

**ACCREDITING TO STANDARDS OTHER THAN NFPA
A Historical Background and Accepted Process for
Adopting Alternative Standards**



**PRODUCED BY THE ALTERNATIVE STANDARDS
COMMITTEE OF THE CERTIFICATE ASSEMBLY
BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

September 2005

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Alternative Standards Acceptance Tracking Chart
Ordered chronologically by CABOG Action Date
(as of September 28, 2005)

Name of Standard	Date of Request	Action by Admin.	Action by ASC	Action by CABOG	Accepted/ Denied	Acceptance Notification
Washington State Marine FF Standard	12/7/99	8/00	4/01	4/01	Accepted	5/7/01
Ontario Fire Services FF Standard	9/01	N/A	9/28/02	9/28/02 Mtg Min.	Accepted	4/12/03 Mtg min.
Ontario OFM Fire Investigator Standard	3/10/03	5/8/03	6/23/03	7/7/03	Accepted	7/17/03
Ontario Company Officer Standard	9/2/03	9/3/03	9/27/03	9/27/03	Accepted	11/31/03
Oklahoma FST WMD for LOE	9/11/03	9/11/03	9/27/03 Mtg Min. 4/23/04	4/23/04	Accepted	4/23/04
Ontario Fire Protection Advisor Standard	1/23/04	1/28/04 Mailed to ASC	4/23/04	4/23/04	Accepted	4/23/04
Mississippi Fire Academy Safety Officer Standard	9/03	9/03	4/23/04	4/23/04	Accepted	5/04
Ontario Fire Services Training Officer Standards	2/28/05	2/28/05	4/20/05	4/20/05	Accepted	Emailed 5/4/05
Ontario Fire Services Fire Prevention Officer Standards	2/28/05	2/28/05	4/20/05	4/20/05	Accepted	Emailed 5/4/05
Bucks County – Special Fire Police Officer Standard	4/12/05	4/12/05	4/20/05	4/20/05	Accepted	Emailed 5/4/05
Ohio Fire Academy – WMD Standard	4/04	4/04	4/04 – Back to OH for more work			

1. INTRODUCTION

The Alternative Standards Committee (ASC) of the Certificate Assembly Board of Governors (CABOG) of the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) has prepared this guide.

This guide is intended to be helpful to Administration and entities seeking IFSAC accreditation to standards other than National Fire Protection Association Professional Qualifications Standards (NFPA), and those who may be unfamiliar with the background to the development of fire service performance standards, to accreditation by peer review and to specific IFSAC requirements.

The background to IFSAC's involvement with standards other than NFPA Standards is explained in Appendix 1.

2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 The role of IFSAC Administration

The role of the Administration is to provide any entity interested in seeking IFSAC accreditation for standards other than NFPA with the information, documentation and advice needed to submit an application. Once an application is received the Administration will identify the standard(s) for which accreditation is sought and forward this to the Chair of the ASC for evaluation. To ensure the Committee and the Certificate Assembly Board of Governors are adequately prepared for decision-making, Administration requires all submissions arrive in their office no later than 60 days prior to the CABOG meeting.

2.2 The role of the Alternative Standards Committee

The role of the ASC is to advise the Certificate Assembly Board of Governors (CABOG) whether or not a standard other than an NFPA Standard meets IFSAC's definition of a bona fide standard (see Section 3).

Where an entity seeks reciprocity with an NFPA Standard the ASC should determine whether the standard for which accreditation is being sought is equivalent to the corresponding NFPA Standard. In this case a cross mapping of the relevant standard(s) should be carried out by the entity involved and subsequently verified by the ASC. If the correlation is not exact the ASC

should provide the Certificate Assembly Board of Governors with an analysis of differences.

One of the benefits of exposing the differences between standards adopted by different jurisdictions will be opportunity to examine differences between their standards and other standards. This will lead eventually to a greater level of interaction between standards making bodies, and a progressive convergence towards whatever is generally accepted as best practice.

