capabilities, including professional continued personal development requirements.

VI. Follow-up Assessment

- A follow assessment shall be planned by the assessors after 18 month of the assessment day to update the improvement action plan (refer to section 3.6).

1.3. Primary Objectives of the Gulf SQAS Assessor Accreditation System:

I. Enhance Regional Safety

- Demonstrate the petrochemical industry's commitment to maintaining and improving safety standards in the GCC.

II. Standardized Continuous Improvement

- Promote a standardized approach to continuously improving logistics service providers within the petrochemical sector.

III. Improve Industry Transparency

- Provide a clearer understanding of logistics service providers' operational safety and foster open communication with potential business partners.

IV. Assurance of Assessment Quality

- Guarantee consistent, high-quality assessments across all evaluators, regardless of their geographical or professional background.

V. Uniformity in Assessment Interpretation

- Ensure all assessors uniformly interpret the assessment questionnaires and the associated guidelines.

VI. Training on System Tools

- Provide comprehensive training on effectively using the electronic Gulf SQAS database, www.gulfsgas.com.

VII. Strengthen Industry Relationships

- Enhance understanding of the relationships between GCC-based chemical companies and the logistics sector.

VIII. Insight into Partner Companies

- Offer insights into the typical activities, organizational structures, and infrastructure of logistics companies operating within the region.

By adhering to the guidelines and objectives outlined in this manual, Gulf SQAS assessors are equipped to uphold the highest standards of assessment integrity, contributing significantly to the safety and efficiency of the GCC petrochemical industry's logistics operations.

2. Accreditation

Achieving accreditation as a Gulf SQAS assessor requires the fulfillment of rigorous pre-qualification and training standards outlined in this Gulf SQAS Accreditation Manual. This structured process ensures that all assessors meet the high competency and ethical standards expected within the GCC region. Below is a detailed breakdown of the steps required for general accreditation:

1. Application Submission: Prospective assessors must complete and submit a detailed application form, which serves as the initial screening tool for eligibility.

2. Payment of Training Fees: Training fees require a \$400 investment per candidate per module. This covers comprehensive technical training and supports the accreditation process's administrative costs.

3. Approval for Assessment: Candidates are reviewed and must receive approval to proceed to the examination and interview stages, confirming their readiness and suitability for assessor training.

4. Assessor Training: Attendees must participate in intensive assessor training, including the Core module and any preferred specific modules. This training ensures a profound understanding of the assessment framework and criteria.

5. Examination and Interview: Candidates must pass a demanding written test and an in-depth interview. These assessments evaluate their knowledge, practical skills, and ability to apply assessment principles effectively.

6. Observing and Conducting Assessments

- **Observation:** As part of their training, prospective assessors must watch a full Gulf SQAS assessment for each module of interest under the guidance of an approved assessor. This phase provides them with practical exposure to the assessment process and techniques.
- **Conducting Assessments:** Subsequently, candidates must perform a full Gulf SQAS assessment separately under the observation of an approved assessor for each module. This stage tests their ability to manage and execute an assessment independently, ensuring they can apply their training effectively in real-world scenarios.

7. Obtaining Accreditation Titles: To be authorized to perform assessments, assessors must obtain specific "Accreditation Titles" from the GPCA for each Gulf SQAS module they wish to specialize in. As detailed in this accreditation guideline, the procedure requires additional modular training and the successful completion of module-specific examinations.

These steps are designed to cultivate a cadre of assessors proficient in the technical aspects of the Gulf SQAS assessments and capable of maintaining the highest standards of ethical conduct and impartiality. This comprehensive accreditation process ensures that all assessors are well-prepared to contribute to enhancing safety and quality standards within the petrochemical logistics sector in the GCC.

2.1. Assessor Pre-qualification Requirements

2.1.1 Assessors Employed by Accreditation Bodies or Consultancy Agencies

The following pre-qualification requirements are the ones that every applicant must meet to apply to become a Gulf SQAS assessor:

- Be a full-time employee of an accreditation organization or a consulting agency that is a member of GPCA and has received written approval to nominate assessor candidates.

Criteria for Approval of Consulting Agencies: Consulting agencies wishing to present assessor candidates for Gulf SQAS accreditation must undergo a vetting process by the GPCA. The criteria for approval typically include

- Demonstrated experience and expertise in providing consultancy or auditing services related to quality, health, safety, security, and environmental (EHSSQ) management systems, preferably within the logistics or petrochemical sectors.
- A track record of ethical business practices and impartiality.
- Possession of relevant national or international business registrations and certifications.
- The ability to provide a stable employment environment for assessors.
- Agreement to adhere to the GPCA's requirements and the Gulf SQAS framework.

Consulting agencies interested in becoming approved should contact the GPCA Gulf SQAS administration for detailed application procedures and requirements. A list of GPCA-approved consulting providers may be published on the Gulf SQAS website.

- Be registered as a lead auditor for ISO 9001, 14001, or 45001.
 - Have a **valid qualification with an accredited certification body** or
 - **be registered with a recognized auditor registration organization** (e.g., IRCA)
- Have performed at least five ISO 9001, ISO 14001, RC 14001, or ISO 45001 audits or Gulf SQAS (equivalent) assessments at companies providing logistic services to the chemical industry during the last three years.¹

¹ Note: *Clarification on Equivalent Assessments:* "Equivalent" assessments may include audits conducted under other recognized industry-specific assessment schemes focused on safety, quality, and environmental management within logistics, provided they involve a comprehensive evaluation process comparable in scope and rigor to Gulf SQAS assessments. Examples could include assessments against recognized national or international chemical industry logistics safety programs. Applicants should provide detailed information on the scope, criteria, and duration of any claimed equivalent assessments for evaluation by the Gulf SQAS subcommittee.

- Be able to demonstrate knowledge of the requirements for the transportation, storage, and handling of dangerous goods, including but not limited to ADR, IMDG, or IATA.²
- Have reasonable knowledge about local GCC legislation.
 - Maintain complete independence from the logistics companies under evaluation, with no financial, commercial, or advisory affiliations.
 - Have a good working command of the English language. Working knowledge of the Arabic language is preferred.
 - He/she must possess suitable leadership qualities and a strong and fair personality that allows him/her to work under pressure and deal with highly demanding clients.
- Preferred:
 - Dangerous Goods Safety Advisor (DGSA) training completed.
 - NEBOSH IGC or equivalent
 - Corporate social responsibility (ISO 26000)
 - Security and environmental-specific studies
 - ILO International labor law

The applicant must specify pre-qualification requirements in their application and, where necessary, provide copies of certificates and other pertinent documentation, like recommendations and experience testimonials.

2.2. General Accreditation

2.2.1. Training Course

Achieving accreditation as a Gulf SQAS assessor involves a meticulously structured process that ensures each candidate possesses the qualifications and expertise required for the role. All prospective assessors must meet stringent pre-qualification requirements before enrolling in the Gulf Petrochemicals and Chemicals Association's (GPCA) General Accreditation course, which is taught in English.

