



Criteria for SQF Auditors

Auditor Competence and Registration

7th Edition

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© Safe Quality Food Institute
2345 Crystal Drive, Suite 800
Arlington, VA 22202 USA
202-220-0635
www.sqfi.com

Introduction

The SQF (Safe Quality Food) Program is a third party audited food safety and quality program implemented by Suppliers. This policy describes the auditor qualifications and auditor registration requirements for auditors auditing the SQF Code, edition 7 and is applicable for all SQF auditors applying for registration beginning January 1, 2012.

The development of the SQF Program has been a significant move towards the recognition of the importance of independent third party assurance of food safety and quality at all levels of the food supply. The Program focuses on the benefits to both industry and the consumer, whereby improved product quality enhances marketability and profitability.

This latest edition of the "Criteria for SQF Auditors" has been reviewed and updated to align with the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) guidance document version 6.1.

SQF Auditor Registration is conducted by SQFI. It is designed to enhance the integrity of the SQF Program by providing the food industry with a register of Auditors who have the appropriate qualifications and work experience necessary for auditing SQF Systems.

The integrity provided through the auditing of SQF Systems by Registered SQF Auditors to provide additional assurance of food safety and quality, has received universal recognition.

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Disclaimer

Whilst every effort is made to ensure that the process for evaluating applicants for registration is effective, FMI does not accept liability for services provided by registered SQF Auditors that fail to meet the requirements of all clients of the services.

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1 Fundamentals

1.1 Registration Category

The criteria described in this document are for the SQF Auditor classification. Food Sector Categories are defined in the SQF Code, edition 7, Appendix 1.

1.2 Definitions

For the purpose of these criteria the relevant definitions given in the "SQF Code" *Reference Appendix 2: Glossary of Terms* together with the following definitions apply:

Audit Team means one or more Auditors undertaking an audit of a SQF System.

HACCP Training means training that meets the CODEX guidelines or NACMCF HACCP principles, and this training is:

1. HACCP training course used extensively in a country.
2. Administered and delivered by an institution recognized as a food safety training center of excellence and issues a certificate of attendance to attendees.
3. Shall be a minimum of two days in duration.
4. Shall be examinable.

1.3 Overview of the Requirements for SQF Auditor Registration

All applicants:

- Applicants shall successfully complete a registered Management System Lead Auditor training course of 40 hrs duration (e.g., RABQSA, IRCA), and the 'Auditing the SQF Code,' edition 7 (24 hrs.). Alternately, applicants may attend the five day SQFI Lead Auditor Training Course (refer attachment 1).
- Shall attend a HACCP Training course with certificate issued.
- Shall have completed at least 160 hours of food safety and/or quality auditing in the food industry (20 audit days).
- Shall have at least 5 years work experience in food safety, HACCP program management and/or quality systems management within the food industry.
- For each high risk Food Sector Category (FSC) that is requested for registration, applicant shall demonstrate 2years work experience in food safety and/or quality management within food industry within requested FSC, or 160 audit hours within requested FSC, or a combination of work experience and audit experience for each FSC requested.
- Shall either be employed by or contracted to a SQF licensed Certification Body (if contracted, then the applicant must be sponsored by at least one SQF licensed Certification Body).

- Shall sign and submit "SQF Auditor Code of Conduct".

2 Requirements for Registration

The following educational, training, work and food safety experience requirements apply to all Applicants unless otherwise specified.

2.1 Education

Applicants must demonstrate that, through their qualifications and/or work experience; they have achieved a satisfactory level of knowledge and experience in a particular food industry sector. This knowledge and experience shall be described and substantiated in writing and shall cover the food safety hazards and quality defects and their control within a food industry sector.

2.1.1 High Risk Food Sector Categories

For high risk food sector categories the applicant shall have attained a university degree in a discipline related to the food sector category(s) (FSCs) being applied for (eg food science, food technology, dairy technology, etc.) or equivalent as outlined in GFSI Guidance, version 6.1, Part II, Annex 3,. In addition appropriate qualification for specific processes (e.g. the completion of an Approved Schedule Process Course for determining the scheduled process of canned food) may apply for some food sector categories.

2.1.2 Low Risk Food Sector Categories

For low risk food sector categories, the applicant shall have attained a higher education qualification, or a qualification considered as equivalent (eg a qualification granted by a trade or professional association) in a discipline related to the FSC's being applied for as outlined in GFSI Guidance, version 6.1, Part II, Annex 3.