2.3 The role of the Certificate Assembly Board of Governors (CABOG)

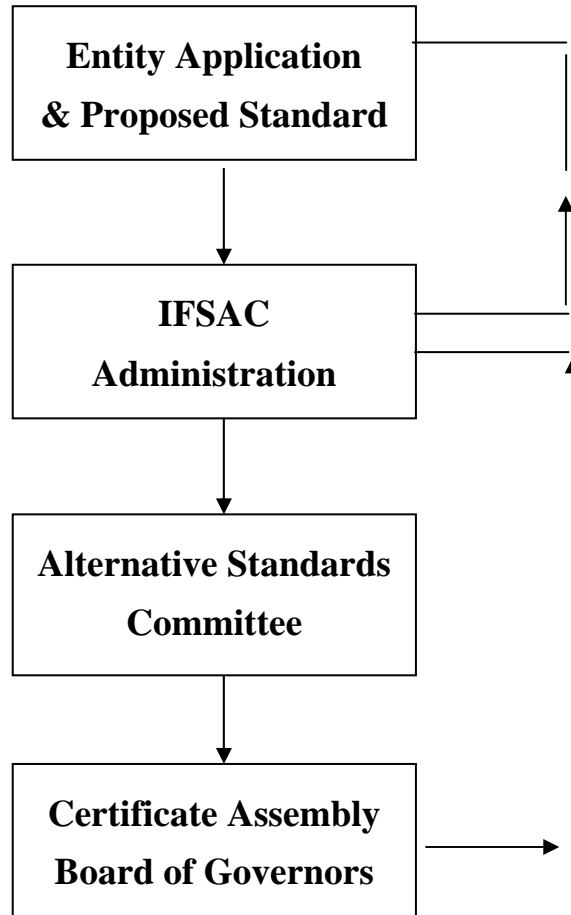
The role of the CABOG Chair is to appoint the Chair and members of the ASC. The CABOG is to receive, review and evaluate the recommendations of the ASC with regard to the adoption of proposed alternative standards. The CABOG then either accepts or rejects the recommendations of the ASC and formulates its own recommendation to the next meeting of the CA.

2.4 The role of the International Site Team

The role of the International Team is to evaluate an entity's certificate program against an alternative standard by following the same procedures as would be followed for an NFPA Standard. All the relevant issues and details relating to alternative standards should have been worked out at an earlier stage. The Site Team should have no concerns about doing a site visit to any entity that is using an alternative standard.

The Alternative Standards Approval Process is summarized in the following diagram:

The Alternative Standards Approval Process



3. DEFINING A BONA FIDE STANDARD

The following criteria should be taken into account when considering whether or not an alternative standard is acceptable to IFSAC for accreditation purposes. Alternative standards will be evaluated against these criteria.

3.1 The Standards Development Process

NFPA standards are produced by standing technical committees. Professional qualifications committees are guided primarily by the Job Performance Requirements approach. Any alternative standards offered should also have been developed and produced following an acceptable methodology. A brief explanation of some of the main possible alternative methods of producing standards is provided in Appendix 2.

Standards may be grouped or clustered in different ways. For example, standards may be grouped around the components of specific jobs to indicate competent job performance, as with NFPA Standards. While it is difficult to envisage an industry performance standard that is not closely job related, standards may also be clustered to form employment related qualifications.

3.2 The Industry Lead Body

As with the NFPA standards making process there should be clear evidence of a consensus within any particular industry about what standards exist, about how they are to be utilized and by whom. This consensus should be reflected in the ownership of alternative industry performance standards by a lead or representative body having the necessary industrial sector support and competent to represent the industry's interests.

3.3 National and/or International Recognition

The Industry Lead Body and Industry Standards should be recognized by a national or international body which regulates and approves industry performance standards e.g. The Standards Council of Canada, The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in the UK, The International Civil Aviation Organization, American National Standards Institute, etc

3.4 Publication/Review of the Standards

As with the NFPA Standards, alternative industry performance standards should be published and widely available. There should also be a mechanism for periodically reviewing and updating alternative standards.

3.5 Equivalency to NFPA

NFPA Standards continue to be IFSAC's benchmark industry performance standards. Where an entity is seeking reciprocity with NFPA Standards it is essential that alternative standards offered for IFSAC accreditation be mapped against the equivalent NFPA Standards.

It is likely that every standards equivalency mapping exercise will produce areas of overlap with common ground, hopefully large, and areas of differences where the standards do not match, hopefully small.

Any of the following may account for valid differences between standards and should be considered before a professional judgment about equivalency is determined.

LEGAL - The legal basis for fire service powers and responsibilities varies from country to country and affects fire services' statutory and non-statutory activities, day-to-day organization and operations and, hence, fire service performance standards.

ORGANISATIONAL - The number, size and type of fire departments/brigades varies from country to country and affects fire departments/brigades organization, day to day operations and, hence, fire service performance standards.

