

IFS Exam Regulation

applicable for

IFS Food and IFS Logistics (pure logistics auditors)



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Table of contents

Part 1: IFS Examination Process for IFS Food and IFS Logistics	3
General rules for IFS Examinations	3
§ 1 Purpose of the examinations	3
§ 2 Nature of the examinations	3
§ 3 General requirements for admission to the IFS Examinations	3
§ 4 Languages of examination	4
§ 5 Breach of regulations	4
§ 6 Communication of the examinations results	4
§ 7 Inspection/review of examination documents	4
§ 8 Objections and complaints	4
§ 9 Registration and approval as an IFS Auditor	4
§ 10 Maintenance of the approval after change of IFS Version	4
§ 11 Rules in case of cancellation of the candidate's participation	5
§ 12 Evaluation of the general written exam, tech scope(s) exam and oral exam	5
Specific rules for IFS Re-approval	6
§ 13 Maintenance of approval after the two (2) years period (= re-approval)	6
§ 14 Conditions of validity of the auditor's certificate	6
Part 2: Rules for the written examination and tech scope exam	6
§ 15 Application process for the written examination	6
§ 16 Tech scope exam(s), in addition to general scope extension requirements (for IFS Food only)	6
§ 17 Duration of the written examination	7
§ 18 Conditions of cancellation of an examination session	7
§ 19 Material and examination documents	7
§ 20 Rules during the examination	7
Part 3: Rules for the oral examination	7
§ 21 Application process for the oral examination	8
§ 22 Code of conduct for examiners	8
§ 23 Oral examination session	9
§ 24 Procedure of the oral exam session	9
§ 25 Material to bring/provided/forbidden for the candidate	10

Part 1: IFS Examination Process for IFS Food and IFS Logistics

General rules for IFS Examinations

§ 1 Purpose of the examinations

- To assess auditor competences
- To examine the candidate's professional knowledge about:
 - The IFS Standard content
 - Food legislation and special food issues
 - Food technology related to food safety and product conformity including basic food processing techniques
 - How to apply the IFS Standards on the case studies
 - To assess ability of the candidate to collect evidence and to compare it to specific standard requirements, interpreting and evaluating the findings impartially as an auditor.

§ 2 Nature of the examinations

The IFS Examination process has two (2) parts: one written and one oral. In general, the oral part of the examinations takes place after the successful participation in the written examination.

The **written exam** is divided into two (2) main sections:

- General exam (independent of product and tech scopes the auditor is confirmed for)
 - Part 1: Multiple choice questions about the IFS Standard and doctrine content (IFS Food respectively IFS Logistics)
 - Part 2: Multiple choice questions about basic scientific knowledge and elementary food processing techniques (tech scope F) additionally for IFS Logistics: Tech scope D questions included
 - Part 3: Multiple choice questions about basic knowledge on legislation
- For IFS Food: Tech scope exam(s) (dependent on the tech scopes the auditor has applied and is confirmed for)

For IFS Food, there are five (5) different and specific tech scope(s) exams: tech scopes A, B, C, D and E. Each exam consists of questions related to the relevant tech scope and is assessed independently.

To become approved for (a) tech scope(s), the candidate must pass the general written exam and the tech scope exam(s) he/she applied for.

Requirements and conditions for admission to the tech scope exam are laid down in the applicable and valid IFS Food Standard and if applicable the current IFS Doctrine.

See also § 12 for the conditions and evaluation.

The **oral examination** is intended to assess the candidate's suitability as an auditor and his/her specific professional knowledge needed for the specific scopes, by analyzing and simulating an audit situation based on a case study.

§ 3 General requirements for admission to the IFS Examinations

The candidate must fulfil the requirements laid down in the current IFS Standards (Part 3, chapter 3) and IFS Doctrine, if applicable.

§ 4 Languages of examination

For applicable language requirements and regulations, please see chapter 3 of part 3 of IFS Food Standard and the current IFS Doctrine (these rules are also applicable for pure Logistics auditors). A language approval can also be obtained by passing the general written exam or oral exam in the respective language.

§ 5 Breach of regulations

A breach of regulations leads to an immediate one-year exclusion from the admission procedure for IFS Auditors. A breach may include in regards to the written and oral exam:

- The candidate has no ID documents and he/she could not be identified
- Inadequate behaviour during the exam
- Attempting to deceive in the examinations
- The falsification of reports

More generally, if a candidate or a certification body does not respect the examination rules, the permission for one or both may be withdrawn by the IFS Offices.

