



ACCREDITATION SANS FRONTIÈRES

ASF Independence & Non-Influence Statement

A direct, public statement: no paid ASF-affiliated service influences an accreditation outcome

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Foreword

Joint Commission states this plainly, in writing, as its own published policy: use of its advisory services is not necessary to obtain accreditation, and does not influence whether accreditation is granted [1]. ASF has never made an equivalent statement, despite operating within a broader ecosystem that includes GMJ Academy and other ventures under shared leadership. That silence is not evidence of a problem — but it is a real, fair opening for anyone who wanted to suggest one. This document closes it, in the same direct language Joint Commission uses, and grounds it in the actual international standard governing impartiality for accreditation bodies, ISO/IEC 17011 [2–4].

1. The Core Assurance

Purchasing any ASF-affiliated service — training through GMJ Academy, consulting, advisory support, or any other paid offering connected to ASF or its leadership — is never necessary to obtain ASF accreditation, and never influences whether accreditation is granted, at what level, or on what timeline.

An organization that has never purchased any ASF-affiliated service, and an organization that has purchased every one ASF or its affiliates offer, are assessed against the identical published standard, by surveyors certified under the identical ASF Surveyor Training Standard, through the identical process described in the ASF Accreditation Process Guide. Nothing in that process asks, records, or considers which of ASF's other services an organization has or has not used.

2. The International Standard Behind This Statement

This is not a voluntary courtesy ASF has chosen to extend. ISO/IEC 17011:2017, Clause 4.4.3, requires that an accreditation body's top management commit to impartiality, and that the body document and make public an impartiality policy addressing the importance of impartiality, the management of conflicts of interest, and the objectivity of its accreditation activities [2]. This document is ASF's own public impartiality policy under that clause.

Clause 4.4.4 of the same standard requires that all personnel and committees who could influence the accreditation process act objectively and remain free from any undue commercial, financial, or other pressure that could compromise impartiality [2]. UKAS, the United Kingdom's national accreditation body, states its own comparable commitment plainly: it is organized specifically to ensure impartiality is not compromised by commercial, financial, or other pressures [3]. ASF adopts the identical standard, not a softer version of it.

3. Specific Applications

- GMJ Academy training — completing training through GMJ Academy, or any program accredited under the ASF Training & Education Standards, has no bearing on an organization's own accreditation outcome under ASF's organizational standards
- Any future ISO 9001 referral partnership — consistent with Principle 4 of the ASF Code of Conduct, a referral to an external management-systems certification partner is non-exclusive, generates no commission or benefit to ASF, and has no bearing on accreditation status
- Consulting or advisory services from any individual connected to ASF's leadership — engaging such services is never presented, implied, or treated internally as a path to a more favorable accreditation outcome
- Any other ASF-affiliated commercial activity, present or future — the assurance in Section 1 applies to any such activity by its nature, not only to the specific examples named here

4. Ongoing Impartiality Risk Assessment

A static assurance, restated once and never revisited, is not what ISO/IEC 17011 actually requires. The 2017 revision of the standard specifically strengthened this requirement from its 2004 predecessor: rather than taking “appropriate action” when a conflict happens to be noticed, an accreditation body must maintain an ongoing process to identify, analyse, evaluate, treat, monitor, and document the risks to impartiality arising from its own activities and relationships, including the relationships of its own personnel [4].

Consistent with that requirement, ASF's own impartiality risk is reviewed, not merely asserted, on a defined cycle:

- Identify — new ASF-affiliated commercial activity, or a new relationship between ASF personnel and an accredited or applicant organization, is flagged as a potential impartiality risk as soon as it arises, not only when a complaint raises it
- Analyse and Evaluate — the ASF International Standards Council assesses whether the specific relationship could reasonably compromise, or appear to compromise, an accreditation decision
- Treat — where a genuine risk is identified, it is addressed through the conflict-of-interest procedures already governing ASF under Principle 3 of the ASF Code of Conduct, up to and including recusal
- Monitor and Document — this review is itself a required input to the annual ASF Management Review Procedure, so that impartiality risk is examined at the same institutional level as every other significant ASF risk, not treated as a lesser, standing assumption

A body that only re-examines its own impartiality when someone complains about it has already waited too long. This section exists so that ASF's own review comes first.

5. How This Is Enforced, Not Just Stated

This statement is enforced through mechanisms that already exist elsewhere in ASF's own governance, not resting on trust alone:

- Principle 1 and Principle 4 of the ASF Code of Conduct make this assurance an actual, binding conduct rule for every individual acting on ASF's behalf
- A surveyor's assessment findings are independently verified through the Domain D competency and quality-assurance requirements of the ASF Surveyor Training Standard, not taken on the surveyor's word alone
- A suspected violation of this assurance is investigated as a nonconformity under the ASF Internal Nonconformity & Corrective Action Procedure, or under Section 6 of the ASF Public Complaints & Feedback Policy where raised by an external party
- The ongoing risk assessment cycle in Section 4 is itself audited under the ASF Internal Audit Procedure, the same as any other core ASF process

6. Terminology

Consistent with ISO/IEC 17011's own terminology, this document treats “impartiality,” “independence,” “freedom from conflict of interest,” “objectivity,” “neutrality,” and “freedom from bias” as describing the same underlying commitment from different angles — the absence of any interest that could reasonably compromise, or appear to compromise, an accreditation decision [4].

References

- [1] Joint Commission International. Conflict of Interest Policy. Oakbrook Terrace (IL): The Joint Commission; 2026.
- [2] International Organization for Standardization. ISO/IEC 17011:2017, Conformity Assessment — Requirements for Accreditation Bodies Accrediting Conformity Assessment Bodies, Clauses 4.4.3–4.4.5. Geneva: ISO; 2017.
- [3] United Kingdom Accreditation Service. Impartiality. Feltham: UKAS; 2024.
- [4] Oxebridge Quality Resources. Assessing Conflict of Interest Risks in the ISO 17000 Series Standards. 2023.

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If you have ever purchased a service from GMJ Academy, or never have, this statement means the same thing either way: it made no difference to your organization's accreditation, and the process that guarantees this is reviewed on an ongoing basis, not asserted once and left untested.