



SOAC Impartiality Policy

The West African Accreditation System (SOAC) considers that impartiality and avoiding conflict of interest are of primary importance to maintain the confidence of all its stakeholders in the accreditation services that it provides.

SOAC is a not-for-profit organism registered in Côte d'Ivoire under Ivorian Law No 60-315 of September 1960, relating to associations. As an association and a diplomatic mission, SOAC provides accreditation services on a not-for-profit basis.

SOAC is structured and organized in a way to safeguard impartiality and not to get affected by means of any commercial, financial or other pressures: the composition of SOAC General Meeting, as well as its Board of Directors, ensures a balanced representation of interested parties with no single party predominating.

SOAC is fully committed to abiding with all requirements of ISO/EC 17011: 2017 "Conformity assessment - Requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies". To this end, SOAC is committed to delivering all its accreditation activities impartially.

SOAC does not engage in any activity that could compromise its impartiality when delivering its accreditation services. SOAC does not provide any consultancy to conformity assessment bodies (CABs); SOAC has no links with bodies providing consultancy in the conformity assessment field. SOAC does not ensure conformity assessment activities.

SOAC provides external training services in accreditation associated activities. In order not to compromise, its impartiality and status in training service delivery, SOAC offers generic training courses and does not give specific advice for the development of an organization's operations.

In addition, the training courses delivered are not a prerequisite of accreditation; neither do they guarantee SOAC accreditation.

SOAC ensures the impartiality and objectivity of its services. To this end, all personnel (including externally contracted assessors/experts, members of all committees, etc.) involved in the accreditation process are required to be free from any undue pressures, including commercial or financial pressure, which may compromise their ability to act impartially and objectively. All personnel, including board members and National Accreditation Focal Points (NAFP), are required to declare any potential conflicts of interest whenever it may arise.



SOAC evaluates potential risks to its impartiality on an on-going basis to safeguarding impartiality, using a number of mechanisms including internal audit, management review, and consultation with appropriate interested parties. Where any such risks are identified, SOAC applies appropriate measures in place to eliminate or minimize them. The effectiveness of these measures is monitored.

SOAC also ensures that its policies, processes, and procedures are non-discriminatory and are also being administered in a non-discriminatory way. Accreditation is accessible to all applicants whose requests for accreditation fall within SOAC activities' scope. Access to SOAC services is not based on the size of the applicant or membership of any association or group; it is also not based on the number of CABs already accredited in any particular Member State or field of any conformity assessment activities.

SOAC is committed to following both the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) and the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) guidelines vis-à-vis cross-frontier policies as well as mandatory policies concerning accreditation in the concerned State / Region.

SOAC does not offer services to CABs with proven evidence of fraudulent behaviour, falsification of information or deliberate violation of accreditation requirements. SOAC is fully committed to safeguarding impartiality and integrity of its services.

When customers or other stakeholders have concerns regarding impartiality, they can refer to SOAC procedure publicly available for handling complaints and appeals.

SOAC impartiality Policy Statement and Procedure for handling complaints and appeals are publicly available in SOAC Website (www.soacwaas.org)

1 September 2022

Marcel Gbaguidi

Resident Representative and Director-General