2.2 Training

Prior to applying for SQF registration Applicants shall have successfully completed the following training courses:

2.2.1 HACCP Training with certificate issued.

2.2.2 Registered Management System Lead Auditor training course of 40hrs duration (i.e. RABQSA, IRCA).

2.2.3 SQF Systems Training – Auditing of SQF Systems – 3-day.

2.2.4 The applicant may attend the 5-day Lead Auditor Training Course (attachment 1) in place of 2.2.2 and 2.2.3.

2.2.5 In addition to the SQF Auditing course, applicants must successfully complete the examination administered by the SQFI on-line examination for SQF Auditors and achieving the SQF certificate through the on-line examination service available through the SQFI web site, www.sqfi.com.

2.2.6 Auditing SQF System courses taken before January 1, 2009 are not valid for new SQF Auditor applicants. Applicants who took an Auditing Systems

course after January 1, 2009 but before January 1, 2011 must also take an SQF Professional Update course before applying. Courses taken after January 1, 2011 are valid for initial registration.

Note: *The training required for registration does not alone address the needs required to demonstrate competence of particular food sector categories.*

2.3 Food Industry Work Experience

Applicants shall have at least five year work experience in a technical, professional or supervisory position involving accountability and the exercise of judgment.

When an applicant wishes to obtain registration outside of their normal scope of operations (for example, a person with a meat processing background wishing to operate in the produce pack house industry), they must demonstrate they have upgraded their knowledge in this area through completion of appropriate short courses or other appropriate qualifications. All Applicants are required to demonstrate operational experience with food hygiene and food safety based programs involving HACCP or other appropriate risk management systems. Alternatively, demonstrated experience involving equivalent practices that are deemed to provide experience relevant to the system being developed and the competencies described in this document for SQF Auditors may be considered. It is possible for an applicant to be registered in more than one food sector category.

2.3.1 High Risk Auditors

The applicant shall have at least five (5) years full-time work experience in a food related technical, professional or supervisory position involving accountability and the exercise of judgment.

For each Food Sector Category (FSC) that is applied for, the applicant must demonstrate:

- i. A minimum of two year work experience, which may include consulting activities, in food safety and/or quality management within the food industry sector; or
- ii. 160 (for high risk FSC) audit hours auditing within the requested FSC, or
- iii. A combination of work experience and audit experience for each FSC requested.
- iv. An industry recognized qualification in a technical discipline within the request FSC may be required.

2.3.2 Low Risk Auditors

- i. The applicant shall have at least five (5) years full-time work experience in a food related technical, professional or supervisory position involving accountability and the exercise of judgment.
- ii. 120 (for high risk FSC) audit hours auditing within the requested FSC, or

- iii. an industry recognized qualification in a technical discipline within the requested FSC.

2.4 Food safety and/or Quality Auditing Experience

All SQF Auditors must complete, at a minimum, 160 hours of food safety and/or quality audits. To demonstrate their auditing experience, all SQF Auditors shall maintain an Audit log as a record of their Audit experience. Audit experience used as justification must be of a third party, second party, or first party from a corporate auditing standpoint. Internal audits of a facility by an employee of that facility will not be considered and should not be included on the audit log. Audits that can be included on the audit log must reference a designated checklist or audit tool, criteria for the conducting of the audit and applicable SQF Food Sector Category of the facility that was audited.

Audit experience may have been acquired up to ten years prior to application. Auditing experience shall be with management systems within the food sector category that have used HACCP, Pre-Requisite Programs, GMP, GAP, ISO 9000 principles or a combination of these systems. Product cuttings, pest control assessments, training and sample retrieval are examples of activities that should not be included on an audit log. Audits included on the audit log must include on-site contact information so that the information included on the audit log can be verified as necessary by SQFI.

To demonstrate competency in a Low Risk Food Sector Category through auditing experience, an applicant must document 120 audit hours of appropriate audits as described above. For High Risk Processes, to demonstrate competency through auditing experience, an applicant must document 160 audit hours of appropriate audits as described above within that specific Food Sector Category.

2.4.1 High Risk Auditors

Applicants must complete, at a minimum, 160 hours of food safety and/or quality audits. To demonstrate their auditing experience, all applicants shall maintain an Audit log as a record of their Audit experience.

Audit experience used as justification must be of a third party or second party food safety or quality management audits, including but not limited to, any GFSI recognized standard, HACCP, GMP, GAP, ISO 22000, or other food safety audit program.

Audits that can be included on the audit log must reference a designated checklist or audit tool, criteria for the conducting of the audit and applicable SQF Food Sector Category of the facility that was audited.

2.4.2 Low Risk Auditors

Applicants must complete, at a minimum, 120 hours of food safety and/or quality audits. To demonstrate their auditing experience, all applicants shall maintain an Audit log as a record of their Audit experience.

