QAI Laboratories

General

Certification Guidelines

Note: In this document a slash (“/”) designates the phrase “and/or” between two items or phrases and is defined as meaning: at minimum at least one of the items is true.

LETTER TO CLIENTS AND APPLICANTS

First, thank you for your interest in obtaining information about the QAI Product Certification and Listing service.

QAI understands that our clients come from a varying array of backgrounds and while some may understand the product certification process, others may not. This document provides a brief overview of the process to certify your product.

QAI's certification and listing program is widely recognized and trusted throughout North America. The QAI certification mark provides you with peace of mind that your product can be brought to market with a mark that symbolizes the compliance of your product to standards that are recognized by regulatory officials and consumers.

Our team of experts use the latest information and evaluation methods to assist you in ensuring your products comply with local, regional, national, and international standards, codes, and regulatory compliance requirements.

After reviewing this document if you would like to learn more about how QAI can partner with you, please contact one of our dedicated employees at info@qai.org or visit our website at www.qai.org.

Again, thank you and we appreciate your interest.

Sincerely,

QAI Laboratories
Kent Adamson, President

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1 INTRODUCTION

Whether you are new to the world of product certification or if you have previously worked with a certification body, we hope you find this guide useful in answering questions you may have regarding the QAI product certification and listing program.

1.1 History of QAI

QAI is a Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) founded in 1994 to provide customer focused service to product manufacturers, distributors, or designers that are seeking to have their product tested, inspected, or certified to meet regulatory requirements for safety or performance. Over the years the QAI certification mark has established a strong reputation as a reliable and trusted product compliance mark in the fields of building products, electrical equipment, factory-built structures, plumbing products, and gas appliances, to name a few.

1.2 Accreditation

QAI is accredited by the International Accreditation Service (IAS) and the Standards Council of Canada (SCC) as a Product Certification Body. Our IAS scope of accreditation is available on the IAS website and details the product categories in which we are accredited. Our SCC scope of accreditation is available on the SCC website and details the product categories in which we are accredited, by way of International Classification of Standards (ICS) Codes. ICS Codes serve as a structured cataloguing system of international, regional, and national standards and other normative documents.

Additionally, QAI is recognized by OSHA as a Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratory (NRTL), and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Innovation, Science and Economic Development (ISED) Canada, and other regulatory bodies to manage and administer product certifications under their specific requirements.

Together, QAI's accreditations and recognitions provide value by allowing our clients to obtain the required product approvals needed to sell the product. Our accreditations are accepted in all of the Canadian Provinces and in all 50 states within the United States.

QAI also holds accreditations in testing at each of our laboratories and our inspection body also holds appropriate accreditations for the inspection and field evaluation of products.

2 SCOPE

This document describes the policies of the QAI Product Certification Schemes. This document should be considered as informational and supplementary to the QAI Listing Agreement and does not amend, revise, or otherwise append the QAI Listing Agreement. This document is subject to periodic review with the possibility of revision and amendment at any time. The most current version of this document can be found at www.qai.org. This program does not include the processes for Field Evaluation and Labelling of Fire Doors covered under NFPA 80, Electrical Special Inspection covered under CSA SPE-1000, or Field Evaluation of Electrical Products covered under IAS AC 354, NFPA 790, and/or NFPA 791.

3 DEFINITIONS

The below are a list of definitions of commonly used terms throughout this document:

- Accreditation: third-party attestation of a conformity assessment entity conveying formal demonstration of its competency to perform specific conformity assessment tasks.
- Appeals: The process wherein a client may challenge a decision or finding made by QAI or its staff.
- Applicant: An entity applying for, or seeking, QAI Product Certification through the formalized process of product certification scheme(s).
- Batch Certification: The process by which limited production runs, one-off product(s), or limited quantities of products are certified.
- Certification Scheme: A system by which a product or service is certified to comply with specific requirements.
- Complaints (to QAI about QAI): The process of initiating a formal complaint concerning the service received or the outcome of a product certification. These are logged into the QAI Quality Management System and investigated accordingly.
- Customer Complaints: The process of formal complaints concerning the certified product, initiated by the end-user of the product, Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ), or other entity. These complaints are typically handled with in the applicant's own processes but may be escalated to QAI if the complainant so desires.
- Evaluation Report: The document containing information about the initial evaluation of conformity of the product to specific requirements.
- Factory Audit Manual (FAM)/Factory Inspection Procedure (FIP): Documents used by the inspector to verify conformity of a product or processes to specified requirements.
- Inspection: A systematic process of examining product manufacturing processes and/or products to assess their conformity to specific requirements. May also be known as surveillance.
- Listing: An umbrella term used interchangeably with certification.
- Listing Agreement: The contractual arrangement between QAI and the applicant with each party being held to specific requirements to be allowed the use of the QAI certification mark.
- Plant: The locations at which the product is produced, assembled, tested, or labelled. The plants are also the location(s) where the Initial Plant Inspection and Follow-Up Inspections may be performed.
- Sampling: the selection of product(s), representative of those products to be certified while ensuring the products sampled have the same design, formulation, and manufacturing as those products to be certified.
- Scheme Owner: the organization or entity responsible for developing and maintaining the certification scheme under which products may be certified.
- Suspension: A temporary action initiated by QAI where noncompliance to the listing requirements is evident, and the certification is suspended pending the outcome of correction of the noncompliance.
- Termination: The action of the client terminating their listing agreement with QAI by written notice and return of all QAI Labels. The client acknowledges they are no longer allowed the use of the QAI mark to show conformance to specified requirements.
- Withdrawal: An action initiated by QAI where noncompliance to the listing requirements is evident, and the client does not have the means to remedy the noncompliance or refuses to remedy the cause of noncompliance.

4 PRODUCT CERTIFICATION SCHEMES

The following is a list of certification schemes offered by QAI Laboratories:

- QAI General Certification Scheme: This is a general product certification scheme owned and managed by QAI. The QAI General Certification Scheme most closely resembles the ISO/IEC 17067, Type 3 certification scheme. However, batch certifications issued under this scheme most closely resemble the ISO/IEC 17067, Type 1b certification scheme.
- OSHA NRTL Certification Scheme: A certification scheme managed by QAI but is prescribed by the applicable requirements of OSHA NRTL. This scheme is closely related to the QAI General Certification Scheme.
- Formaldehyde Emissions in Composite Wood Products: A product scheme specifically for the certification of formaldehyde emissions in composite wood products, managed by QAI. However, the requirements of the certification program are prescribed by local, regional, or national authorities having jurisdiction. The scheme managed by QAI may follow the requirements of the California Air Resources Board (CARB) and/or the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and most closely resembles an ISO/IEC 17067, type 5 certification scheme.
- Prefabricated Building Modules and Panels: A product scheme managed and owned by QAI, specifically for the certification of prefabricated building modules and panels. This scheme most closely resembles an ISO/IEC 17067 type 5 certification scheme. However, batch certifications issued under this scheme most closely resemble the ISO/IEC 17067, Type 1b certification scheme.
- Telecommunication Certification Body Scheme: A product certification scheme for the certification of licensed and unlicensed radio equipment, managed by QAI. However, the requirements of the certification program are prescribed by national authorities having jurisdiction. The scheme managed by QAI follows the requirements of the US Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and/or Canada Innovation, Science, and Economic Development (ISED). This scheme most closely resembles an ISO/IEC 17067, type 4 certification scheme.
- QAI Code Evaluation Report: A certification scheme for evaluation of construction materials and products to the applicable code requirements. This scheme is managed and owned by QAI and most closely resembles an ISO/IEC 17067, type 3, or type 5 certification scheme.

5 CONFIDENTIALITY

QAI is committed to maintaining client information, including design and manufacturing data, test and inspection reports, and any other information provided by the client or gained by other means through the process of performing the product certification, in the highest level of confidentiality, unless prohibited by law. Such information may only be released by written permission of the client or in response to necessary legal actions where QAI is required to release information.

As part of QAI's accreditation requirements, QAI will publish a record of the products that we certify in the QAI Listing Directory found at www.qai.org. QAI will provide the client all information which is to be placed in the public domain, in the QAI Listing Directory, prior to posting any information.

6 PRICING OF SERVICES

All pricing of certification services is provided to applicants or potential applicants through the process of issuing formal proposals. Upon contacting QAI an applicant or potential applicant will be provided with a formal proposal of services detailing the specific costs for certifying your product under the applicable certification scheme.

While providing the proposal for certification services, QAI may also quote additional services of inspections and testing which may be required to certify product under the specific certification scheme, product requirements, or code and regulatory requirements.

