

Doing business with the MOD and NATO

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Introduction

The purpose of this article is to provide an *update* on the military standards created, and used by, the MOD, NATO and NATO member countries.

Companies bidding for military contracts need to be aware of the latest NATO and MoD quality management requirements and 'expectations' to boost their success in securing orders.

AQAP standards and Quality Assurance

The **AQAPs** (Allied Quality Assurance Publications) are standards for quality assurance systems that have been developed by **NATO** (the North Atlantic Treaty Organization). **AQAP-2110:2016** and **AQAP-2310:2017** formalize **NATO's** (and the **MOD's**) quality assurance requirements for design, development and production –

- **AQAP-2110:2016** includes the (applicable) requirements of **ISO 9001:2015**
- **AQAP-2310:2017** includes the (applicable) requirements of **AS9100:2016**

AQAP-2110 and AQAP-2310 contain of *additional* requirements added to the clauses of ISO 9001:2015 and AS9100:2016 respectively. If applied appropriately, they provide confidence in a company's capability to deliver products that conform to MOD and/or NATO contract requirements.

In this context, the term **product** means the result of activities, processes and tasks. A *product* may include service, hardware, processed materials, software, etc. A product can be tangible (e.g. assemblies or processed materials) or intangible (e.g. knowledge or concepts), or any combination. Traditionally the military have referred to **matériel** – the aggregate of things used or needed in any business, undertaking, or operation (distinguished from personnel) – when referring to their

acquisitions.

*The AQAPs define Quality Assurance standards for the acquisition of defence matériel (land/sea/air) – compliance with AQAP-2110 or AQAP-2310 is vitally important for companies wanting to bid for **MOD** or **NATO contracts***

Indeed, compliance with AQAP requirements is a prerequisite in the bidding process and underlines the UK MoD's focus on Quality Management. This increased contact and joint working between the MOD and Industry is carried out under the auspices of the CQI's **Defence Special Interest Group (DSIG)** who set out their joint objectives within their Business Plan; further details can be found on the [CQI DSIG website](#).

*The need for effective and 'economical' quality management systems is demonstrated by the MOD's policy of "Appropriate Certification" in preferring to do business with suppliers that have a **certified** Business Management System.*

In this respect, ISO 9001:2015 or AS9100:2016 **certification** is 'a must' coupled with conformity with either AQAP-2110 and AQAP-2310 additional requirements.

Mutual Government Quality Assurance of defence

As part of the NATO **STANAG** (standardization agreement), Mutual Government Quality Assurance of defence products is performed by the appropriate national authority of one NATO member nation at the request of *another* NATO member nation or NATO organization. This 'reciprocity arrangement' uses the following terminology to define the 'supply chain' –

Acquirer – Governmental and/or NATO Organisations, that enter into a contractual relationship with a Supplier, defining the product and quality requirements

GQAR (Government Quality Assurance Representative) – Personnel with responsibility for Government Quality Assurance (GQA), acting on behalf of the Acquirer

Supplier – Organisation that acts in a contract as the provider of products to the Acquirer

Sub-supplier – Provider of products to the Supplier

Within AQAP 2110 and AQAP 2310 the term “GQAR and/or Acquirer” is used to enable the Acquirer to be *the default* in situations in which there is either no GQAR associated with the contract or where the appointed GQAR has not been delegated the authority to conduct particular activities.

AQAP core concepts and QMS requirements

The **core concepts** of all ISO 9001-based management systems are embedded in the **AQAPs** –

- ***the process approach***
- ***the P D-C-A cycle***
- ***risk-based thinking***

Further *AQAP-specific requirements* relate to –

- **Release of products & Certificate of conformity**
- **Quality plan**
- **Identification and traceability**
- **Configuration management**
- **Customer communications**
- **Dependability**
- **Performance Evaluation**
- **Customer satisfaction**
- **Internal audit**

- **Management review**
- **Nonconformity and corrective action**

*Also, there is a mandatory need for a 'competent' **Management Representative** to be appointed; reporting directly to top management; to head-up liaison with the **GQAR and/or Acquirer** on pertinent matters*

The detailed requirements of AQAP 2110 and AQAP 2310 are contained in Chapters **4** and **5** and are cross-referenced to the associated ISO 9001:2015 or AS9100:2016 clauses by means of [braces].

Appropriate AQAP standard selection guidance

The MOD (and NATO) place a wide variety of contracts for *matériel* with global suppliers. **AQAP-4107-SRD.2** aims to provide them with guidance to select the appropriate AQAP in contracts and tenders. AQAP-4107-SRD.2 enhances the understanding of AQAPs, their relationship and applicability for different types of suppliers and matériel (e.g. design, development, production, storage, distribution, agencies and other services), life cycle participants (e.g. supplier, developer, maintainer), disciplines (e.g. engineer, project manager, quality manager) and drivers for requirement tailoring (product and project needs).

Of particular interest is the guidance on '*risk to the programme or contract*' which takes the form of flowchart and questionnaire. All identified **risks** must be included in the Acquisition/Project risk register and managed by the project – if accepted. Suitable AQAP contract requirement alternatives are given in Chapter **5**.

Exploiting knowledge of MOD/NATO requirements

Although the guidance contained in AQAP-4107-SRD.2 is intended for the MOD/NATO GQAR and/or Acquirer, knowledge of this information is extremely useful to companies bidding for contracts so that they may identify MOD and NATO Quality Management 'expectations' and conduct self-assessments. In the words of

Lao Tzu an ancient Chinese philosopher and writer, reported to be the founder of philosophical Taoism –

*“knowing others is intelligence;
knowing yourself is true wisdom”
“mastering others is strength;
mastering yourself is true power”*

As the saying goes – “luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity”. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, **preparation** is defined as “the things that you do or the time that you spend preparing for something”. Simply put, preparation is about being proactive to deliver on a contract you are accountable for.

More information on deploying an effective AQAP Training Programme is available at [TEC's website](#).