§ 6 Communication of the examinations results

The examinations results will be communicated by the IFS Offices to the candidates via the certification body. Non-exclusive auditors will receive the results directly.

§ 7 Inspection/review of examination documents

After communication of the examination results, the candidate who failed or the corresponding trainer of the certification body can review his/her examination documents in the presence of a person nominated by the IFS Offices:

- Not later than four (4) weeks after results have been communicated by IFS Offices and
- Not within four (4) weeks prior to the date of his/her next written examination session attempt

However, the candidate is neither allowed to make copies of the documents nor to take notes. The IFS Offices commit to archive the last examination documents.

§ 8 Objections and complaints

Objections or complaints arising from IFS Examinations must be made in written form and addressed to the IFS Offices within seven (7) days after the results have been communicated. The IFS Offices are responsible for taking appropriated actions.

§ 9 Registration and approval as an IFS Auditor

The registration and approval processes for IFS Auditors are described in the relevant IFS Standards (see part 3, chapters 2 and 3 of IFS Food or IFS Logistics Standard and the current IFS Doctrine, if applicable).

§ 10 Maintenance of the approval after change of IFS Version

In case of update/modification of the scope names and/or numbers by the IFS Offices, auditor's scopes are going to be updated accordingly (this update may be based on further objective documents or evidence requested by the IFS Offices).

§ 11 Rules in case of cancellation of the candidate's participation

- The certification body, respectively the non-exclusive auditor, is required to inform the IFS Offices immediately, if a candidate is unable to attend the confirmed examination session.
- Unexcused failure to appear at the written and/or oral examination will be rated as not passed.
- If the IFS Offices are not informed five (5) working days in advance of the exam date at the latest, the exam fee(s) for the candidate will be charged to the certification body or to the non-exclusive auditor.

§ 12 Evaluation of the general written exam, tech scope(s) exam and oral exam

- The required minimum score in order to pass the general written exam is 60 % for the complete exam and 50 % for each individual part of the exam.
- If a candidate fails at the written general examination, he/she can make a second attempt. If the second attempt also results in a failure, six (6) months must have passed before the general written examination can be repeated. The date for a new possible exam is counted from the last written examination date plus six (6) months.
- For passing a tech scope exam the auditor needs, as a pre-requisite, to pass the general written exam. Each tech scope exam is evaluated independently and is evaluated as passed when the score of at least 60 % is reached. In case of failure, he/she can attend a second time at the next possible session. After a second failure, he/she will be blocked for three (3) months for the respective tech scope. The new possible examination date after a blocking period has to be at least three (3) months after the last written examination for this tech scope. If the auditor passes one of the tech scope exams, he/she is approved for this tech scope, independent of the results of the other tech scopes exams. If an auditor fails the general written and/or oral exam, he/she will not receive any approval for (a) tech scope(s).
- Example: An auditor requested scopes B, C, D and E. He/She passed the general exam and reached over 60 % for tech scopes B and D exams but failed the tech scopes C and E exams. So he/she is finally approved for tech scopes B and D and is allowed to perform IFS Food audits for these tech scopes. He/She can attend a second time the tech scope exams C and E and in case of passing them, he/she will be approved for these tech scopes, too. In case of a second failure, the candidate will be blocked for three (3) months for tech scopes C and E.
- A candidate who passed at least the general written examination is admitted to the oral examination. The oral examination can be repeated. If a candidate fails at the first attempt, he/she can be admitted to the next possible oral examination. On repeated failure, the candidate may only participate in IFS Examinations after having observed two (2) additional full IFS Food (respectively Logistics) Assessments as Trainee. He/She will be admitted to two (2) further attempts again if necessary, taking the oral examination again.
- Note: the oral examination has to be passed no later than four (4) years or the period the same version of the standard is valid, if it is less than four (4) years after having passed the general written examination. This includes all attempts of the oral examination.
- Note: Passing the written exam will only be valid within the same version of the Standard. With a new full version of the IFS Food/Logistics standard the candidate shall start again the full examination process (written and oral exam).
- If for exceptional reasons the written and the oral examinations take place at the same time and the candidate only passed the oral exam, the general written exam has to be passed with the next attempt which has to be taken within a one year period.
- For tech scope extension requests the same rules as for the tech scope exams apply. Only approved auditors are allowed to request a tech scope extension. The auditor can apply for one or more tech scopes when he/she fulfils the requirements which are defined in part 3, chapter 3 of the IFS Food Standard.