TRADITIONAL - Different historical and other national and local influences on the development of fire services' responsibilities, day-to-day organization and operations vary significantly and hence, fire service performance standards.

CONTEXTUAL - Fire Service Performance Standards may be affected by the context e.g. a Rescue Standard in one country may be geared towards earthquakes and in another towards urban terrorism.

OPERATIONAL - Fire Services may express preferences for different equipment to do the same job and for different professional approaches to achieving the same operational outcomes. Different equipment and different approaches may require different operating procedures and hence fire service performance standards will also be different.

CULTURAL - The Fire Services different nations are bound to reflect different national characteristics and identities. Cultural differences are therefore likely to play some part in accounting for differences between one set of Fire Service Performance Standards and another.

Thus, there should be no early inference that differences between alternative standards and NFPA Standards indicate that the alternative standard is in some sense less than or inferior to the NFPA.

Appendix 1

BACKGROUND

This section explains how IFSAC evolved into a truly international accrediting body.

The International Fire Service Accreditation Congress was formed in 1990 to accredit by national peer review individual entities providing certification for fire service personnel. Initially the accreditation process was geared specifically and only to NFPA Standards.

At its 3rd Annual Meeting in Hilton Head in 1993 representatives from the United Kingdom Fire Service College were also present. A letter of intent was subsequently submitted and the United Kingdom Fire Service College became a voting member in April 1994 and the first non- North American entity.

At its 4th Annual Meeting in Austin in 1994 the Congress debated possibly accrediting to standards other than NFPA. On the one hand Congress recognized the desirability of becoming truly international. Yet self-evidently not all the world's fire services were working to NFPA Standards. Also, to attempt to equate performance standards and accreditation criteria to a single system world- wide seemed unrealistic. On the other hand, there was concern about the possible dilution of the fire service standards established by the NFPA. This meeting was attended by representatives of the South African Fire Service.

(Note: It was at the Austin meeting that separate assemblies were formed for Certificate and Degree Programs.)

At the Fall Meeting in Raleigh the Certificate Assembly Board of Governors (CABOG) developed a policy statement (see CABOG Fall Meeting Minutes September 1994 p 5) to be directed to the Assembly, which reads as follows:

“The Certificate Assembly recognizes that standards other than NFPA are in the international environment for fire service training. The Board's interpretation is that the site team would measure the applicability of the standard to the occupational level and determine if the testing mechanism adequately measures that standard.”

The CABOG also planned a site visit to South Africa to accredit the South African Fire Services Institute to South African Fire Service Standards.

At its 5th Annual Meeting in Toronto in 1995 the Certificate Assembly accepted the recommendation of the Certificate Assembly Board of Governors and the South Africa Site Team that the South African Fire Services Institute should receive accreditation to NFPA Standards. Thus, South Africa became the first entity to receive accreditation outside North America.

Further discussion took place about the policy to be applied to standards other than NFPA during which the Chair recommended that the Assembly adopt language to clarify the issue (see IFSAC Certificate Assembly Annual Meeting Minutes April 22-23 1995 p 12) 1995. The Certificate Assembly then directed the CABOG to develop a proposal regarding international standards (see IFSAC Certificate Assembly Annual Meeting Minutes April 22-23 1995 p 11).

Following the Toronto meetings, and as notified in the June 1995 IFSAC Newsletter, the CABOG Chair established an International Standards Committee. This committee consisted of

Robin Willis-Lee (Chair)	Dean, The Fire Service College, U.K.
Rick McCullough	Fire Commissioner, Saskatchewan Community Services
Butch Weedon	Director, Montana University Extension Service Fire Training School

At the Fall Meeting in Salt Lake City the International Standards Committee

- i) proposed a set of principles to clarify IFSAC's international role. These principles were accepted and endorsed by the Board.
- ii) recommended that an International Standards Committee be appointed as a standing committee of the Certificate Assembly to evaluate international standards (i.e. other than NFPA) and recommend acceptance or non-acceptance by IFSAC.
- iii) recommended that the relevant Articles of the Certificate Assembly By-Laws and Constitution be amended to be consistent with the proposed principles.

- iv) recommended that under Article 12.3.2 relevant guidance to the IFSAC Administration should be amended to include dealing with applications from entities seeking accreditation to standards other than NFPA.
- v) recommended that under Article 12.3.4 Site Team Training should be amended to include dealing with international standards (i.e. other than NFPA).