The training course is designed to provide a thorough understanding of the following critical areas:

1. **Overview of the Gulf SQAS System:** This section introduces the general characteristics of Gulf SQAS, including its objectives, scope, and strategic importance within the petrochemical and logistics industries in the GCC region.
2. **Assessment Process and Principles:**
 - **Preparation:** Detailed guidelines on preparing for an assessment, including the kick-off meeting, reviewing necessary documentation like the PAD and the pre-assessment submitted documentation, and planning the assessment schedule.
 - **Fieldwork:** Executing the on-site assessment, focusing on direct observation, interviews, and other practical evaluation methods.
 - **Evidence Seeking:** Techniques for Collecting and Verifying Evidence to Support the Assessment Findings.

² Note: There may be a future requirement for Dangerous goods dedicated training.

- **Conformance with Guidelines:** Ensuring the assessment follows the established Gulf SQAS guidelines and protocols.
- **Administration:** managing assessment-related administrative tasks like the assessment report and the improvement action plan to ensure a smooth and efficient process.
- **Reporting:** Prepare comprehensive assessment reports that accurately reflect the findings and provide clear, actionable insights.

3. Core Competencies Relevant to All Modules

Training covers essential topics universally applicable across all modules.

- **Risk Assessment:** Methods for Identifying and Evaluating Risks Associated with Petrochemical Logistics, including qualitative and quantitative techniques.
- **CSR:** Corporate Social Responsibility principles and their application in the logistics sector, including labor practices, human rights, and community engagement.
- **Security:** Understanding security risk assessment, physical security measures, supply chain security, and emergency response protocols for security incidents.
- **Safety at Work:** Principles of occupational health and safety management systems, hazard identification, risk assessment, control measures, incident investigation, and emergency preparedness for handling hazardous materials.
- **Subcontracting:** Guidelines for selecting, evaluating, and managing subcontractors to ensure compliance with Gulf SQAS standards and the Responsible Care principles.

4. CORE Questionnaire: An in-depth exploration of the CORE questionnaire, covering its structure, intent of each question, required evidence, and scoring methodology. Case studies and practical exercises will be used to ensure a deep understanding.

5. Specific Module Questionnaire(s): Detailed examination of questionnaires specific to each module (Transport Services, Warehouse, Tank Cleaning, Rail, etc.). This includes:

- Specific regulatory requirements relevant to the module (e.g., detailed requirements of ADR, IMDG, IATA, DG national warehousing regulations).
- Technical aspects specific to the module (e.g., vehicle technical requirements, warehouse design and operations, tank cleaning procedures and standards).
- Module-specific risks and assessment techniques.
- Practical exercises and site visit simulations related to the module.

This comprehensive training ensures that all accredited Gulf SQAS assessors have the knowledge, skills, and ethical foundation to conduct assessments that significantly improve safety, quality, and environmental stewardship within the GCC's petrochemical logistics sector.

2.2.2. Examination

2.2.2.1. Written examination

After attending the General Accreditation Training course, applicants must participate in a written examination to demonstrate their knowledge of the Gulf SQAS assessment system. The examination will be conducted as follows:

- The examination will be in English. The applicant may use the English version of the Core and Specific Module questionnaires during the examination.
- The Gulf SQAS subcommittee will approve a list of questions to choose from.
- The examiner will mark the examination without knowing the applicant's name.

2.2.2.2. Interview

Members of the Gulf SQAS Committee will interview each applicant in English. The purpose of the interview will be to validate the applicants' technical knowledge, experience, communication skills, and ability to carry out Gulf SQAS assessments and maintain the required GPCA ethics of conduct.

2.2.2.3. Passing or failing the examination:

The applicant will be judged to have passed when the average interview and written examination score is 70% or higher. Candidates whose total average is more than 60% and less than 69% may re-sit the written examination once through an e-exam. They will pass if the total average of the initial assessment and the re-sit e-exam is 70% or higher. Candidates under 60% may apply to participate in the next Gulf SQAS General Accreditation Training and Examination organized by GPCA.

2.3. Demonstration of Practical Competence

An assessor candidate will be required to:

- a) Observe a complete assessment for every module performed by a lead Gulf SQAS assessor³.
- b) Conduct an individual assessment under the observation of a lead Gulf SQAS assessor, ideally the same one they observed during the initial assessment.⁴
- c) Every subject module (transportation, warehousing, tank-cleaning, and rail) requires a separate assessment, but it is allowed to conduct multiple modules during the same assessment, making sure that the initial assessment and the follow-up assessment cover both the specific modules.⁵

³ Lead Gulf SQAS assessor: The GPCA will approve Lead Assessors who meet the ethical standards and general requirements of having completed at least one Gulf SQAS cycle (3 years) during which they have conducted at least 15 assessments.

⁴ Although it is preferable to have the same lead assessor conduct both observee and observed assessment, ideally an independent assessor. Exceptional cases may be requested from GPCA to allow a lead assessor from the same company to conduct observe assessment, and the final observed assessment shall be observed by an independent external lead assessor (can be SQAS or Gulf SQAS lead assessor).

⁵ For instance, the candidate assessor may observe a transportation and warehousing module assessment on the same assessment dates. The assessment led by the assessor candidate must be a The candidate must undergo a transportation and warehousing assessment while being observed by the lead assessor from a different LSP to obtain accreditation for both modules. Otherwise, the candidate assessor will have to conduct two separate assessments covering transportation and warehousing, separately.

d) In case more than one candidate assessor needs to be accredited as observers during the same assessment, the GPCA needs to be contacted, and a decision will be made on a case-by-case basis.⁶

e) Only one candidate assessor can lead an assessment whilst being observed by the lead assessor.

f) An official Gulf SQAS account will be generated as soon as the candidate assessor passes his initial assessment, so that he/she can create an assessment to be observed by the lead assessor. The generated report will be issued in the candidate's name and should mention the presence of the lead assessor.

When the observer and observed phases for each individual module are completed the assigned certified lead-assessor will complete the verification process and **prepare a letter and** sign the relevant section of the assessor Certification Tracking Form to the Gulf SQAS subcommittee recommending that the assessor is competent to be certified.

2.4. Accreditation Titles for Gulf SQAS modules

Successful completion of the Gulf SQAS General Accreditation Program will allow applicants to progress and obtain an accreditation title for each Gulf SQAS module individually.⁷

The Gulf SQAS subcommittee will define each module's training and examination requirements and organize regular examination opportunities. This training will be based on self-study and e-learning of the relevant subjects and an understanding of the reference documents posted on the Gulf SQAS website. When necessary, for instance, following a significant revision of a module, GPCA may arrange a particular "in-class" training course specific to that module.

