



Candidate Handbook

Certified Management Systems
Auditor

General

The objective of the “PECB Certified Management Systems Auditor” exam is to ensure that the candidate has acquired the necessary knowledge and skills to perform a management system audit by applying widely recognized audit principles, procedures and techniques.

The Certified Management Systems Auditor exam is intended for any auditor, regardless the type of industry that wants to lead a management system audit.

The exam covers the following competency domains:

- **Domain 1:** Auditing management systems
- **Domain 2:** Addressing ethics and liability
- **Domain 3:** Planning a management system audit
- **Domain 4:** Conducting a management system audit
- **Domain 5:** Concluding a management system audit

The content of the exam is divided as follows:

Domain 1: Auditing management systems

Main objective: Ensure that the management systems auditor candidate understands all the requirements of management system standards in order to perform management system audits

Competencies	Knowledge statements
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to understand and explain the operations of the ISO organization and the development of different management system standards 2. Ability to explain and illustrate the main concepts in management system standards 3. Ability to understand the common structure of ISO management system standards 4. Ability to understand and explain the purpose of a management system audit 5. Ability to grasp the concept and objectives of an audit 6. Ability to understand, explain and illustrate the management system audit process 7. Ability to interpret and analyze different types of audits 8. Ability to understand the difference between first party audits, second party audits and third party audits 9. Ability to verify conformance with standard requirements 10. Ability to identify opportunities for improvements 11. Ability to ensure the effectiveness of a management system 12. Ability to identify best practices for a management system 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Knowledge of the ISO 19011 standard 2. Knowledge of the ISO 17021-1 standard 3. Knowledge of the relation between the audit system and the management system 4. Knowledge of the common structure of ISO management system standards 5. Knowledge of the purpose of a management system audit 6. Knowledge of the concept and objectives of an audit 7. Knowledge of initiating an audit 8. Knowledge of the basic principles of management system audit 9. Knowledge of the importance and purpose of first party audits, second party audits and third party audits 10. Knowledge of the techniques of verifying whether the audited organization is working in conformance with relevant standards, policies, procedures and adopted industry practices 11. Knowledge of appropriate actions to improve a process or system 12. Knowledge of the effectiveness of a process and evaluation of the process being audited 13. Knowledge of the best practices that can be applicable to organizations

Domain 2: Addressing ethics and liability

Main objective: Ensure that a management systems auditor candidate is able to prepare, conduct, manage and conclude a management system audit by following auditing ethical principles and also understand the legal liabilities and implications

Competencies	Knowledge statements
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to conduct an audit with integrity, objectivity and independence 2. Ability to understand the main purpose of Code of Ethics 3. Ability to understand principles of an audit such as integrity, objectivity, confidentiality and competency 4. Ability to act with due professional care when conducting an audit 5. Ability to identify issues related to conflict of interest including financial interests, business relationships, current employment, former employment and subsequent employment 6. Ability to understand the client confidential information regulation 7. Ability to understand the implementation of necessary measures for reducing the risk of information breach 8. Ability to understand the concept of liability 9. Ability to identify the categories of auditor's legal liabilities 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Knowledge of the fundamental ethical principles 2. Knowledge of the codes that provide guidance to auditors on how to conduct an audit 3. Knowledge of the techniques of establishing trustful relations between the auditor and the client 4. Knowledge of presenting the highest level of professional objectivity in collecting, verifying and communicating information about the activities or processes being examined 5. Knowledge of the techniques of respecting the value and ownership of information 6. Knowledge of the necessary competencies that an auditor shall have in order to perform audit activities 7. Knowledge of the techniques of conducting an audit by using an attentive and diligent approach 8. Knowledge of the techniques of identifying actual and potential conflicts of interest 9. Knowledge of the main factors that lead to the identification of the actual and potential conflicts of interest 10. Knowledge of how to preserve confidentiality of information 11. Knowledge of the necessary measures that can be implemented to reduce the risk of information breach 12. Knowledge of the techniques used to perform an audit according to engagement terms and audit best practices 13. Knowledge of the liability to clients, liability to third parties and criminal liability

