

To all Buyers and Suppliers

As part of our continuing aim to improve the Link-up and Link-up Audit schemes we are about to launch an improvement to the Link-up Audit question set structure. This is in response to a wide range of feedback received from scheme participants regarding a perception of question duplication during audits.

The change is called the **Common Question Set**.

- **What is it?** It is a response to some of the points raised about perceived question duplication
- It is not a replacement or reduction in the Core Module
- A common set of technical questions which replace some of the questions within Level 1 categories and brings them together in a more focused and concentrated manner in the audit
- It does not change the principles of the scheme:
 - No de-duplication across Level 1's
 - Different levels of questions within each level 1 product code
 - Levels of interrogation and evidence requirement.
- **It is part of our drive to deliver a better service**

How does it work?

- We have assessed all Level 1 product codes
- We have reviewed all Questions
- Where appropriate these were gathered into 7 categories:
 - Competency
 - Document Control
 - Document Receipt
 - Risk Assessment Process
 - Training (Removed following analysis)
 - Policies & Review
 - Infrastructure Security
- Where there were common themes the questions relating to these areas have been gathered into the Common Question Set of 14 questions. This 14 replace many questions which existed across the 19 Level 1 codes.
- All companies are asked the Common Question Set

What does this require of Auditors?

- Understanding of the Product Code footprint selected by a company
- Knowledge as to what documents expected to be seen as evidence dependent on the above
- Auditor common sense

What does this require from Achilles?

- Technical sign off of the questions - **DONE**
- Extended Auditor guidance in the audit questionnaire – **DONE**
- Briefing of auditors – **ALREADY STARTED**
- Briefing of suppliers – how it will effect them – **see this document**
- Changes to IT outputs – protocols and invoices – **ON PROGRAMME**

What does this require from Auditees?

- Understanding that they will still have to present evidence relevant to the full scope of their footprint
- Understanding that for different suppliers it will have different effects but all should see a more focussed audit with reduced numbers of questions
- Understanding that there is no reduction in the quality of supporting evidence required
- Recognition that there are still some specific questions in some product codes that fall outside the Common Question Set due to the focussed and specific response required in that particular area

When Will it Happen?

- It will be launched in May 2009

This means that new questions sets sent out after the launch will include the Common Question Set questions. There will be no retrospective applications to audits that are already in process or where questions sets have already been sent out.

This should benefit all auditees. It is part of our continued drive to improve our offering to all of our customers.

Regards



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