



IAF CAAR | CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT | FIRST EDITION

APPLICANT GUIDE

Route selection, scope definition, self-assessment and preparation for a credible approval decision.

PREPARED FOR IAF ADOPTION

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Document control

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Owner	International Automotive Federation
Master language	English
Hierarchy	Standard with category schedules, automotive overlays and internal directives; adopted implementation notice within those rules; Trust and Mark Rules; Operations and Technical Manuals; Applicant Guide; controlled forms.
Authority boundary	Voluntary sectoral assurance. No automatic public appointment, statutory authorization, external-standard equivalence or universal acceptance.
Use	Controlled ten-document set. Protect completed applications, client evidence, personal data and decision records.

Purpose and use

Route selection, scope definition, self-assessment and preparation for a credible approval decision.

This document implements the Standard and cannot weaken its requirements. Administrative convenience, commercial priority or a favorable score cannot compensate for unproven competence, unsafe work or compromised impartiality.

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01 Understand the programme and select the route

CAAR is one automotive-sector programme with a common governance and reliability core, ten activity categories, twelve automotive overlays and eight internal directives. An applicant selects the actual activities it performs, not the most prestigious label. A laboratory performing supplier audits may need TST and AUD; a certification body commissioning tests needs PCC or MSC and controlled evaluation providers, not automatically TST authority of its own.

Choose ACC for continuing capability and REC for a bounded assessment project and its enumerated outputs. REC is not a provisional or easier accreditation. It uses the same applicable technical controls, but its decision is tied to identified work and does not authorize unrelated future reports. A new body without sufficient work should complete a private readiness review and build honest performance evidence before applying for a grant.

The programme assesses sectoral competence and integrity. It does not itself appoint public technical services, grant vehicle type approval, authorize regulated occupations or guarantee acceptance by every buyer or authority. Establish any required separate permissions and explain the intended users of the output.

02 Describe the legal entity and group relationships

Prepare the legal identity, principal address, operating permissions, ownership and control structure. Identify every brand, subsidiary, parent, agent, franchise and shared-service arrangement relevant to assessment work. List where testing, review, decisions, report release and record storage actually occur. A sales office with no technical function may need only administrative review; a remote decision centre is a critical location even without instruments.

Map relationships with clients and the objects assessed. Select IND, CAP or SEP for each scope row, then check the individual engagement for further conflicts. A captive manufacturer laboratory can demonstrate strong technical competence, but its reports must state that relationship. MSC, PCC and PSC require independent third-party operation under CAAR.

Name the accountable executive, technical leaders, quality leader, deputies and authorized signatories. Provide protected escalation routes and evidence that technical personnel can stop invalid work without losing commercial support.

03 Build a precise scope schedule

Use one scope row for each coherent authorization unit. Include category, automotive domains, object or matrix, property or process, method/scheme identifier and edition, range, uncertainty or other capability, site, delivery mode, independence mode and exclusions. For certification, state the scheme and relevant client-sector boundaries; for calibration, state measurand, range and demonstrated capability.

Group methods into a technical family only where the principles, equipment, competence and risk justify it. Record the representative and worst-case members. Do not combine unrelated chemistry and software tests merely because both serve automotive clients. New hazards, materially different principles or unsupported ranges require separate treatment.

Freeze a numbered scope version for the application. Changes during assessment must be logged and their effect on team competence, witnesses and evidence coverage assessed. The issued scope may be narrower than requested where the evidence does not support the full claim.

04 Select category modules and automotive overlays

Apply every category needed to support the outputs offered. A shipment observer reporting quantities and seal condition normally uses AUD; an inspector making a reasoned condition decision uses INSP; a body issuing continuing product certification uses PCC. Actual function and claim determine the route, not the report title.

Choose every automotive overlay materially related to the claimed work. A battery test laboratory may use A02 and A06; a charging assurance project may require A03 and A04; a lifecycle statement may require A08 and A12. The overlay adds domain risks to the category controls and never replaces them.

For each requirement mark applicability and provide reasons for any proposed NA. Lack of instruments, staff, client work or evidence is a gap rather than an NA reason. The IAF assessment team accepts or rejects the proposed applicability map.

05 Prepare competence and independence evidence

A staff CV is an input to competence evaluation, not the final proof. Provide task-specific criteria, observed work, technical questioning, reviewed case files and current authorizations. Show who may perform, review, release and decide each activity, with limits and deputies. Include contractors and people at remote locations.

For certification, demonstrate separation between evaluation and the final decision, including actual staff assignments. For safety-critical or novel testing, provide an independent competent technical reviewer. Small size is not a reason to remove required independence; use controlled external expertise while retaining responsibility for decisions that must remain within the body.

Disclose relevant consultancy and relationships before work. The certification consultancy exclusion period is at least twenty-four months for relevant consultancy, with longer exclusion where the threat remains. IAF assessors and panel members use the separate thirty-six-month recent employment/consultancy exclusion. These are minimum scheme controls, not automatic clearance of older conflicts.

06 Demonstrate method capability and valid results

Prepare a method dossier with intended use, scope, version, performance criteria, implementation verification or validation, uncertainty, equipment, competent staff and reporting rules. Retain original data and adverse outcomes. Supplier brochures, instrument purchase records and a copied method do not show that the body can perform it reliably.

Organize quality controls and external challenges by technical family. Provide satisfactory performance, investigations and evidence of recovery after adverse results. Where a suitable external comparison is unavailable, explain the search and propose a technically credible alternative such as independent reference comparison, blind items or peer witnessing; disclose the reduced evidential strength.