The CABOG accepted and endorsed the International Standards Committee's proposed principles and recommendations and agreed that they should be brought forward to the next Annual Meeting for presentation to the Certificate Assembly. The Board also instructed the International Standards Committee to draft proposed amendments to the By-Laws and Constitution for presentation to the Certificate Assembly.

At its 6th Annual Meeting in St. Louis in 1996 the Certificate Assembly:

- i) Accepted and endorsed the principles attached as Appendix 1
- ii) Approved the proposed amendments to the Certificate Assembly By-Laws and Constitution
- iii) Agreed the appointment of a Standing Committee on International Standards
- iv) Authorized the CABOG to draft appropriate terms of reference for the International Standards Committee, to amend guidance to the Administration, and to amend Site Team training.

At the Fall Meeting in San Antonio the International Standards Committee worked on a proposal to create a Standing Committee on International Standards, on a Guidance Document for evaluating standards other than NFPA Standards, and on an international contribution to IFSAC Site Team Training.

At its 7th Annual Meeting in Columbia in 1997 the Certificate Assembly accepted the proposal that the International Standards Committee should become a Standing Committee and, also, the first International Site Team Training took place.

The Fall Meeting took place at the United Kingdom Fire Service College. The Fire Service College had applied for dual accreditation, i.e. to UK Emergency Fire

Services Lead Body Standards and to equivalent NFPA Standards. In December 1997 a Site Visit to accredit The Fire Service College took place.

At its 8th Annual Meeting in Syracuse New York in 1998 the Certificate Assembly accepted the recommendations of the Certificate Assembly Board of Governors and the UK Fire Service College Site Team that the Fire Service College be dual accredited. Thus, the UK Emergency Fire Services Lead Body Standards became the first national standards to be accepted internationally by IFSAC.

At the same meeting The Fire Safety Engineering College in Oman was accepted as a voting member of the Certificate Assembly.

At the Fall Meeting in Winnipeg Manitoba Canada in 1998 alternative standards from British Columbia and Ontario had been submitted to the International Standards Committee and were being studied. The policy on alternative standards was further reviewed and discussed. There remained concerns that by accommodating diversity in standards the concept of a standard is undermined. The ISC was also considering possible international accrediting bodies e.g. ISO. ISC was also working to produce a draft guidance document for discussion at the next meeting of the Certificate Assembly Board of Governors.

At its 9th Annual Meeting in Minneapolis St. Paul in 1999 the ISC asked the Certificate Assembly Board of Governors (CABOG) to confirm that the work of the ASC was being carried out in response to a task assigned by the CABOG and that this work is of strategic significance in the overall IFSAC planning process. The CABOG provided this confirmation. Agreement was also reached that a site visit to Ontario would take place.

At the Fall Meetings in Mesa Arizona in 1999 the ISC became the Alternative Standards Committee (ASC) and presented a paper setting out 4 possible ways forward as follows:

- Option 1** IFSAC continues to accredit entities to NFPA Standards or to other standards measured as equivalent to or exceeding NFPA Standards. This option implies reciprocity between jurisdictions working to NFPA Standards and jurisdictions working to standards measured as equivalent to NFPA.

- Option 2** IFSAC reverts to accrediting entities exclusively to NFPA Standards. This option implies reciprocity between jurisdictions working to NFPA Standards.
- Option 3** IFSAC accredits entities to any recognized standard. This option does not imply reciprocity between jurisdictions working to different standards.
- Option 4** IFSAC accredits to NFPA Standards and to other recognized standards measured against NFPA but without equivalency to or reciprocity with NFPA.

The CABOG accepted Option 4 as the basis for further work and ASC was asked to develop language, rules and procedures for the adoption of Option 4. The ISC was also asked to make a presentation to the 2000 Annual Meeting.

Two members of the Fire Service College in the UK presented proposals for the creation of IFSAC Satellite Centres in different strategic locations throughout the world.

At its 10th Annual Meeting in Lexington Kentucky in 2000 the ASC's proposals along the lines of Option 4 were not accepted by the Certificate Assembly. However, the ASC was encouraged to continue to develop policies and procedures to deal with convergent and divergent standards. The ISC was also asked to review a Marine Firefighting Standard developed by the State of Washington and a member of the ASC presented a detailed paper explaining the role and operation of ISO to the Council of Governors.

