

Quality and Audit programme (QAP)

Within the supply chains for **hygiene products** many quality audits are conducted on an ongoing basis. As there are multiple quality standards in use, audits made by converters often result in duplicated efforts for a single supplier. Suppliers face multiple audits against standards which are essentially similar and only differing in the details, causing confusion.

This can be addressed with a voluntary minimum standard, which can deal with the industry need to focus on verifying and ensuring quality requirements rather than formalities. In early 2018 it was exactly this idea that led towards today's Quality and Audit Programme.

QAP is a quality and audit programme

QAP, the EDANA quality and audit programme, is a voluntary programme and comprises of 2 parts:

- This first element is a minimum quality standard, which specifies minimum requirements for the quality management system of a supplier in the hygiene industry, thus helping to ensure consumer expectations of this industry are met. The word 'minimum' indicates this is a common benchmark, developed by EDANA and a wide range of members in the hygiene industry, including both suppliers and converters*. Industry players can apply different and/or additional quality requirements in their business.
- The second element is an audit scheme assuring that:
 - Audits are conducted by reputable, trained and qualified third-party auditors.
 - Suppliers are no longer subject to multiple, independent but quite similar audits.
 - Audit results are owned by the individual suppliers and shared through a cloud-based platform with converters that have been granted access by those suppliers.

*a wide range of companies have contributed to the QAP, including but not limited to Essity, Fibertex Personal Care, Fitesa, H.B. Fuller, Kimberly-Clark, Mondi, Ontex, PFNonwovens, Procter & Gamble, RKW, Sandler and TWE.



A short history of the development of this quality standard

After a number of preliminary meetings and workshops under the roof of EDANA, during which the idea was discussed and the feasibility of the programme was verified, the standard was drafted by an expert panel of members, using the existing multiple different standards as a basis. This work was completed in the summer of 2019, culminating in the first version of a Quality standard, the requirements of which would meet the quality expectations of consumers and contribute to increasing quality assurances of the absorbent hygiene industry.

For the development of the audit process, a series of 20 pilot audits were scheduled to verify the standard was adequate, fulfilling the expectations of the converters in practice, and beneficial for the suppliers in terms of making improvements to their Quality Management Systems. After following a careful supplier evaluation and selection procedure, EDANA members selected BSI as a first partner to conduct the audits.

Special attention was given to auditor selection, training and qualification, to assure audits could be conducted at suppliers producing different materials used within the supply chain and also producing in different geographical regions.

After more than 3 years of preparation and testing, EDANA is proud to announce that the QAP has been formally released. EDANA offers the QAP to the hygiene industry and trusts this will streamline cooperation along the supply-chain and help promote quality requirements to help assure high consumer expectations are consistently met by the industry.