7 CERTIFICATION PROCESS OVERVIEW

The following outlines the general steps and processes for certification under any certification schemes. If your product falls within one of the certification schemes not owned by QAI, i.e., TCB, Formaldehyde, etc, there may be specific forms or processes not outlined herein that our team of specialized certification experts will help guide you through.

7.1 Application

Upon acceptance of the proposal for service, potential applicants to product certification will be provided the appropriate application form. The applicant will complete the application in detail and return to QAI.

It is important that the application be completed with the following information:

- Full legal name of the entity applying for QAI certification,
- Correct address of the main office and all work locations,
- the correct standard your products are to be certified or listed to (if known),
- product model numbers or a description,
- product ratings, and
- other applicable information

Incorrect information may lead to incorrect sampling and evaluation of your products, which can result in loss of time and money.

7.2 Application Review

Your application will be reviewed by QAI employees to ensure completeness and full understanding of the desired scope of certification. QAI employees may contact you to address any corrections or to clarify any information within the application.

7.3 File Opened

A client file is opened for each project, containing at a minimum: a signed contract outlining scope of services, applicable correspondence, the application form, and other applicable data.

Where a test plan is required by the test method, test standard, or client request, the test plan will be created and approved by the appropriate technical employee prior to conducting sampling or testing.

QAI will use its normal process flow to plan for the evaluation activities to ensure necessary arrangements are made. Following the client file being opened, activities will be assigned to a project manager. The project manager will be responsible for ensuring the necessary activities of certification, to include coordination of sampling/witnessing of test samples, evaluation activities, testing, inspection and processing all information for submission for certification decisions. The project manager will ensure all necessary documentation and information is available for use and when not available the project manager will coordinate obtaining this information.

7.4 Product Sampling

Quite often the certification scheme will require product sampling from the applicant's manufacturing sites. This sampling is to ensure the quality of the samples to be used in the evaluation of compliance for product certification are typical of normal production. The project manager will coordinate with the client and internally within QAI to ensure the sampling is performed as conveniently as possible for clients.

Dependent on the certification scheme, sampling may be required at periodic intervals throughout the entirety of the certification. Products may be sampled from:

- Manufacturing sites,
- Warehouses and Distribution sites, or
- Open Market

The inspector will instruct you on how to submit samples to the appropriate laboratory for testing.

Where formal sampling is not required, the project manager will direct the client on how to select and ship samples.

7.5 Testing

Once the samples to be evaluated have arrived at the laboratory testing in accordance with the applicable standards may commence. The laboratory testing is conducted either in QAI's internal laboratory or is contracted to an external laboratory, as discussed during the initial discussion period. Once the testing has been completed, a test report maybe generated including the results or QAI may just use the data to generate the Evaluation report noted below for product certification.

7.6 Evaluation

Your project manager may request that you submit quality documentation related to the manufacturing of products to be certified. Additionally, the project manager will request drawings and other documentation as required to support the certification of your products.

Your project manager will evaluate the test data and all available information in determining compliance to the relevant standard for certification. The project manager may begin developing documents as required by the certification scheme to support the certification and/or inspection of your products.

Where instances occur that the products do not comply with the relevant requirements for certification. The project manager will provide you with a findings letter. Typical items found in these letters include test failures, product construction details that do not comply with the requirements of the standard, and improper markings. These letters are made available for your review and response, and to discuss with your project manager

You may be afforded time to make correction to the items and resubmit samples or information for testing and evaluation. If you are unable or unwilling to make the required changes, the certification process may end at this point and no product certification will be issued.

If you have any questions on this process, please contact your project manager to discuss the next steps.

7.7 Initial Plant Inspection (IPI)

QAI will conduct an initial plant inspection to ensure that you have the personnel, equipment, and quality procedures in place to ensure products are manufactured in accordance with the applicable standards and QAI evaluation reports.

Non-conformances found during the Initial Plant Inspection will be assigned a level of severity in accordance with clause 8 below. Non-conformities must be addressed before your product may be certified.

A successful initial plant inspection will indicate that your manufacturing system complies with the requirements for certification.

7.8 Evaluation Report

The QAI evaluation report details the critical elements of the product to maintain product conformance with the applicable standards. The evaluation report is the basis on which follow up inspections are conducted, and QAI ensures that there have been no changes between the products evaluated and

certified by QAI, and the products being manufactured.

The evaluation report is subject to multiple levels of review prior to the certification decision being made.

7.9 Certification Decision

During this process QAI's President or designee reviews the certification packet, information, data, inspection, evaluation, and other pertinent information to make the final determination as to whether the product will be certified by QAI.