2.4.1. General Requirements

The requirements for being listed as an accredited assessor for a module are

- To study the associated documents (questionnaires and specific guidelines);
- To research the literature and documents deemed pertinent to the field or activity covered by the module by the Gulf SQAS subcommittee and posted on the Gulf SQAS website.
 - To successfully pass an examination on the subject matter with a minimum score of 70%, the examination will be either classroom-based or an e-exam, downloaded from the website or sent by email and submitted to GPCA before the requested due date.
- If the applicant fails the exam on the first attempt, he or she may re-sit the examination once.
- Be fluent in English and sufficiently proficient in the local language when assessments are conducted in a language different from the assessor's native tongue. An independent colleague with local language skills should accompany the assessor instead.

⁶ The dedicated LSP (the client) needs to approve it when more than two assessors join the assessment. The observer assessor shall not affect the man-days calculation.

⁷ Every module: Transportation, Warehousing, Tank Cleaning, and Rail, requires an assessment once as an observer and an assessment once as an observee. Except for the core questionnaire, which requires only the first assessment without repetition,

- To be knowledgeable of the relevant local regulations and guidelines provided by GPCA (e.g., ADR) to ensure that key documents and procedures (e.g., operating permits, training records, inspection certificates) can be interpreted correctly.

Gulf SQAS Transport Services

In addition to the above general requirements, applicants for the Gulf SQAS Transport Service need to demonstrate through their continued professional development (CPD):

- Knowledge of national and international regulations related to road transport operations.
- When appropriate for the supply chain, knowledge of national and international regulations covering intermodal operations (e.g. IMDG, ADR, RID, ADN, etc.);
- Knowledge of basic technical issues concerning transport.

Gulf SQAS Warehouse

In addition to the above general requirements, applicants for Gulf SQAS Warehouse need to demonstrate, through their Continued Professional Development (CPD):

- Knowledge of national regulations related to warehousing operations and permitting.
- Knowledge of fundamental technical issues concerning Warehousing.

Gulf SQAS Tank Cleaning

In addition to the above general requirements, applicants for Gulf SQAS Tank Cleaning need to demonstrate, through their Continued Professional Development (CPD):

- Knowledge of national regulations related to tank-cleaning operations and permitting
- Knowledge of basic technical issues concerning tank cleaning.

2.5. Granting the Accreditation

The Gulf SQAS subcommittee grants accreditation to candidates who meet the following criteria:

- Demonstration of the requisite knowledge and experience.
- Attended the General Gulf SQAS training course.
- Successfully passed the written examination and the interview.
- Successfully obtained an accreditation title for one or more specific modules.
- The candidate observes a full assessment conducted by Lead assessor.
- A lead assessor observes a full assessment conducted by the candidate.
- Lead assessor submits to the GPCA the assessment witness report.

The applicant will receive a Gulf SQAS accreditation. Lead assessors chosen by the Gulf SQAS subcommittee managing the candidate's assessments shall provide performance feedback to GPCA. The certificate is valid for three years.

When an applicant is rejected from obtaining the Gulf SQAS assessors' accreditation and feels that a Gulf SQAS subcommittee decision was unfair, they may appeal to the GPCA Secretary General. The procedure referred to in Section 5 will be followed in this case.

3. Conducting an assessment

3.1 The contracting phase

In the dynamic logistics and professional certifications sector, authorized Gulf SQAS assessors, often constrained by time, do not directly engage in contracting logistics service providers. The marketing and sales teams of the certification bodies for which these assessors work typically oversee this function. This separation ensures that assessors can focus on the core responsibilities of assessing organizations without the distraction of contractual negotiations.

Despite this delegation of duties, the GPCA-approved assessor remains pivotal in the assessment process. The assessor is solely accountable for conducting the assessment and for the accuracy and integrity of the assessment report. It is critical to understand that any deviations from the established GPCA procedures directly impact the evaluation of the assessor's performance, not that of the certification body.

Assessors are also valuable contributors to the continuous improvement of the Gulf SQAS program itself. Based on their practical experience during assessments, assessors are encouraged to identify and report any ambiguities, redundancies, or areas for enhancement within the assessment questionnaires, guidelines, and procedures. Suggestions for changes or improvements should be submitted to the Gulf SQAS committee or the Assessors Task Force through the designated channels (e.g., a feedback form available on www.gulfsqas.com or direct communication with the Assessors Task Force chairman). These proposals are carefully considered by the Gulf SQAS committee and, if deemed necessary, escalated to the higher Responsible Care Committee for further evaluation and potential integration into future revisions of the Gulf SQAS framework.

Given the centrality of their role, accredited assessors must exercise the utmost caution with their login credentials to www.gulfsqas.com. These credentials must be kept from others within the certification body. The GPCA mandates this to safeguard the assessment process's integrity and ensure that all activities under the assessor's account are directly traceable to them. This policy stems from the fact that the GPCA's contractual relationship exists solely with the individual assessor and not with the broader certification body. This arrangement emphasizes that while certification bodies may facilitate business operations, the accountability for maintaining GPCA standards and the specifics of the Gulf SQAS agreement rest exclusively with the accredited assessor.

Thus, every accredited assessor must vigilantly uphold the standards and responsibilities entrusted to them, recognizing that they bear the personal obligation to ensure their actions align with GPCA guidelines and the ethical execution of their duties in the Gulf SQAS assessment process.

3.2 The Pre-Assessment Document (PAD)

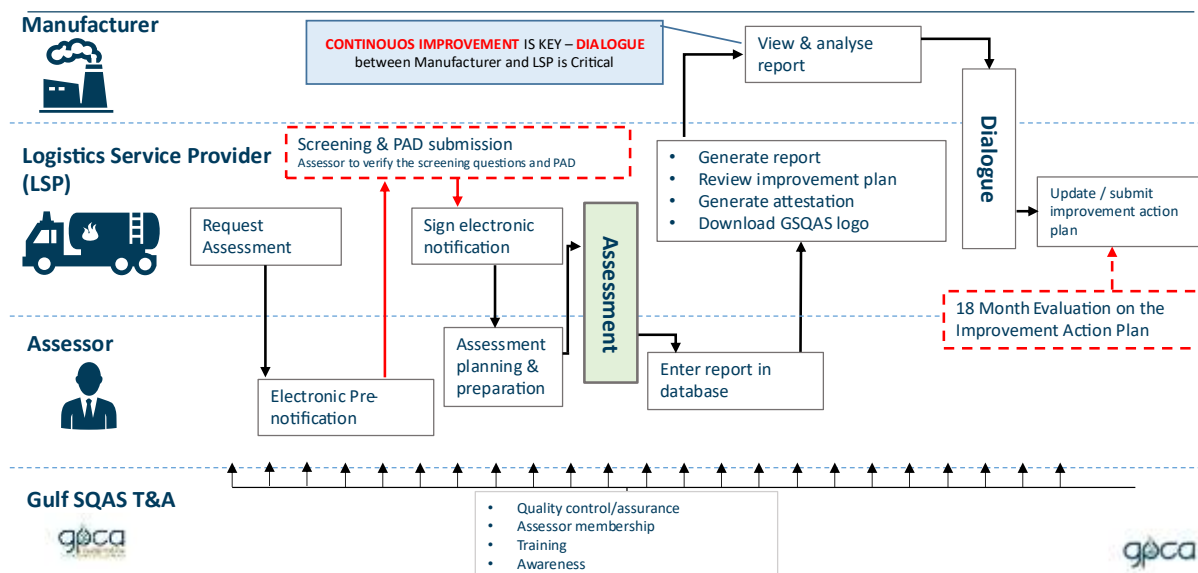
As accredited assessors under the Gulf SQAS (Sustainability and Quality Assessment System) framework, it is imperative to adhere strictly to the predefined protocols outlined in the Gulf SQAS assessment procedures. From the initial Pre-Assessment Document (PAD) to the Improvement Action Plan (IAP), each step is meticulously designed to ensure uniformity and rigor in the evaluation process. Assessors must perform their duties without deviation or using methods from other certification industries.