Domain 3: Planning a management system audit

Main objective: Ensure that the management systems auditor candidate can appropriately prepare an audit plan, and determine an effective audit strategy in the context of the management system being audited

Competencies	Knowledge statements
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to understand and interpret the steps of the audit engagement 2. Ability to identify the existence of possible conflicts of interest before accepting the client 3. Ability to understand and preserve confidentiality of information that may be revealed by the client 4. Ability to determine the audit duration 5. Ability to understand and conduct pre-audit activities 6. Ability to understand the impact of risk and materiality on audit planning 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Knowledge of the main steps to be followed of audit engagement 2. Knowledge of the pre-engagement investigation 3. Knowledge of the independence threat analysis 4. Knowledge of the client and organization to be audited 5. Knowledge of the consequences of conflict of interest in an audit 6. Knowledge of the factors that influence conflicts of interest 7. Knowledge of confidentiality in a management system audit 8. Knowledge of the disclosure of confidential information 9. Knowledge of the actions and steps needed to mitigate the risk of confidentiality breaches 10. Knowledge of confidentiality after terminating the audit engagement 11. Knowledge of the specific criteria used when determining the audit duration 12. Knowledge of the PECB MS application form 13. Knowledge of the NACE Code when determining the audit duration 14. Knowledge of the complexity of the organization’s business activities when determining the audit duration 15. Knowledge of the time modification that can be applied to the total audit duration 16. Knowledge of good practices when determining the audit team members 17. Knowledge of the engagement letter 18. Knowledge of materiality within the management system 19. Knowledge of the relationship between materiality, audit risk and audit planning 20. Knowledge of performing materiality and risk assessment

Domain 4: Conducting a management system audit

Main objective: Ensure that the management systems auditor candidate can conduct an audit in the context of management system standards

Competencies	Knowledge statements
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to conduct a stage 1 audit in the context of a management system audit by taking into account the documentation review conditions and criteria 2. Ability to prepare the stage 1 audit report 3. Ability to establish an effective audit strategy 4. Ability to gather appropriate evidences objectively from the available information and evaluate them 5. Ability to plan the audit 6. Ability to conduct a stage 2 audit in the context of a management system audit by applying the best practices of communication when collecting appropriate evidence, and taking into account the roles and responsibilities of all the individuals involved 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Knowledge of the stage 1 audit steps and activities 2. Knowledge of the activities to be carried out during the on-site visit 3. Knowledge of the points to be validated at the stage 1 audit 4. Knowledge of the documentation review criteria during the stage 1 audit 5. Knowledge of documenting the stage 1 audit 6. Knowledge of the steps in determining the audit strategy 7. Knowledge of the differences between the audit plan and audit strategy 8. Knowledge of the applicable methods in an audit strategy 9. Knowledge of audit procedures in collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative evidence 10. Knowledge of the audit testing process 11. Knowledge of steps in planning an audit 12. Knowledge of the stage 2 audit steps and activities 13. Knowledge of the audit types and scope 14. Knowledge of the audit authority, required resources, structure of the audit team, and their roles and responsibilities 15. Knowledge of performing a quality review to ensure the effectiveness of the audit procedures 16. Knowledge of the stage 2 audit report 17. Knowledge of the follow-up audit

Domain 5: Concluding a management system audit

Main objective: Ensure that the management systems auditor candidate is capable of concluding different management system audits