Audit experience used as justification must be of a third party or second party food safety or quality management audits, including but not limited to, any GFSI recognized standard, HACCP, GMP, GAP, ISO 22000, or other food safety audit program.

Audits that can be included on the audit log must reference a designated

checklist or audit tool, criteria for the conducting of the audit and applicable SQF Food Sector Category of the facility that was audited.

3 Key Competencies for SQF Auditors

3.1 General Competencies

Applicants must demonstrate that, through their qualifications and/or work experience; they have achieved a satisfactory level of knowledge and experience in a particular food industry sector. All applicants:

- Proficiency in auditing, management and effective communication techniques
- The ability to demonstrate the personal attributes and professional integrity necessary for the effective performance of audits
- Knowledge and experience of auditing in the food industry
- The ability to identify and assess potential quality defects at all links in the food supply chain
- The ability to plan, lead and organize the audit

3.2 Food Safety Competencies

- The ability to identify and assess potential food safety hazards at all links in the supply chain including:
 - Biological hazards
 - Chemical hazards (including allergens)
 - Physical hazards
- The ability to assess the effectiveness of methodologies for controlling food safety hazards
- An understanding of the current principles and practices of HACCP to the current edition of the Codex Alimentarius Commission Guidelines or to the USA National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods (NACMCF) Guidelines
- Experience and a sound technical knowledge of the product and the process
- Knowledge of relevant Pre-requisite programs, industry codes of practice, legal requirements, industry guidelines and standards

4 Requirements for Registration

The SQFI assesses the competencies of applicants for SQF Auditor registration by evaluating education, training, work experience and auditing experience against the requirements specified in these registration criteria. Application forms are available from the SQF website, www.sqfi.com.

Applicants should ensure that their application includes evidence of all competencies detailed in the criteria, evidence of required training and other relevant educational qualifications and that all other information requested has been provided. Applications will only accepted in the format provided which is available from the SQF Institute, www.sqfi.com.

All applications are completed and submitted online at www.sqfi.com. You will be required to upload your evidence supporting your application, upgrade application or re-registration in PDF format as part of the online process. Be prepared to have the following documentation available prior to starting the application process:

- Audit, HACCP or Training logs
- Professional development records
- Certificates
- Work Experience records
- Sponsor verification form

A non-refundable application fee must be paid before registration can begin. Once an application is approved, applicants will be responsible for paying a registration fee before their SQF Professional credentials can be issued. Applicable amounts for fees can be found at www.sqfi.com.

Applications will not be processed unless all information required is provided.

4.1 Audit Log

Applicants shall provide details of audits conducted to meet the requirements of these criteria. All details required on the SQF Audit Log must be provided.

4.2 Sponsors

Each applicant for initial registration shall be sponsored by their employer and one other person in the food industry with whom they have a business relationship. Alternatively two persons who have a food industry business relationship with the applicant may be sponsor the applicant. Sponsors must have evidence and / or personal knowledge of the relevant information contained within the application that they have verified.

4.3 Personal Declaration

Each applicant for registration or re-registration is required to sign a declaration personally attesting they have complied with the SQF Institute Code of Conduct and that any complaints regarding their performance have been dealt with in a manner to prevent recurrence.

5 Requirements for Registration

On receipt of an application all information for accuracy, including documentary evidence of training and formal qualifications, and verifies on a sample basis the auditing and work experience claimed by the applicant to establish the validity of such claims. This is done by direct contact with company contacts at site where the audit activity was performed and sponsors.

Applications are evaluated by an independent body who, in considering registration level and scope, evaluate the applicant's qualifications, any food sector related training courses undertaken and the applicant's food sector work and auditing experience. The review may also evaluate the feedback received on the performance of the applicant.

Applicants with less than five years work experience should not be discouraged from applying for SQF Auditor registration as the overriding consideration will be to establish the Applicant's competence to audit within the food sector categories nominated.

The Panel may request additional supporting information from the applicant or from other industry representatives as required. If the SQFI is unable to obtain satisfactory verification of information and experience from competent referees, an interview may be required. In addition, applicants wishing to be registered for High Risk Processes may be required to be interviewed by the Panel.

Interviews will be arranged with consideration being given to convenience for all parties; however, costs to attend an interview will be at the applicant's own expense.

The Panel will decide whether to grant registration and the appropriate registration level and scope. The SQFI maintains a file on each applicant, which will remain confidential. The file will include the original application documentation; check sheets, records of investigations, appeals and complaints, Auditing Logs and re-registration documents.