The Gulf SQAS program is distinct and highly specialized, with the authority to amend or revise the assessment protocols resting solely with the Gulf SQAS committee. While assessors are encouraged to engage with the process actively, any suggestions for changes or improvements must be directed to the Gulf SQAS committee or the Assessors Task Force⁸. Such proposals are carefully considered and, if deemed necessary, escalated to the higher Responsible Care Committee for further evaluation and potential integration into the existing guidelines.

Regarding the assessment duration, the PAD provides a specific recommendation for the minimum number of person-days required. Assessors must align strictly with these guidelines, ensuring that the duration of the assessment meets or exceeds the stipulated time. Any deviation from this prescribed duration is considered a severe protocol breach, especially if intended to secure contractual advantages or for other extraneous reasons. Such violations are subject to rigorous scrutiny by the Gulf SQAS committee and are addressed promptly to maintain the integrity and efficacy of the assessment process.

⁸ The assessors task force is a strategic arm used by the Gulf SQAS committee to hold assessors accountable for the quality of the program and involve them in the standardization of the assessment processes. All G-SQAS assessors are members of the committee, and they are expected to attend approximately 4–5 meetings annually and conduct the required actions to help support achieving the annual targets of the Gulf SQAS technical committee and the program.

Assessment Process



In conclusion, the role of a Gulf SQAS assessor is anchored in precision, adherence to established guidelines, and a commitment to maintaining the highest standards of integrity and impartiality. This disciplined approach ensures that the assessment process remains robust and reflects the overarching principles of the GPCA’s Responsible Care initiative.

3.3 The Kick-off Meeting

Setting the stage for a successful and effective assessment heavily depends on the first Gulf SQAS assessment meeting. This meeting should be conducted a few days before the appointment is confirmed in the Gulf SQAS database.

This meeting aims to clarify any ambiguities about the assessment days and ensure everyone involved knows all the agreements.

This kickoff meeting helps spend less time reviewing the PAD on the first day of the assessment, and it creates clear knowledge among all the concerned parties about the program, thereby promoting a cooperative climate that supports open and comprehensive assessments. It also aims to clarify the assessment objectives, scope, and process to ensure that the Logistics Service Provider (LSP) and pertinent staff members are completely ready and informed on what to expect throughout the forthcoming assessment days. The GPCA Gulf-SQAS representative should be invited to attend all the kick-off meetings and ensure the quality of the program.⁹

3.3.1 Main Features of the Kick-off meeting The assessor welcomes and identifies himself or herself and the certifying body he or she represents, emphasizing their experience, qualifications,

⁹ All kick-off and closing meetings should include the GPCA representative or related members of the Gulf SQAS committee as guests. Knowing that it's not mandatory for them to attend, but they should be enabled to attend when they deem this necessary for quality assurance purposes for the program.

and responsibilities. LSP delegates briefly introduce themselves, summarizing their roles and responsibilities inside the business. They then highlight the pre-reading materials¹⁰ uploaded to the Gulf SQAS website through the assigned LSP's account.

The assessor provides a general picture of the GPCA and the Gulf SQAS assessment process, including their understanding of the pre-reading materials uploaded to the portal, the important phases, and what each entails. The scope of the assessment is justified based on the Pre-Assessment Document (PAD) and any areas of specific emphasis.

It is crucial to emphasize the importance of assessing conformance with Gulf SQAS criteria, identify potential areas for ambiguity, and clearly define the key goals of the evaluation process.

The kickoff includes verifying the assessment day(s) schedule(s), including start and end hours and any specific needs for each day. Discuss logistical details such as meeting locations, necessary access, and any safety procedures the assessor's site visit calls for.

The assessor will also explain his or her way of establishing open lines of communication for the entire assessment, including main contacts from representatives of the assessor and the LSP, and how to determine and present the results during the assessment.

Emphasize the importance of confidentiality and safe handling of any private data discovered during the examination.

Opening the floor for any queries the LSP may have about the process, aiming to eliminate doubts and reassure the LSP's staff. Review any last-minute notes or paperwork required for the first day of the assessment. Ensure every participant is fully prepared for the assessment and knows what to expect.

Summarize the main ideas covered in the discussion and verify the agreement on the day and time of the assessment's start. This guarantees that all participants are in line and dedicated to an open and cooperative assessment process from the first day. Setting a positive and constructive attitude for the forthcoming assessment depends on this first meeting, which guarantees that the assessor and the LSP are ready for a successful involvement.

3.4 Assessment Process

The Gulf SQAS (Sustainability and Quality Assessment System) Assessment process is a comprehensive and rigorous framework designed to evaluate the operational and environmental standards of logistics service providers within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region. This system, spearheaded by the Gulf Petrochemicals and Chemicals Association (GPCA), aims to promote transparency, safety, and sustainability in the logistics sector by aligning it with globally recognized best practices.

¹⁰ Pre-reading materials include the main documents necessary for the assessor to evaluate the LSP performance, like international standards certifications, the last Gulf SQAS improvement action plan, HSSEQ policies, system procedures, risk assessments, HSEQ plans, KPIs, audit results, and management reviews.

3.4.1 Stages of the Gulf SQAS Assessment Process

1. Pre-Assessment Preparation: The assessment begins with a thorough pre-assessment phase, where the logistics service provider (LSP) must complete the Pre-Assessment Document (PAD) and send relevant pre-reading documentation to the assessor on the online portal provided by the GPCA. This document gathers essential information about the LSP's operations, which helps plan the onsite assessment's scope and focus. Assessors review the PAD to identify critical areas of concern and prepare relevant evaluation strategies.

2. Onsite¹¹ Assessment: Accredited Gulf SQAS assessors visit the LSP's facilities to conduct a detailed examination of operations during the onsite assessment. This phase is critical and involves direct observation, interviews with staff, and a review of operational practices. Assessors focus on various aspects such as safety measures, environmental compliance, quality control, and security protocols.

The objective is to measure conformance to the established Gulf SQAS criteria and identify areas for improvement.

During the assessment, the assessor should share with the LSP the questions he/she is scoring as "0" to ensure proper alignment and avoid conflicts after the assessment is completed.