Competencies	Knowledge statements
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to explain and apply the evaluation process of evidence to draft audit findings and prepare audit conclusions 2. Ability to understand, explain and illustrate the different levels of conformity and the concept of the benefit of the doubt 3. Ability to appropriately report audit observations in respect to the audit rules and principles 4. Ability to complete audit working documents and perform a quality review of an audit 5. Ability to draft audit conclusions and present them to the top management of the auditee and audit client 6. Ability to write an audit report and justify a certification recommendation 7. Ability to conduct the activities following an initial audit including the evaluation of action plans, follow-up audits, surveillance audits and recertification audits 8. Ability to review and finalize audit results 9. Ability to report the results at the closing meeting 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Knowledge of the evaluation process of evidence to draft audit findings and prepare audit conclusions 2. Knowledge of the differences and the characteristics between the concepts of conformity, minor nonconformity, major nonconformity, anomaly and observation 3. Knowledge of the guidelines and best practices to write nonconformity reports 4. Knowledge of the guidelines and best practices to draft and report audit observations 5. Knowledge of the principle of the benefit of the doubt in the context of a management system audit 6. Knowledge of the guidelines and best practices to complete audit working documents and perform a quality review of an audit 7. Knowledge of the guidelines and best practices to present audit findings and conclusions to the top management of an audited organization 8. Knowledge of the possible recommendations that an auditor can make in the context of a certification audit and the certification decision process 9. Knowledge of the guidelines and best practices to evaluate action plans 10. Knowledge of the conditions for modification, extension, suspension or withdrawal of a certification for an organization

Based on the above-mentioned domains and their relevance, 10 questions are included in the exam, as summarized in the table below:

				Level of understanding (Cognitive/Taxonomy) required					
		Points per question	Questions that measure comprehension, application and analysis	Questions that measure synthesis and evaluation	Number of questions per competency domain	% of test devoted to each competency domain	Number of points per competency domain	% of points per competency domain	
Competency domains	Auditing management systems	10	X		1	10	10	10	
	Addressing ethics and liability	10	X		1	10	10	10	
	Planning a management system audit	10	X		2	20	20	20	
		10	X						
	Conducting a management system audit	10		X	3	30	30	30	
		10	X						
		10	X						
	Concluding a management system audit	10		X	3	30	30	30	
		10	X						
		10		X					
Total points		100							
Number of questions per level of understanding			7	3					
% of the exam devoted to each level of understanding (cognitive/taxonomy)			70	30					

The exam passing score is **70%**.

Taking the Exam

General Information on the Exam

Candidates are required to arrive/be present at least 30 minutes before the exam starts. Candidates who arrive late will not be given additional time to compensate for the late arrival and may not be allowed to sit for the exam.

Candidates are required to bring a valid identity card (a national ID card, driver's license, or passport) and show it to the invigilator.

If requested on the day of the exam (paper-based exams), additional time can be provided to candidates taking the exam in a non-native language, as follows:

- 10 additional minutes for Foundation exams
- 20 additional minutes for Manager exams
- 30 additional minutes for Lead exams

PECB Exam Format and Type

1. Paper-based: Exams are provided on paper, where candidates are not allowed to use anything but the exam paper and a pen. The use of electronic devices, such as laptops, tablets, or phones, is not allowed. The exam session is supervised by a PECB approved Invigilator at the location where the Partner has organized the training course.

2. Online: Exams are provided electronically via the PECB Exams application. The use of electronic devices, such as tablets and cell phones, is not allowed. The exam session is supervised remotely by a PECB Invigilator via the PECB Exams application and an external/integrated camera.

For more detailed information about the online format, please refer to the [PECB Online Exam Guide](#).

PECB exams are available in two types:

1. Essay-type question exam
2. Multiple-choice question exam

This exam comprises essay-type questions. They are used to determine and evaluate whether a candidate can clearly answer questions related to the defined competency domains. Additionally, problem-solving techniques and arguments that are supported with reasoning and evidence will also be evaluated.

The exam is open book and is not intended to measure memorizing or recalling information. It aims to evaluate candidates' comprehension, analytical skills, and applied knowledge. Therefore, candidates are required to provide logical and convincing answers and explanations in order to demonstrate that they have understood the content and the main concepts of the competency domains.

Since the exam is “open book,” candidates are authorized to use the following reference materials:

- Training course materials (accessed through PECB Exams app and/or printed)
- Any personal notes taken during the training course (accessed through PECB Exams app and/or printed)
- A hard copy dictionary

PECB exams are available in English and other languages. For the availability of the exam in a particular language, please contact examination@pecb.com.

Note: PECB will progressively transition to multiple-choice exams. They will also be open book and comprise scenario-based questions that will allow PECB to evaluate candidates’ knowledge, abilities, and skills to use information in new situations (apply), draw connections among ideas (analyze), and justify a stand or decision (evaluate). All PECB multiple-choice exams have one question and three alternatives, of which only one is correct.

