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Lloyd's Register QA

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November 1, 2016

FORMAL COMPLAINT SUBMITTAL

1. **PREAMBLE**

The following complaint alleges the UKAS accredited certification body Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance Ltd. (herein "LRQA") has failed to abide by its accreditation requirements under ISO 17021-1 by linking the marketing of consulting services which provide client-specific solutions for implementation of ISO 9001 with the certification services LRQA provides for ISO 9001.

Oxebridge Quality Resources International LLC (herein "OQRI") hereby requests formal corrective action in accordance with clauses 4.7 and 9.8 of ISO 17021-1, to include a documented acknowledgement of receipt of this complaint, a thorough and systemic investigation, corrective and preventive corrective action, and notification of actions taken when complete.

NOTE: ISO 17021-1 clause 4.7 indicates that complaints may be issued to certification bodies by "parties that rely on certification," and not only direct clients of the certification body. It furthermore references ISO 10002 in its section on complaints, and ISO 10002 allows for the submission of complaints to certification bodies by "interested parties," and not just direct customers. Based on this information, OQRI asserts it right to submit this complaint not only on behalf of its clients, but on behalf of itself as an interested party and industry stakeholder, directly concerned with the validity of the certificates issued by accredited certification bodies.

2. **APPLICABLE ISO 17021 CLAUSES**

The herein complaint relies on the knowledge that LRQA is accredited by UKAS to ISO 17021-1 for the issuance of ISO 9001 certificates, and that as a result LRQA is subject to the following rules and definitions from ISO 17021-1:

4.2.3 To obtain and maintain confidence, it is essential that a certification body's decisions be based on objective evidence of conformity (or nonconformity) obtained by the certification body, and that its decisions are not influenced by other interests or by other parties.

4.2.4 Threats to impartiality include the following:

- a) Self-interest threats: threats that arise from a person or body acting in their own interest. A concern related to certification, as a threat to impartiality, is financial self-interest.*
- b) Self-review threats: threats that arise from a person or body reviewing the work done by themselves. Auditing the management systems of a client to whom the certification body provided management systems consultancy would be a self-review threat.*
- c) Familiarity (or trust) threats: threats that arise from a person or body being too familiar with or trusting of another person instead of seeking audit evidence.*

5.2.3 When a relationship poses an unacceptable threat to impartiality (such as a wholly owned subsidiary of the certification body requesting certification from its parent), then certification shall not be provided.

NOTE A relationship that threatens the impartiality of the certification body can be based on ... shared resources, finances, contracts, marketing and payment of a sales commission or other inducement for the referral of new clients, etc.

5.2.5 The certification body and any part of the same legal entity shall not offer or provide management system consultancy.

5.2.7 The certification body shall not certify a management system on which a client has received management system consultancy or internal audits, where the relationship between the consultancy organization and the certification body poses an unacceptable threat to the impartiality of the certification body.

5.2.9 The certification body's activities shall not be marketed or offered as linked with the activities of an organization that provides management system consultancy. The certification body shall take action to correct inappropriate claims by any consultancy organization stating or implying that certification would be simpler, easier, faster or less expensive if the certification body were used.

5.2.11 The certification body shall take action to respond to any threats to its impartiality arising from the actions of other persons, bodies or organizations.

5.2.12 All certification body personnel, either internal or external, or committees, who could influence the certification activities, shall act impartially and shall not allow commercial, financial or other pressures to compromise impartiality.

5.3.2 The certification body shall evaluate its finances and sources of income and demonstrate to the committee specified in 6.2 that initially, and on an ongoing basis, commercial, financial or other pressures do not compromise its impartiality.

Note that ISO 17021-1 defines “management system consultancy” by a CB as providing “client specific solutions” towards the implementation of a management system for which the CB will later provide certification. Specifically, this is defined as (emphasis added):

3.3 management system consultancy:

participation in establishing, implementing or maintaining a management system

EXAMPLE 1 Preparing or producing manuals or procedures.

EXAMPLE 2 Giving specific advice, instructions or solutions towards the development and implementation of a management system.

3. EVIDENCE

Note: copies of evidence are on file with OQRI, and available for review, in the event that links have changed since the filing of this complaint.

Currently the LRQA website within the UK, and its translated versions in other countries, include the option for users to utilize the “Pathway self-assessment tool” to determine their level of readiness for certification. The UK version of this offering appears at the following URL:

<http://pathway.lrqa.co.uk/>

That page clearly indicates that the Pathway tool is intended to be used for certification:

LRQA's Pathway service is a free online self-assessment tool to enable you to check the readiness of your management system for certification.

Simply select the management system standard you are looking at implementing and you will be taken through to an online questionnaire.

Answer the questions honestly and you will be presented with a report outlining any potential weaknesses in your management system.

That page then indicates that LRQA will provide client-specific solutions, based on the input the client enters in the Pathway tool:

LRQA will provide tips to help you rectify the gaps found and provide you with relevant support options to enable you to successfully gain certification.

4. ALLEGATIONS – SUMMARY

By offering a client-specific tool, wherein each client will enter “Gap” information that is unique to that client, and then offering “tips to help rectify” those gaps, LRQA is literally providing “client-specific solutions” prohibited under ISO 17021-1.

5. ALLEGATIONS - SPECIFIC

Based on the evidence presented herein, OQRI alleges that LRQA is currently in severe breaches of the ISO 17021-1 clauses referenced above for:

- Failing to conduct thorough assessment of conflicts of interest and threats to impartiality
- Openly providing consulting services to its current or potential certification clients

OQRI formally requests that LRQA conduct an appropriate investigation and enforce the accreditation rules of ISO 17021-1 appropriately, and take suitable corrective action to prevent Pathway clients from utilizing LRQA certification services for at least two years, as required by the accreditation rules, or cease offering Pathway entirely.



LRQA is furthermore requested to ensure any such investigation includes all LRQA worldwide offices under its accreditation, for marketing efforts, including non-English language websites, which currently offer Pathway or similar tools providing client-specific solutions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "CP", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Christopher Paris
VP Operations
Oxbridge Quality Resources International LLC