For software, models and AI tools, record exact versions, intended domain, validation data, failure cases and human review. Explain which observations were physical and which were simulated. Establish a controlled change process before using model updates in endorsed work.

07 Prepare the evidence pack and self-evaluation

Use the Self-Evaluation Report Template to describe actual implementation, strengths, weaknesses and improvement. Index evidence with stable IDs, exact version/date, owner, location and mapped requirements. Distinguish policies from completed records and current capability from planned investment.

Create a population register of completed work for each category/site/family over the previous twelve months. Include failures, withdrawn cases, amendments, outsourced work and complaints. IAF selects the sample; do not preselect only successful or familiar clients. Protect personal and proprietary data while enabling competent original-record review.

For ACC each family/site needs at least three complete executed case files and one directly witnessed end-to-end activity. Controlled demonstrations may supplement laboratory performance evidence when accurately labelled. MSC, PCC and PSC require actual completed client/candidate cases and a full witnessed evaluation; a fictional certificate is not evidence.

08 Plan safe access and witnessing

Offer dates for actual work representative of the scope, including high-consequence and difficult conditions. Explain hazards, required competence, protective arrangements and site access. Assessors observe competent safe work; they do not ask staff to bypass controls to make a demonstration more impressive.

Initial ACC includes physical assessment of every critical permanent location and representative field work. Remote viewing can supplement evidence, but a camera tour cannot replace required initial physical coverage. Provide controlled access to original instrument or audit records and independent interviews.

For fully digital REC projects, remote witnessing may be feasible where identity, system access, completeness and corroboration are strong and no physical claim remains unverified. Record outages, client-controlled views and blind spots. If adequate confidence cannot be obtained, arrange physical work or narrow the claim.

09 Respond to findings with evidence

Read every finding against its requirement, facts, significance and affected scope. Use the fifteen-calendar-day factual response period to correct errors and supply missing context. Disagreement alone is not corrective action, and an assessor suggestion does not replace the responsibility of the body for choosing an effective remedy.

Contain invalid work immediately, identify affected prior outputs, investigate root causes and implement action. Submit independent effectiveness evidence, such as a repeated challenge, reviewed real work or an observed corrected process. Training attendance or a new procedure alone is normally insufficient for a technical failure.

Initial ACC and REC cannot be granted with open Minor, Major, Critical or Pending findings. On an already active ACC scope, the limited ninety-day Minor closure allowance applies only where validity, safety and impartiality remain protected. It is not a conditional initial accreditation route.

10 Understand decisions and use approval correctly

The assessment team recommends; the independent IAF panel decides. Read the decision, scope annex, dates, independence mode, monitoring obligations and appeal route before making any public claim. Check that the legal name, sites, methods, ranges and restrictions are correct.

Use IAF Approved Body - CAAR Accredited only for active ACC scope. Use IAF CAAR Recognized Assessment Record for a specifically recognized REC output, with its project and output identifiers. Membership or a pending application provides no technical approval wording.

For an ACC-endorsed output, scope must match both when the work was performed and when the report was released. Do not retroactively add endorsement to work completed before approval. Mixed-scope reports must visibly separate approved and excluded work. The CAAR body mark is not a vehicle, product or personnel certification mark.

11 Maintain approval and control change

Plan annual surveillance, annual reporting and reassessment from the effective date. The ACC term is no more than four years; annual surveillance is planned by months twelve, twenty-four and thirty-six. Apply for renewal at least six months before expiry. There is no automatic extension if assessment or closure is late.

Notify serious harm, suspected systemic falsification, material evidence compromise or loss of relevant authority within forty-eight hours of awareness. Notify other material changes before implementation or within thirty calendar days if unexpected. Obtain approval before using an enlarged scope.

Maintain original evidence, correction history and verification capability. On suspension or expiry stop new affected endorsed release. Review whether older outputs are affected by the underlying issue; preserve accurate historical facts rather than deleting the record or implying that every past result has automatically failed.

12 Prepare for acceptance and future capability

Show prospective users exactly what an approval establishes, its scope and limitations. Use transparent report verification, competent witnesses, reliable comparison performance and effective complaint handling to build confidence. Record actual acceptance arrangements; do not promise universal acceptance before those arrangements exist.

Develop future capability through controlled pilots for new battery systems, automated functions, virtual testing, digital evidence, circularity and other emerging work. Define pilot limits, independent challenge and criteria for progression. A roadmap or research partnership shall not be listed as current approved capability.

Use the complete set together: Standard for requirements, Technical Manual for implementation methods, Operations Manual for IAF case handling, Trust and Mark Rules for public reliance, and the writable forms for evidence and decisions.

Submission pack and readiness review

Folder	Contents
00 Identity and route	Legal identity, membership, Constitution/scheme undertaking, ACC/REC request and contacts.
01 Scope	Scope rows, categories, domains, sites, delivery modes, independence and technical families.
02 Management and integrity	Governance, conflicts, quality system, internal audit, review, privacy and complaints.
03 Technical capability	Staff, methods, equipment, uncertainty, validation, comparisons and authorizations.
04 Completed work	Population register, original files, failures, amendments, review and release evidence.
05 Assessment access	Witness availability, site safety, source access, confidentiality and translations.
06 Improvement and trust	Self-assessment, actions, report/mark controls, continuity and verification.

Final preparation questions

Is every claimed activity supported by an actual category and scope row? Are independence relationships disclosed? Can each technical family be demonstrated by complete work and a safe witness? Are failures and corrections included? Can the body show original data and independent decisions? Are public claims bounded to the actual route?

No guarantee of grant

Complete preparation makes the assessment reviewable; it does not predetermine the outcome. The independent panel must still find all applicable requirements Met and the exact scope supported.