For specific information about exam types, languages available, and other details, visit the [List of PECB Exams](#).

Receiving the Exam Results

Exam results will be communicated via email.

- The time span for the communication starts from the exam date and lasts three to eight weeks for essay type exams and two to four weeks for multiple-choice paper-based exams
- For online multiple-choice exams, candidates receive their results instantly

Candidates who successfully complete the exam will be able to apply for one of the credentials of the respective certification scheme.

For candidates who fail the exam, a list of the domains where they have performed poorly will be added to the email to help them prepare better for a retake.

Candidates that disagree with the results may request for a re-evaluation by writing to results@pecb.com within 30 working days of receiving the results. Re-evaluation requests received after 30 days will not be processed. If candidates do not agree with the results of the reevaluation, they have 30 working days from the date when they received the reevaluated exam results to file a complaint through the [PECB Ticketing System](#). Complaints received after 30 days will not be processed.

Exam Retake Policy

There is no limit to the number of times a candidate can retake an exam. However, there are certain limitations in terms of the time span between exam retakes.

- If a candidate does not pass the exam on the 1st attempt, s/he must wait 15 days after the initial date of the exam for the next attempt (1st retake).

Note: Candidates who have completed the training course with one of our partners, and failed the first exam attempt, are eligible to retake for free the exam within a 12-month period from the date the coupon code is received, because the fee paid for the training course, includes a first exam attempt and one retake). Otherwise, retake fees apply.

For candidates that fail the exam retake, PECB recommends they attend a training course in order to be better prepared for the exam.

To arrange exam retakes, based on exam format, candidates that have completed a training course, must follow the steps below:

1. Online Exam: when scheduling the exam retake, use initial coupon code to waive the fee
2. Paper-Based Exam: candidates need to contact the PECB Partner/Distributor who has initially organized the session for exam retake arrangement (date, time, place, costs).

Candidates that have not completed a training course with a partner, but sat for the online exam directly with PECB, do not fall under this policy. The process to schedule the exam retake is the same as for the initial exam.

Reschedule the Exam

For any changes with regard to the exam date, time, location, or other details, please contact examination@pecb.com.

Closing a Case

If a candidate does not apply for the certificate within three years, their case will be closed. Candidates whose case has been closed due to the expiration of the certification period have the right to request to reopen their case. However, PECB will no longer be responsible for any changes in the conditions, standards, policies, candidate handbook, or exam preparation guide that were applicable before the case was closed. A candidate requesting their case to reopen must do so in writing and pay the required fee.

Exam Security

A significant component of a successful and respected professional certification credential is maintaining the security and confidentiality of the exam. PECB relies upon the ethical behavior of certificate holders and applicants to maintain the security and confidentiality of PECB exams. Any disclosure of information about the content of PECB exams indicates violation of PECB's Code of Ethics. PECB will take action against individuals who violate PECB Policies and the Code of Ethics. These actions include permanently barring individuals from pursuing PECB credentials and revoking the awarded

credentials. PECB will also pursue legal action against individuals or organizations who infringe upon its copyrights, proprietary rights, and intellectual property.

SAMPLE EXAM QUESTIONS

Question 1: Understand the client

Prepare a list of questions for the interview that you will conduct with the manager of the organization that you are about to audit.

Possible answer:

- *Can you please explain what are your organization's goals and how are you currently performing compared to your competitors?*
- *Could you please provide us with the previous audit results?*
- *Is it possible to have your permission to observe the documentation of the management system within your organization?*

Question 2: Evaluation of corrective actions

You have received a corrective actions plan to review. Evaluate the adequacy of the proposed corrective actions. If you agree with the corrective actions, explain why. If you do not agree with them, explain why not, and propose an alternative corrective action that is more adequate.

Nonconformity 1: The auditor has detected and issued nonconformity because the audit procedure has not been documented properly.

Corrective action plan 1: Review the audit procedure and document it as requested.

Possible answer:

I agree with the proposed corrective action. The audit documents should be documented and updated based on the organization's policy.

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