At the Fall Meetings in Edmonton Alberta in 2000 the ASC acknowledged that the ISC's and the CABOG's objectives had not been met in Kentucky and brought forward a revised proposal.

The revised proposal was that IFSAC would recognize any bona fide standard from an entity that can demonstrate support from a national standards making body or equivalent body. Where no alternative recognition exists then NFPA Standards will apply. Reciprocity may or may not be possible between entities adopting different standards.

This revised proposal was accepted by the Certificate Assembly Board of Governors and the ISC was asked to have procedures and by-laws ready for the Committee on Rules in time for the 2001 Annual Meetings.

At its 11th Annual Meeting in Minneapolis/St. Paul in 2001 the Certificate Assembly accepted the ASC's recommendation that IFSAC accept standards other than NFPA that have significant recognition and support from local jurisdictions.

The Marine Firefighting Standard developed by the State of Washington was accredited under the new policy.

At its Fall meeting in Mesa, Arizona in 2001 the Committee was asked to follow up on the draft administrative manual for alternative standards. The Committee was redrafting the manual. The Committee's plan was to issue a tidied up version of the manual to the Certificate Assembly Board of Governors in late December. With input from the Board, the committee would make additional revisions, and have it back to IFSAC Administration in time so that the manual can be re-circulated at the 2002 annual conference.

The Alternative Standards Committee has been invited to contribute to the site team training at the 2002 annual conference.

At its Annual Meeting in Lexington, Kentucky in 2002 the Certificate Assembly Board of Governors unanimously approved the Alternative Standards Guide for submission to the Certificate Assembly for final approval.

At the Fall meeting in Ashville, North Carolina in 2002 the CABOG approved the ASC proposal to proceed with streamlining the standards adoption process for ratification by the Assembly at the annual meeting in 2003. The CABOG further recommended the Ontario and Alberta standards for adoption by the CA also at the annual meeting in the spring of 2003.

At its Annual meeting in Portland, Oregon 2003 the ASC received the support of the Certificate Assembly to change the mission statement of the Assembly to recognizes other approved standards (in addition to NFPA) and to grant the CABOG the power to approve and adopt alternative standards.

The first alternative standards are adopted by IFSAC. Ontario and Alberta are granted approval by the CA to proceed with their submissions. Henceforth the standards adoptions will be the responsibility of the CABOG.

At its meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana, 2005, the alternative standards committee recognized the need for a minimum 60-day time period for submissions prior to scheduled CABOG meetings to ensure administrative readiness for accreditation deliberations.

At its meeting in Dublin, Ohio, 2006, the 60-day submission time period was accepted by the Certificate Assembly.

Appendix 2

METHODS OF PRODUCING STANDARDS

JOB PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS

The Job Performance Requirements approach focuses on specific jobs. The technique begins with a job task analysis, organizes tasks into duties and areas of responsibility and then converts this information into job performance requirements. Tasks must be observable, discreet, frequently carried out and lead to a specific output e.g. product, service or decision. Then information is collected about what tools, equipment or materials are needed for tasks to be performed effectively, about how well the tasks need to be performed, and about the prerequisite skills and knowledge needed by the jobholder. The NFPA Professional Qualifications are based on Job Performance Requirements technique.

FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS

The Functional Analysis approach begins with the organization's mission and the identification of those functions, which enable the organization to achieve its mission. Each function is then progressively broken down into occupational areas/sub-functions. The method identifies the key purpose of each occupational area/sub-function, then what needs to happen for each key purpose to be achieved, then the tasks performed by individuals. Thus Functional Analysis establishes standards, which reflect work activities grouped by purpose. Such standards can be common to more than one industry/sector if the roles performed by individuals and groups are the same. The United Kingdom Emergency Fire Services Lead Body Standards are based on Functional Analysis.

OBSERVATION

Common sense suggests that observation of jobholders actually performing their work roles must be one of the simplest and most valid ways of arriving at a set of standards. The method may include activity and time sampling, the recording of observations, and questioning of jobholders. The observations may include jobholders' attributes and behaviour as well as the content of tasks. The data gathered is then analyzed and summarized either in the form of narrative accounts or as tables of counts and frequencies.