3. Evidence Collection: Assessors gather evidence to support their findings throughout the onsite visit. This evidence includes documentation, records, and physical proof of practice. It is imperative for the credibility of the assessment that all conclusions are well supported by clear and verifiable evidence.

4. Onsite closing meeting: Assessors compile a brief presentation with the most positive findings and best practices observed during the assessment and then review the agreed-upon areas for improvement. During the kick-off meeting, stakeholders, including the GPCA's Gulf SQAS representatives, will be invited to this meeting. Critical areas for improvement will be added to the closing meeting package, and a comprehensive Improvement Action Plan will be uploaded on the portal for the assessor's review and approval.

5. Reporting and Feedback: After the onsite assessment, assessors compile a comprehensive report detailing their observations, findings, and comments. This critical document provides the LSP and GPCA (and eventually the Petrochemical producers) with an in-depth analysis of the LSP's adherence to the Gulf SQAS standards. Feedback is provided to the LSP, outlining areas of strength and recommending actions for areas needing improvement.

6. Post-Assessment Follow-up: Following the initial feedback, there is a follow-up phase during which the LSP is expected to address the assessors' recommendations. This phase is monitored to ensure that all corrective actions are implemented effectively, leading to sustained improvements in operations.

¹¹ Remote assessments are not allowed in Gulf SQAS; assessors must be physically at the site.

3.4.2 Importance of Adherence to Assessment Guidelines

Throughout the Gulf SQAS assessment process, it is crucial that all assessors adhere strictly to the guidelines and protocols to maintain the integrity and effectiveness of the assessment. The assessor's role is evaluative and advisory¹², as the goal of the Gulf SQAS is to foster continuous improvement and ensure the highest standards of safety and quality in the GCC logistics sector. This structured approach ensures that the assessment process is transparent, impartial, and consistent, thus maintaining its credibility and reliability.

3.4.3 Leveraging Digital Tools and Remote Assessment

The Gulf SQAS system encourages the strategic use of digital tools and technologies to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the assessment process. While on-site assessments remain crucial, accredited assessors should explore opportunities for leveraging the www.gulfsqas.com platform and other secure digital communication tools for

- **Pre-assessment document review and verification:** Efficiently reviewing and verifying documentation submitted by the LSP through the online portal.
- **Remote follow-up assessments:** Conducting targeted follow-up assessments remotely for specific action plan items, where on-site verification is not strictly necessary and can be achieved through virtual meetings, document review, and photographic or video evidence.
- **Enhanced communication:** Utilizing secure digital channels for communication with the LSP before, during, and after the assessment to clarify information and address minor issues promptly.

Guidelines for conducting remote assessment activities, including data security protocols and verification methods, will be provided by the GPCA and updated on the Gulf SQAS website. Assessors must ensure that the integrity and rigor of the assessment are maintained regardless of the methodology employed.

3.4.4 Assessing New and Emerging Logistics Practices

The petrochemical logistics industry is dynamic, with continuous advancements in technologies, operational methodologies, and sustainability initiatives. Assessors may encounter logistics

¹² Assessors may only give non-binding advice during the assessment. This should be entirely impartial and based on the best practices they have obtained while conducting several company assessments. Except for the payment of the Gulf SQAS assessment process, assessors cannot receive any financial or personal benefits for their advice. Assessors are prohibited from working as consultants and supporting organizations with the standard's implementation. LSPs are not obliged to use any advice from the assessors. Committee members or the GPCA have the right to periodically attend Gulf SQAS assessments and evaluate the performance of the assessors or reach out to the LSPs for objective feedback about the assessors' performance.

service providers employing practices or technologies that are not explicitly detailed in the current Gulf SQAS modules or questionnaires.

In such cases, assessors should:

- Gain an understanding of the new practice or technology and its intended application within the LSP's operations.
- Evaluate how the new practice aligns with the overarching principles and objectives of Gulf SQAS, particularly concerning safety, environmental protection, quality management, and security.
- Assess the associated risks and the effectiveness of the LSP's measures to mitigate them, drawing upon their technical expertise and understanding of relevant regulations and industry best practices, even if they are not specifically referenced in the current questionnaire.
- Document the observed new practices clearly in the assessment report, noting their potential impact on the LSP's performance against Gulf SQAS principles.
- Provide feedback on the observed new practices to the Gulf SQAS committee through the established channels for program improvement, highlighting whether the current questionnaire adequately addresses such practices or if revisions may be necessary.

This approach ensures that the Gulf SQAS assessment process remains relevant and capable of evaluating innovation while upholding the core standards of the program.

3.5 Improvement Action Plan

The Improvement Action Plan (IAP) is an integral component of the Gulf SQAS (Sustainability and Quality Assessment System) process, designed to foster continuous improvement within logistics service providers (LSPs) operating in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region. This plan is formulated following a comprehensive assessment that identifies areas requiring enhancement to meet or exceed the stringent standards of the Gulf Petrochemicals and Chemicals Association (GPCA).

Structure of the Improvement Action Plan

The IAP is systematically structured to ensure clarity and effectiveness in addressing the specific needs identified during the Gulf SQAS assessment. The plan typically includes the following key elements:

1. Issue Identification: Each IAP begins with a detailed listing of issues (the so-called zeros) identified during the assessment. These issues are clearly defined to ensure no ambiguity regarding the areas that need attention.

2. Recommended Actions: For each identified issue, the IAP outlines specific, actionable steps the LSP should take to rectify the problem. These recommendations are designed to be practical and achievable within realistic time frames.

3. Priority Levels: Issues and actions are prioritized based on their impact on safety, environmental performance, and operational efficiency. This prioritization helps LSPs to allocate resources effectively and address the most critical issues first.

4. Time Frames: The IAP specifies timelines for the implementation of each action. These time frames are set to encourage timely improvement while allowing enough time for thorough and sustainable changes.

5. Responsibility Assignment: To ensure accountability, the IAP assigns responsibility for each action to specific individuals or teams within the LSP's organization. Clear responsibility is crucial for effective implementation and follow-through.

6. Follow-Up Mechanisms: The plan includes a schedule for follow-up assessments to monitor progress on implementing the IAP. This ongoing evaluation is essential to ensure that actions are not only implemented but also effective in bringing about the desired improvements.

3.5.1 Importance of the Improvement Action Plan

The IAP is more than a regulatory requirement; it is a strategic tool that drives operational excellence and competitive advantage for LSPs in the GCC region. By systematically addressing the areas for improvement identified during assessments, LSPs can enhance their compliance with international standards, improve their operational efficiencies, and reduce risks associated with their activities.

Moreover, the IAP fosters a culture of continuous improvement and compliance within organizations, making it a cornerstone for long-term sustainability and success. In the dynamic and challenging environment of logistics and petrochemicals, adherence to the Improvement Action Plan is about meeting regulatory requirements and striving for excellence and leadership in the industry. This commitment to rigorous improvement processes underlines the credibility and reliability of the Gulf SQAS. It reinforces its role in promoting safety, quality, and environmental stewardship across the GCC logistics sector.