Specific rules for IFS Re-approval

§ 13 Maintenance of approval after the two (2) years period (= re-approval)

For the general process of maintenance of approval after the two (2) years period see IFS Food or Logistics Standard part 3, chapter 3 and the current IFS Doctrine if applicable. If the auditor fails to meet the requirements for the re-approval process, the auditor has to participate again in the IFS oral examination. Furthermore, the CB has to perform a sign-off audit again for the auditor being re-approved again for the same scope(s). This possibility is only available within a timeframe of one year after the approval ended and only under the same version the auditor was approved for before.

After the two (2)-year period the candidate has to go through the re-approval process again (see also paragraph 14).

§ 14 Conditions of validity of the auditor's certificate

In general the certificate is valid until 31.12. of the 2nd following year.

Example: **Written exam passed: 04.07.2020**

Oral exam passed: 04.09.2020

Auditor certificate valid until: 31.12.2022

Part 2: Rules for the written examination and tech scope exam

§ 15 Application process for the written examination

- When all requirements for the application are fulfilled, a confirmation will be sent to the candidate via the certification body (for exclusive auditors) including the date, time and place of the written examination, in general two weeks before the examination date. The certification bodies are responsible for the communication to their candidates.
- The non-exclusive auditor is responsible for the complete application on his/her own. He/she will be contacted directly by IFS Offices.
- In respect of deadline: registrations which are sent after the deadline will not be taken into consideration.

§ 16 Tech scope exam(s), in addition to general scope extension requirements (for IFS Food only)

- The tech scope exam(s) can be taken directly following the initial general written exam.
- For extension of tech scope(s), auditors are required to provide the same evidence as for initial approval and must additionally pass a tech scope written examination organised by IFS Offices. The examination for separate tech scopes (when the auditor passed the general exam at an earlier date) can be taken at a regular general or at a specially dedicated tech scope exam session (either face to face or remote) scheduled by IFS.
- In general, the same rules as for the initial exam apply.
- The auditors can only perform IFS Assessments according to the scopes approved by IFS.

§ 17 Duration of the written examination

- The duration for the general written examination of the IFS Food in its current version is two (2) hours.
- The duration for the general written examination of the IFS Logistics in its current version is 60 minutes.
- After a short break, the applicants can attend the tech scope exam(s) for each requested and confirmed tech scope. The duration for each tech scope exam is 20 minutes. That means, if an auditor takes the maximum of five (5) different tech scope exams, it will take 100 minutes (one hour and 40 minutes).

§ 18 Conditions of cancellation of an examination session

- A session can be cancelled if the minimum number of candidates cannot be reached (10 persons). In this case, the decision will be communicated in general two weeks in advance of the exam session.

§ 19 Material and examination documents

- Authorized material for the examination: in case of digital version a laptop, in special cases of paper format a pen (not a pencil)
- Mobile phones are not allowed and have to be switched off. It is allowed to use a dictionary in form of a hardcopy. This will be checked by the IFS Supervisor directly before starting the exam.

§ 20 Rules during the examination

- In the case of face to face sessions, each candidate signs the attendance sheet when entering the exam.
- The IFS Proctor verifies the identity of all candidates before starting the exam.
- Participants who arrive after the examination has started will no longer be accepted. Entering and leaving the exam room during the examination is not accepted. If a candidate needs to leave the room for a specific reason, he/she has to get the permission of the IFS Proctor. Only one person at a time is allowed to leave the room.
- As soon as one candidate has finished the exam and left the room, no other person is allowed to exit and re-enter.
- For online examination, the additional rules of "IFS Terms and Conditions IFS Food Exam" apply.