SELF-DESCRIPTION

This method uses descriptions of jobs provided by jobholders themselves. Diaries, logs and narrative accounts may be used. These may be unstructured or structured in various ways, for example by time or by activity, or job holders may be asked to provide information about typical work routines and experiences. This method is particularly useful when the output of jobholders is difficult to observe or cannot be observed e.g. decision making in managerial jobs. The data gathered from jobholders is then analyzed singly, collectively and/or comparatively using content analysis techniques until the content and structure of jobs have been determined.

INTERVIEWS

Detailed information about jobs can be gathered from interviews. Interviews may be structured or unstructured. In the case of structured interviews the interviewer has a predetermined format/checklist of questions in mind. In the case of the unstructured interview the interviewer has no predetermined format. In the unstructured interview supplementary questions are used to probe for more detailed information. Unstructured interviews may be used to produce lists of questions for use in structured interviews. Interviewing is mainly a descriptive technique but there is no reason why jobholders cannot be asked to rank or rate job criteria elicited from interviews.

CRITICAL INCIDENT

The description and analysis of critical incidents is a well-established approach to gaining a detailed understanding of the content and performance of jobs. The focus, at least to begin with, is usually on describing and analyzing those critical aspects of job performance that determine either success or failure. Thereafter, the focus is usually on the avoidance of future failure. This method is normally applied to something that has already happened, or a near miss, and may involve a wide range of data gathering techniques. Data analysis concentrates on the reduction of subjectivity and the construction of a single reliable account from a variety of sources.

WORK PROFILING

Work Profiling is another job analysis technique. In this case based on the use of questionnaires. Different questionnaires have been developed for managerial/professional, service/administrative, and manual/technical jobs. The first part of each questionnaire is concerned with job content, i.e. the tasks to be performed, and the second part with job context i.e. skills, knowledge,

qualifications and training required, etc. Questionnaire are rated and/or ranked and the data is then reconfigured to produce reports for various purposes e.g. task analysis, attribute analysis, job descriptions, person specifications, job/person matching or assessment instruments for use in selection. This questionnaire technique and the methods of analysis involved have much in common with those used in personality testing.

POSITION ANALYSIS

The Position Analysis Questionnaire contains a large number of job elements organized into six main areas. These are the information input to the job, the mental processes required to perform the job, job output, relationships, job context, and other job characteristics. Each job element is rated on scales relating to different aspect of jobs e.g. importance, proportion of time spent, etc. The data is then computer analyzed. A number of outputs are possible from this analysis e.g. item analysis, dimension analysis, attribute analysis and comparative analysis between jobs drawn from a large database of jobs.

REPERTORY GRID

Repertory Grid technique is a method of eliciting the personal dimensions (constructs) used by individuals to interpret (construe) their experience of the world. Some personal dimensions may also be common to more than one individual. Repertory Grid technique can be applied to collecting information about jobs. The standard approach would be to ask interviewees to focus on a number of job titles (called elements), and then to compare these elements using the triad sort method. The triad sort method would involve selecting three job titles and then asking interviewees to answer the question “in which respect are two job titles the same and different from the third”. The answer to this question would produce a comparative job dimension (called a construct). Triad sort would then continue iteratively until the interviewees could not produce any more dimensions (constructs). These job dimensions would then provide the basis of further job analysis.

CHECKLISTS/INVENTORIES

The main characteristic of checklists and inventories is the list of tasks. Another characteristic is that ratings of one kind or another are often applied to each task. The lists of tasks and ratings may be combined in the form of a questionnaire. Questionnaires may be standardized so that a large number of jobholders may be surveyed and the resulting data used to provide a consensus description of the

content of particular jobs, and job attributes etc. Job task inventories provide useful models of particular jobs, which can either be adopted by organizations as standards or used as benchmarks for comparative purposes.

IFSAC – CERTIFICATE ASSEMBLY
Adoption of Alternative Standards

Entity: _____ **Standard:** _____

1. Action by Administration

Date

- | | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------|--------------------------|-------|
| 1.1 | Evidence of empowerment | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 1.2 | Evidence of financial support | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 1.3 | Evidence of staffing | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 1.4 | Completion of self-study | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |

Signed _____ IFSAC Manager

2. Action by Alternative Standards Committee

Date

- | | | | |
|-----|------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------|
| 2.1 | The standards development process | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.2 | Industry consensus / lead body | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.3 | National/international recognition | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.4 | Publication and review | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2.5 | Distinct certificate | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |

Signed _____ ASC Chair

3. Action by Certificate Assembly/Board of Governors

Date

Alternative standard approved _____

Signed _____ CABOG Chair