7.10 Listing Agreement

The listing agreement outlines the obligations of the client and of QAI and defines the terms of the listing. This agreement must be signed by the client before certification is granted. By not fulfilling all of the obligations of the listing agreement, you may be suspended, or even withdrawn, from the QAI listing program, so it is important that you are familiar with this document. It is important to note that the listing agreement does not give you permission to use the QAI logo. Permission to use the QAI logo is granted only in an original listing letter signed by the president of QAI or the president's designee.

7.11 Listing Letter

Once you receive a listing letter, you are then eligible to apply the QAI logo to the products included in your QAI listing. Your QAI listing is published in our listing book online at www.qai.org as confirmation of product certification.

7.12 Follow-up Inspection

Where required by the certification scheme, follow up inspections are scheduled in accordance with the frequency as required by the certification scheme to ensure that you continue to manufature and only label products complying with the applicable standards and certification requirements.

If non-conformities are found during inspections, you will be afforded the opportunity to make remedy to these non-conformities and provide objective evidence to the inspector of their correction within a thirty (30) day period. Failure to make adequate correction may result in a suspension or withdrawal of the certification. Non-conformities are classified in severity as per section 8 below.

The frequency of follow-up inspections are determined by the certification scheme and will be disclosed to you in the certification documentation. Please refer to section 9 below for more detailed information about inspection frequency.

7.13 Continued Surveillance

Some certification schemes may require other surveillance activities outside of the follow-up inspection process. In these cases, these requirements will be detailed to you by your project manager or other appropriate staff.

8 CLASSIFICATION OF NON-CONFORMITIES

Non-conformities identified in the inspection process will be assigned a level of severity in accordance with the following:

8.1 Major:

- Significant changes to the product or the process that will directly affect the compliance of the product with the applicable requirements of the standard to which the product is certified;
- The accumulation of several minors for the same deficiency exemplifying systemic deficiencies. For example, the inspector finds multiple pieces of equipment out of calibration such that the manufacturer's calibration program is suspect.
- Not following required procedures and generating or using required documentation.
- Multiple recurrences of previously addressed minors.
- Misuse of the QAI mark is considered a major CAR.

8.2 Minor:

- Objective evidence shows that a procedure or instruction is being followed by the majority of the evidence. However, a small percentage of the evidence shows required information is lacking. For example, inspector finds a data test sheet is not completed in full and signed by the technician but when investigating further finds that most other test data sheets are completed properly.
- Recurrence of previously addressed concerns.

8.3 Concern:

- Objective evidence shows that the procedure or instruction is currently meeting the intent of the requirement. However, the procedure or instruction is vague in areas which could allow a deficiency of the QMS soon.

8.4 Opportunity for Improvement (OFI):

- Objective evidence shows that the procedure or process is adequate to meet the intent of the requirement. However, the process by which the procedure or instruction is being met is cumbersome or could be performed more efficiently as identified by the auditor.

9 INSPECTION FREQUENCY

Inspection frequencies are generally determined by the certification scheme at a default frequency of two (2) inspections per year. However, QAI bases the inspection frequency on the following:

- requirements of the certification scheme,
- regulatory requirements,
- risks associated with the products or manufacturing process,
- review of the manufacturer's quality management system,
- standard(s) to which the product is certified, and/or
- previous inspection results,

QAI reserves the right to increase inspection frequencies based on information gained from inspections, changes in industry norms or practices, significant revisions in certification requirements, etc.

Where permitted by the certification scheme, clients may request a reduction in frequency of inspections. Please contact your project manager for further details to see if your certification allows for reduced inspection frequency.

10 ELECTRONIC INSPECTIONS (VIRTUAL)

QAI may elect to perform inspections using electronic and/or video means of communication, depending on the local political climate, health and safety rules and regulations, or internal QAI policies. In these instances, the inspector assigned to perform the inspection will contact you to make necessary arrangements.

11 CERTIFICATION TRANSFERS

If your products are already certified by an accredited certification agency, please contact QAI to learn how you can transfer your active certifications to QAI. Our expert team of professionals will be glad to explain the process to transfer your existing certifications or listings to QAI.

Document Revision History

Date	Version	Change Description	Created by	Reviewed By	Approved by
01/12/2022	6	Withdrawn as QM0500 and Reissued as QSP 7.1-1	JJohnson	K Adamson	K Adamson