Part 3: Rules for the oral examination

§ 21 Application process for the oral examination

- Only candidates who passed at least the general written examination can be registered (For combined sessions the registration includes both, written and oral examination.).
- The certification bodies, respectively the non-exclusive auditor, will inform the IFS Offices about the date for which the candidate applies to take the oral examination.
- If candidates apply for several languages, the IFS Offices have the right to choose the language of examination.
- It is possible to apply to include an interpreter in the oral exam. In this case the interpreter has to be nominated by the CB or the non-exclusive auditor when registering for the oral examination. The name of the interpreter will be documented; he/she may not be an IFS Auditor, TTT or Reviewer.
- IFS Offices will announce and confirm the place and time of the examination.
- IFS Offices identify and assign the appropriate case study for the oral examination and prepare the documentation.
- In case of a second attempt of the oral examination, the IFS Offices will choose a case study which is different from the one provided for the first attempt.
- If the candidate declares and confirms in writing that he/she is not competent for the scope and respective case study provided for this examination, he/she can make the decision to withdraw from the examination (the examination is suspended). In this case the scope will be eliminated from the candidate's CV.
 - If the candidate's CV is approved for other scopes, the candidate has the possibility to participate in the next oral exam session with a case study related to one of these other scopes. This new participation is considered as a second attempt.
 - If the candidate's CV has only been approved with the cancelled scope, the candidate shall start the complete exam process from the beginning, with a new validated CV.
- In case of an obvious mistake by the IFS Offices in choosing the case study, the IFS Examiner can change the case study (scope) before the exam starts.

§ 22 Code of conduct for examiners

In general, examiners are expected to have a clear record of impartiality and independence. In case of doubt the candidate can decide not to participate in the oral exam. This decision has to be stated before the exam. Further actions have to be discussed with the IFS Management GmbH.

Candidates who failed in the first attempt at the oral examination should be re-examined by at least one new examiner.

To ensure confidentiality, the examiners have to sign an obligation of non-disclosure and code of conduct including the following topics:

- Data security (persons, results, documents, contents of exams)
- Impartiality and independence

§ 23 Oral examination session

A session corresponds to one or several consecutive days (in general seven (7) candidates per day). If at the day of the registration deadline, there are less than four (4) candidates per day, the examination session may be cancelled.

§ 24 Procedure of the oral exam session

The examination team is composed of at least two (2) people and at least one of them will be an IFS validated oral examiner. The exam consists of one case study that the candidate should read carefully and put him/herself into the position of the auditor. The examiners represent the assessed company.

Examiners have access to the CV with the audit experience of the candidate.

The duration of the oral exam in general is 60 minutes per candidate. If an interpreter takes part in the examination, the duration will be extended to 90 minutes.

- At the beginning of the examination the IFS Examination Team verifies the identity of the candidate.
- There are a maximum of 5 minutes for the verification of the identity and introduction.
- In general there are 10 minutes for the candidate to read the case study and reflect on the case.
- Approx. 30 minutes are given for the simulation of the audit situation and/or questions on technical competences related to the case study.
- Then there will be 15 minutes to draw conclusions, in particular to assign a clear IFS Score (A, B, C, D, Major, KO) for identified IFS Food or IFS Logistics Requirements and to explain to the simulated assessed company the reasons of assigning those scorings. At this stage the examiners might challenge these results acting as the assessed company, to check the communication skills and the confidence of the candidate.
- The oral examination is intended to assess candidates' suitability as auditors by verifying specific skills, thus his/her:
 - Technical knowledge;
 - Amplitude of the investigation of all requirements of the case study;
 - Depth of the investigation of each requirement identified;
 - Knowledge of the standard and ability to correctly identify the requirements;
 - Knowledge of the standard, including criteria and doctrine;
 - Ability to correctly evaluate the requirements;
 - Communication skills;
 - Ability to control conflicts.
- The candidate leaves the room while the examiners discuss the performance and make a decision about the evaluation (passed or failed).
- The result is communicated to the candidate and – if this is the case – the reason of failure will be explained to the candidate.
- Records are taken in form of key words/input of examiners and questions and answers of candidates.

- Summary of important points of the evaluation of the candidate are documented in an evaluation sheet.
- All material and documents provided by the examiners (including the case study, the notes taken by candidate on paper) must be given back at the end of the examination to the IFS Offices.

§ 25 Material to bring/provided/forbidden for the candidate

The IFS Offices provide:

- The case study (for the simulation of the audit situation) based on the scope(s) the candidate is registered for
- Some sheets of blank paper
- One IFS Food Standard or IFS Logistics Standard in the language of the examination

Everything else is forbidden (e.g. electronic devices).

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