3.6 IAP follow-up assessment after 18 months

The follow-up assessment after 18 months is a critical element of the Gulf SQAS (Sustainability and Quality Assessment System) Improvement Action Plan (IAP), designed to ensure sustained compliance and continuous improvement among logistics service providers (LSPs) in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region. This assessment plays a pivotal role in reinforcing LSPs' commitment to the high standards of safety, environmental stewardship, and quality management prescribed by the Gulf Petrochemicals and Chemicals Association (GPCA).

Framework of the Follow-Up Assessment

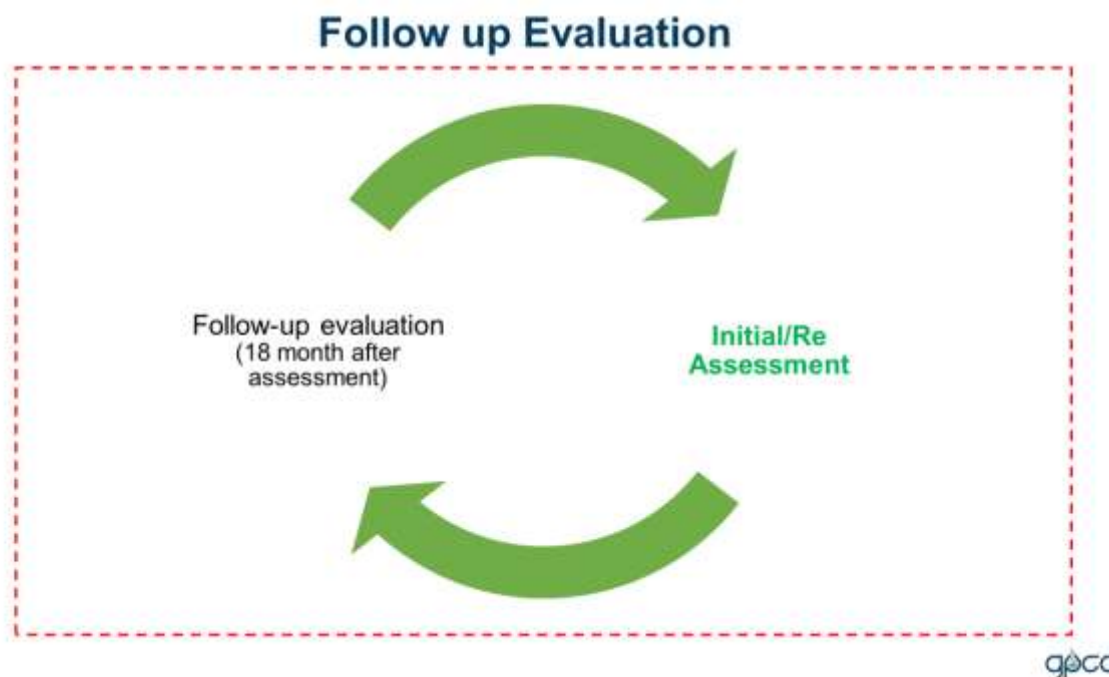
1. Comprehensive Review: The follow-up assessment after 18 months begins with a comprehensive review of the LSP's progress against the Improvement Action Plan formulated in the previous assessment. This review critically evaluates the implementation of recommended actions, the effectiveness of these interventions, and the attainment of targeted outcomes.

2. Verification of Compliance: Assessors verify the LSP's adherence to the agreed-upon actions within the IAP. This process involves a detailed examination of records, operational practices, and on-site observations to ensure that all corrective measures have been properly implemented and maintained over time.

3. Assessment of New Challenges: As businesses evolve, new challenges may emerge that were not previously identified. The annual follow-up provides an opportunity to identify and address these new issues, ensuring that the LSP meets the dynamic demands of the logistics industry and regulatory standards.

4. Documentation and Reporting: Findings from the follow-up assessment after 18 months are meticulously documented in a comprehensive report. This report compares the LSP's status with its previous conditions and outlines additional recommendations for further improvement.

5. Continuous Improvement Cycle: The follow-up assessment after 18 months is part of a continuous improvement cycle, not merely a compliance check. It encourages LSPs to perpetually refine their operations and align closer with best practices and the highest standards set forth by the GPCA.



3.6.1 Importance of the Follow-Up Assessment

The follow-up assessment after 18 months ensures that improvements are implemented but are effective and sustainable. It helps maintain the momentum of continuous enhancement and ensures that LSPs do not revert to previous practices that may compromise safety, quality, or environmental performance. This regular scrutiny supports a proactive approach to risk management and enhances the overall reliability and reputation of the LSP within the industry.

Moreover, by maintaining a consistent schedule of follow-ups, the GPCA promotes a culture of accountability and excellence among LSPs. It underscores the importance of ongoing development and upholds the integrity of the Gulf SQAS as a benchmark for industry best

practices. This rigorous process thus serves as a cornerstone for ensuring that the logistics operations within the GCC region operate at peak efficiency and safety, fostering trust among stakeholders and enhancing the competitive edge of the LSPs.

4. Evaluating Assessor Performance

To uphold the highest standards of professionalism and consistency in all assessments, each Gulf SQAS assessor's performance undergoes stringent and systematic monitoring. This exacting supervision ensures that each assessor's work is not only of good quality but also strictly adheres to a standardized methodology that is uniformly applied across all accredited assessors.

Observers may be appointed by the Gulf SQAS Subcommittee during an assessment and could be strategically placed to evaluate an assessor's performance meticulously against well-defined benchmarks. Their periodic involvement is essential for ensuring that all assessors execute their duties in accordance with the established protocols and maintain a high level of professional conduct.

If an observer attends an assessment, they will compile a comprehensive feedback report and submit this to the committee. These reports provide detailed insights into the assessor's adherence to the assessment criteria, highlighting areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. This feedback is crucial, as it affirms practices that meet the expected standards and identifies any discrepancies that must be addressed.

Moreover, observer feedback contributes to a continuous feedback loop that enhances the overall quality and consistency of the assessment process. It enables the Gulf SQAS Subcommittee to oversee and maintain a rigorous quality control system that aligns with its commitment to excellence. Through this dynamic and robust evaluation mechanism, the Gulf SQAS ensures that its accreditation process remains credible, reliable, and effective in fostering the highest standards of assessment practices in the logistics sector.

4.1 Performance Criteria

The performance of each assessor is evaluated based on several key criteria:

- 1. Adherence to Assessment Protocols:** Assessors must strictly follow the standardized procedures and guidelines set forth by the Gulf SQAS. This includes the preparation, execution, and reporting phases of the assessment.
- 2. Technical Expertise:** Assessors are expected to demonstrate profound knowledge and understanding of the logistics and petrochemical sectors and the specific operational practices covered under the Gulf SQAS modules they are accredited to assess.

3. Analytical and Observational Skills: It is crucial for assessors to accurately identify, analyze, and report findings. They must also effectively discern compliance levels and risk factors within the logistics service providers they evaluate.