5.1 Certificate of Registration and ID Card

Each successful applicant will receive a Certificate of Registration and ID card issued by the SQFI. Certificates and ID cards have an expiry date, which is the date re-registration falls due. The terminology to be used by SQF Auditors in describing their registration on business cards, letterhead etc. is: "Registered SQF Auditor".

5.2 Publication of Registration

A register of SQF Auditors is displayed on the SQF Institute website, www.sqfi.com.

6 Appeals

Written appeals against the outcome of an application for registration will be referred to the Senior Technical Director of SQFI. Decisions made by the Senior Technical Director relating to any appeal are final.

7 Complaints Against Registered SQF Auditors

Complaints regarding an SQF Auditor's conduct will be acknowledged and investigated by the SQF Institute's Senior Technical Director. Substantiated evidence of misconduct may result in withdrawal of registration.

8 Advancement to Another Category

Advancement to another Food Sector Category can be achieved at any time, provided suitable qualifications and / or experience for that category has been gained. To gain registration for an extra food sector category, applicants will need to submit:

1. Supporting documentation demonstrating additional qualifications and audit experience in the relevant food sector (at least 120 audit hours for SQF Auditor and 160 audit hours for SQF Auditor High Risk Processes) that

substantiate the Auditors ability to work in the nominated additional category(s).

2. The appropriate advancement fee.

Note: The additional auditing experience shall be completed under the supervision of qualified personnel.

9 Advancement to Another Category

Re-registration is required every year from the anniversary date of initial registration. Requirements for re-registration include submission of the following with the annual fee:

1. Evidence of auditing experience, as detailed below.
2. Evidence of professional development, as detailed below.
3. Evidence of participation in SQF Professional Development Update.

9.1 Auditing Experience

For re-registration, all SQF Auditors shall submit an audit log demonstrating a minimum of six (6) complete SQF System audits. All audits shall be certification, re-certification or surveillance audits.

9.1.1 High Risk Auditors

High risk auditors must conduct a minimum of one (1) audit in their designated Food Sector Categories within five years. Auditors that do not conduct audits within their designated Food Sector Categories (FSCs) for five years, will be de-registered from the FSCs in which they do not have the required auditing experience.

9.2 Professional Development

SQF Auditors also need to undertake at least 15 hours of continuing professional development annually, that is relevant to their food safety work and their personal needs for skills and knowledge. Professional Development information shall be provided on the Professional Development Record. The following activities are examples of professional development, if related to the food industry, which can be included:

- Formal short course participation;
- In-house course / workshop participation;
- Conference / seminar attendance;
- Professional Body / Association meeting attendance;
- Relevant committee and working group meeting attendance;
- Preparation and public presentation of papers;
- Preparation and publication of articles

Note: In the selection of appropriate professional development, SQF Auditors need to consider their personal strengths and weaknesses and identify areas for personal improvement. These activities should target new or the improving of existing food safety and quality management methodologies. Consulting, training, development of programs, or other activities completed in the execution of work product are not considered professional development and should not be included.

9.3 SQFI Professional Update

For re-registration, all SQF Auditors shall submit an audit log demonstrating a

minimum of six (6) complete SQF System audits. All audits shall be certification, re-certification or surveillance audits.

9.3.1 SQFI Professional Update

Auditors shall participate in an annual 4 hour professional update delivered by SQFI. This update will be delivered via webinar for general participation or delivered directly to Certification Bodies upon request.

9.3.2 SQFI Professional Update (edition 7)

All SQF auditors seeking to audit edition 7 of the SQF Code shall attend and successfully complete an 8 hr "Auditing the SQF Code (edition 7) Upgrade" training course. Only auditors who have completed this class shall be able to audit to the new edition from 1st July 2012.

10 SQF Auditor Code of Conduct

All registered SQF Auditors have an obligation to maintain the integrity of the SQF Program by observing the following Code of Conduct. Failure to do so may result in withdrawal of their registration. The Code of Conduct is detailed in Part G of the "Application for SQF Auditors" and must be signed and faxed to SQFI.

10.1 Fundamental Principles

- 10.1.1 Act professionally, accurately, honestly and impartially and in an unbiased manner.
- 10.1.2 Not to act in any way that would prejudice the reputation of the SQF Program and co-operate fully with an inquiry in the event of any alleged breach of the SQF Program.

10.2 Relations with the Public

- 10.2.1 Use their best endeavors to promote the worth of the SQF Program.
- 10.2.2 Act with professionalism and integrity when promoting their services.
- 10.2.3 Make it clear when dealing with the public, the capacity in which they are acting and on whose behalf (if any) they are acting.