4. Impartiality and Professionalism: Integrity is paramount in the assessment process. Assessors must remain unbiased and professional, ensuring that all evaluations are conducted fairly and without any conflict of interest.

5. Communication Skills: Effective communication, both in written reports and verbal interactions, is essential. This includes the ability to clearly articulate findings, provide constructive feedback, actively listen, and interact professionally and respectfully with all stakeholders from diverse backgrounds. Assessors should demonstrate strong interpersonal skills, including adaptability, cultural sensitivity, and the ability to manage potentially challenging discussions or conflicts constructively.

4.2 Appraisal Process

The appraisal process for assessors involves several steps to ensure a comprehensive evaluation:

1. Observer Report: After the assessment, observers (the Lead Gulf SQAS assessor) complete a detailed report that evaluates the assessor's performance based on the defined criteria, including their technical knowledge, adherence to protocols, and communication and interpersonal skills. These reports are critical for providing constructive feedback and identifying areas for improvement.

2. Feedback Sessions: Assessors receive feedback on their performance through formal sessions where observer reports are discussed. These sessions serve to reinforce strengths and address any weaknesses noted during the assessments.

3. Continuous Professional Development: Based on the feedback, assessors may be required to engage in additional training or professional development activities to enhance their skills and knowledge, ensuring they remain at the forefront of assessment best practices.

4. Performance Tracking: Performance metrics are tracked over time to identify trends, improvements, or declines in each assessor's work. This longitudinal analysis helps in making informed decisions about an assessor's accreditation status and areas needing attention.

By employing a structured and transparent appraisal process, the Gulf SQAS ensures that all accredited assessors meet the program's high standards, thereby upholding the integrity and effectiveness of the assessment system.

4.3 Expectations

To ensure a consistently high quality of performance, the assessor must demonstrate the following:

- Submit at least three completed Gulf SQAS assessments for each assessment cycle (one every year) and any module(s).

- All assessment questionnaires need to be filled out properly, e.g., where the LSP scores a “one,” the evidence is made clear, and where the LSP scores a “zero,” the justification is made obvious for a reader to understand its reasoning. Where the LSP has made items N/A (not applicable), the assessor reviews and verifies that the non-applicability of the question is correct. Where the N/A is not correctly chosen, the assessor is expected to add the question to the (to be assessed) list and score the question with a 1 or a 0 and update the system. Assessors should also upload pictures of the evidence whenever needed.
- Efficient communication between the assessor and GPCA is essential. The assessor must be accessible by e-mail and phone. If, after reasonable efforts to contact the assessor, he or she does not answer emails or phone calls, his or her accreditation can be suspended after 6 months, pending a final decision by the Gulf SQAS subcommittee.
- Attend personal development training and stay updated on changes in the subject-related industries.
- Attending the scheduled Assessors Task Force (online) meetings.
- Compliance with all the requirements defined in Gulf SQAS.
- Attending the Gulf SQAS Committee’s training periodically.
- Assessors with a minimum of 3 years of Gulf SQAS experience are titled as Lead Assessors and can conduct the observee and observers’ accreditation stage for other trainee assessors. Lead assessors are not allowed to accredit assessors from certification bodies they are associated with within the last 3 years.
- Conducting the annual IAP follow-up assessments for the LSPs they have assessed initially or delegating this to colleague assessors.
- Strictly follow the guidelines from this manual and report any concerns and observed deviations immediately to the GPCA, Gulf SQAS director, or the Assessors Task Force chairman.
- Provide constructive feedback and suggestions for improving the Gulf SQAS assessment questionnaires and guidelines based on practical experience during assessments.

4.4 Evaluating Performance

A minimum of two members of the Gulf SQAS subcommittee will undertake an accredited assessor evaluation. The evaluation of each Gulf SQAS applicant will be carried out periodically, depending on the performance of the assessor, but at least once every three years, based on

- Review of recent assessments.
- Feedback from observers and assessed companies.
- Assessor interview (if required).

The criteria, process, and evaluation findings will be recorded on the Evaluation Form, Addendum 2.

The chairman and vice chairman of the Gulf SQAS subcommittee will act as arbitrators where conflicting views are identified.

The completed Gulf SQAS Evaluation form will be sent to the assessor, and it will include scoring and highlighting specific comments and recommendations. The assessor must respond with proposed corrective actions as appropriate.

4.5 Guidelines to conduct assessments through consultants

As part of the rigorous standards maintained by the Gulf Petrochemicals and Chemicals Association (GPCA), assessors engaged in the Gulf SQAS Assessment System are expected to uphold the highest levels of objectivity and impartiality. The GPCA mandates that no assessor consult services for logistics service providers (LSPs) assigned to assess. This directive ensures that assessments remain untainted by conflicts of interest, thereby preserving the integrity of the accreditation process.

To facilitate appropriate preparation for Gulf SQAS assessments, the GPCA may publish an endorsed list of vetted consulting providers. LSPs are encouraged to engage these consultants to refine their operational frameworks and compliance strategies ahead of assessments. It is crucial to note that accredited assessors are prohibited from offering consultancy services to entities they evaluate, reinforcing the clear demarcation between assessment and consultancy roles.

The performance of accredited assessors is subject to periodic review by the GPCA and the Gulf SQAS technical committee. Any involvement of assessors with consultancy services triggers a formal investigation by the committee aimed at mitigating any risk to the credibility and reliability of the assessment program.

Furthermore, accredited assessors are strictly prohibited from allowing unauthorized individuals or consultants to use their Gulf SQAS assessor accounts. This includes forbidding third-party assessors from conducting assessments remotely or using the platform to input assessment results. Violations such as these or any form of forgery involving GPCA/Gulf SQAS material will result in the immediate revocation of accreditation. If there is reasonable doubt about an assessor's conduct, the GPCA reserves the right to suspend accreditation pending the temporary outcome of a thorough investigation.

Assessors and certification bodies must exercise strict caution when engaging with consultants or third parties. In particular:

- Assessors must not collaborate with consultants, training providers, or other third parties that have demonstrated malpractice, have a documented history of unethical behavior, or have been formally identified by the GPCA as entities under review. Doing so compromises both the impartiality of the assessor and the credibility of the assessment outcome.
- Certification bodies are strongly advised to establish all contractual and financial arrangements directly with logistics service providers (LSPs). The use of intermediaries or third parties in contracting assessments introduces unnecessary risks and reduces

transparency. Direct agreements ensure accountability and preserve the professional independence of the certification process.

- Any deviation from these practices may trigger a formal investigation by the Gulf SQAS Subcommittee. Such reviews will examine whether assessments have been compromised, manipulated, or forged. Depending on the findings, outcomes may include warnings, suspension, or revocation of accreditation in accordance with the Gulf SQAS Accreditation Manual.

This measure is crucial to maintaining the sanctity and accuracy of the assessments conducted under the auspices of the GPCA.