10.3 Relations with their Employer Colleagues/Clients

- 10.3.1 Act in professional matters as a faithful operator to each employee/client.
- 10.3.2 Inform employees and clients of any business connections, interest or affiliations, which might influence judgment or impair the equitable character of its services.
- 10.3.3 Indicate to their employer or clients the adverse consequences to be expected if their professional judgment is overruled.
- 10.3.4 Not disclose information concerning the business affairs or technical process of any present or former client without the client's consent.
- 10.3.5 Not accept compensation from more than one party for the same service without the consent of all parties.

10.4 Relations with Peers

- 10.4.1 The SQF Auditor will assist those under their supervision to develop their professional skills.

Attachments 1

SQFI Auditor Training Courses

SQFI Lead Auditor Training Course (40 hrs)

This training course is only offered by SQFI or persons designated by SQFI and designed for applicants with no prior QMS or FSMS auditor training.

Course outline:

Day 1: Management System Auditing (1)

- Definitions
- Principles of Auditing
- International audit standards
- Forms and Types of Audits
- Accredited certification
- Audit objectives
- Roles and responsibilities of auditors
- Personal attributes of Auditors
- Phases of an Audit
- Audit planning
- Scoping the audit
- Audit timetables
- Auditor and auditee tools and resources

Day 2: Management System Auditing (2)

- The Entry Meeting
- Collecting objective evidence
- Interview technique – questioning styles
- Record review – sampling
- Collating findings
- Auditee briefings
- Nonconformity reports
- Exit meetings
- Writing audit reports
- Corrective actions
- Follow-up
- Close out of non-conformities
- Records and confidentiality

Day 3: Auditing the SQF Code

- Introduction
- SQF Overview
- Certification Body Criteria
- Registering SQF Auditors
- Auditing SQF Systems
- Multi-site Certifications
- Preparing for Certification
- The Certification Process

The Certification Decision
Surveillance and Re-certification
Suspensions and Withdrawals
Obligations of Suppliers and CBs

Day 4: The SQF Code

The SQF Assessment Database
The SQF Audit Assessment Tool
Auditing 2.1 Management Commitment
Auditing 2.2 Document Control and Records
Auditing 2.3 Specifications and Product Development
Auditing 2.4 Attaining Food Safety
Auditing 2.5 SQF System Verification
Auditing 2.6 Product Identification, Trace, Withdrawal, and Recall
Auditing 2.7 Site Security
Auditing 2.9 Identity Preserved Foods
Auditing 2.10 Training

Day 5: Pre-Requisite Programs

Identifying the right FSC and GAP/GMP modules
Auditing the primary production modules (3 – 8)
Auditing the manufacturing, distribution modules (9 – 15)

Auditing the SQF Code, edition 7 (24 hrs)

This training course is only offered by SQFI or persons designated by SQFI and designed for applicants who have already successfully completed recognized training in audit techniques (40 hrs).

Course outline:

Day 1: Auditing the SQF Code

Introduction
SQF Overview
Certification Body Criteria
Registering SQF Auditors
Auditing SQF Systems
Multi-site Certifications
Preparing for Certification
The Certification Process
The Certification Decision
Surveillance and Re-certification
Suspensions and Withdrawals
Obligations of Suppliers and CBs

Day 2: The SQF Code

The SQF Assessment Database
The SQF Audit Assessment Tool
Auditing 2.1 Management Commitment
Auditing 2.2 Document Control and Records
Auditing 2.3 Specifications and Product Development
Auditing 2.4 Attaining Food Safety
Auditing 2.5 SQF System Verification

Auditing 2.6 Product Identification, Trace, Withdrawal, and Recall
Auditing 2.7 Site Security
Auditing 2.9 Identity Preserved Foods
Auditing 2.10 Training

Day 3: Pre-Requisite Programs

Identifying the right FSC and GAP/GMP modules
Auditing the primary production modules (3 – 8)
Auditing the manufacturing, distribution modules (9 – 15)

Implementing & Auditing the SQF Code (edition 7) Upgrade (8 hrs)

This training course is only offered by SQFI or persons designated by SQFI and designed for applicants who are registered auditors with SQFI and are seeking to upgrade to edition 7.

Course outline:

Overview of GFSI Guidance Document, version 6 or applicable subsequent revisions of this document
Changes to Certification Body Criteria
Part A of the SQF Code

1. Preparing for Certification
2. The Certification Process
3. The Certification Decision
4. Surveillance and Re-certification
5. Suspensions and Withdrawals
6. Obligations of Suppliers and CBs

The SQF Assessment Database
The SQF Audit Assessment Tool
Auditing Module 2: The System Elements
Identifying the right FSC and GAP/GMP modules
Auditing the primary production modules (3 – 8)
Auditing the manufacturing, distribution modules (9 – 15)