4.6 Revoking Accreditation

Assessor accreditation may be withdrawn when performance does not meet the required standards defined solely by the Gulf SQAS subcommittee. Depending on the circumstances of the discrepancy, this may result in the withdrawal of one or more accreditation titles or the complete revocation of the essential Gulf SQAS accreditation.

When continued or repeated deviations from the required performance criteria are observed, the assessor may be called to an interview with a panel drawn from the Gulf SQAS sub-committee to discuss their concerns. The assessor can present his or her case and will be formally informed of the outcome of such an interview by the Gulf SQAS subcommittee.

The applicant will have the opportunity to appeal the decision to the GPCA Secretary General formally. In this case, the procedure referred to in Section 6 will be followed.

5. Accreditation Renewal

5.1 Refresher Accreditation Training

The GPCA will hold regular refresher training sessions to facilitate the general accreditation renewal process and guarantee the assessors' continued high quality. All certified assessors must attend refresher training once every three years, or whenever a subsequential change has been made to one of the elements of the Gulf SQAS program and the GPCA deems training on the subject as needed.

The refresher training will cover the following aspects:

- A general update on the status and content of all modules, including regulatory changes.
- Selected topics are chosen from all modules where assessors experienced difficulties or where the Gulf SQAS subcommittee noticed inconsistencies.
- An exchange of learning. The sessions will allow sufficient time for discussion with and amongst assessors to address concerns and capture opportunities for improvement.

5.2 Continued Professional Development (CPD)

To maintain their accreditation, assessors are required to demonstrate ongoing Continued Professional Development (CPD) to stay current with technical and legislative developments

relevant to the subjects covered in the Gulf SQAS modules and applicable to the countries of assessment. A structured approach to CPD is essential for maintaining a high level of competence and delivering valuable assessments.

Assessors shall:

- Actively engage in training, workshops, seminars, and self-study related to petrochemical logistics, safety, environmental management, quality control, security, and relevant regional and international regulations (e.g., updates to ADR, IMDG, IATA, and local GCC legislation).
- Stay updated on advancements in logistics technologies and operational best practices relevant to the Gulf SQAS modules.
- Maintain knowledge of corporate social responsibility principles relevant to the industry.
- Self-monitor their professional development activities and maintain a log of their CPD efforts, including dates, topics, duration, and providers of training.
- Submit a summary of their CPD activities to the Gulf SQAS subcommittee periodically, as part of the accreditation renewal process.
- Aim for a minimum number of CPD hours or points over the three-year accreditation cycle, as shall be further defined by the Gulf SQAS subcommittee and communicated to accredited assessors.

Compliance with CPD requirements is a key factor in the accreditation renewal process.

5.3 Granting the Accreditation Extension

To renew the Gulf SQAS accreditation for the subsequent 3 years, the Gulf SQAS assessor shall:

- Complete at least three Gulf SQAS assessments within the last 3 years.
- Maintain the ISO Lead Auditor qualification (documentary proof has to be sent);
- Maintain current knowledge of the requirements for the transportation and handling of dangerous goods, including but not limited to ADR.
- Ensure that he or she is current on the changing regulations regarding the carriage and handling of dangerous goods. (i.e., the two-yearly cycle of ADR and RID changes);
- Before an evaluation, submit a report to the Gulf SQAS subcommittee summarizing key observations and recommendations to improve the Gulf SQAS program, e.g., questionnaire content.
- Complete applicable refresher training.

The Gulf SQAS subcommittee will officially notify the assessor of the extension.

6. Ethics

Gulf SQAS assessors require access to sensitive information about assessed companies. The assessor is also the face of the GPCA in the region. At all times, assessors must uphold the highest standards of ethical compliance. The Gulf SQAS subcommittee will monitor assessors

and assessments for compliance with the program standards and ethical compliance and may act against infringements according to Section 3.

Ethical compliance shall mean compliance with regional ethical compliance laws, including but not limited to:

- Acts of bribery are strictly prohibited in all forms. Accepting or giving any form of payment, whether in cash or kind, for improper advantage is considered bribery. A breach of anti-bribery laws may be considered committed regardless of whether an actual payment was given.
- Avoidance of conflicts of interest.
- Ensuring the protection of sensitive information.
- Upholding the reputation of the GPCA and Gulf SQAS programs.

Assessors or companies may contact mohamed@gpca.org.ae with concerns relating to ethics.

6.1 Handling and Protection of Sensitive Information

Accredited Gulf SQAS assessors will inevitably access sensitive and confidential business information belonging to the assessed companies. Upholding the highest standards of data protection and confidentiality is paramount. Assessors must adhere to the following principles and protocols:

- All information gathered during an assessment is strictly confidential and must only be used for the Gulf SQAS assessment and reporting.
- Sensitive data must be stored securely, whether in physical or electronic format, and protected against unauthorized access, disclosure, alteration, or destruction.
- Assessors must comply with the data security policies and procedures specified by the GPCA for the Gulf SQAS platform when using digital tools.
- Confidential information should not be shared with any third party not directly involved in the assessment process and authorized to access such information (e.g., members of the Gulf SQAS subcommittee as required for performance evaluation).
- Assessors must be aware of and comply with all applicable regional and national data protection laws and regulations within the GCC countries where assessments are conducted.
- Upon completion of the assessment and reporting cycle, assessors must securely dispose of any temporary records containing sensitive information following GPCA guidelines.

Any breach of confidentiality or failure to adhere to data protection protocols will be subject to investigation and potential revocation of accreditation as per Section 4.6.

7. Appeal Procedure

If an applicant feels that a Gulf SQAS subcommittee decision is unfair, he or she may appeal to the GPCA Secretariat.

- The applicant should write to the GPCA Secretariat and explain in detail why they think a Gulf SQAS subcommittee decision is unreasonable or not in accordance with the Gulf SQAS Accreditation Manual.
- The Gulf SQAS Representative will be notified of receipt of an appeal notice by the Secretary-General, collect the relevant information that may help review the case, and convene an Appeal Panel. The appeal panel will consist of a minimum of three members, none being members of the Gulf SQAS sub-committee panel who interviewed the Assessor.
- The Gulf SQAS Representative will provide the Appeal Panel with the necessary background information on the decision.
- The Appeal Panel has a right to hear from the applicant.

If the majority of the Appeal Panel decides that the original decision should not be upheld or the applicant should be given another opportunity to succeed, the applicant will be informed in writing by the GPCA Secretary General, with a copy sent to the Gulf SQAS sub-committee. If not, the original decision will stand, and the GPCA Secretary General will inform the applicant in writing of this along with a copy to the Gulf SQAS subcommittee.

Possible outcomes of an appeal may include

- The original decision to deny accreditation or revoke accreditation is overturned, and accreditation is granted or reinstated.
- The original decision is modified (e.g., a temporary suspension is reduced, or a requirement for re-examination is adjusted).
- The applicant is granted an opportunity to re-take the examination or demonstrate practical competence under specific conditions defined by the Appeal Panel.
- The original decision is upheld.

The decision of the Appeal Panel is final.

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