# Certificate of Conformity: The Declaration of Conformity as a Key Document in Industrial Procurement

The Certificate of Conformity (CoC) is a declaration of conformity with which a supplier confirms that delivered products or materials comply with the agreed specifications, standards and legal requirements. For technical procurement professionals it is a central document for quality assurance and documented compliance along the entire supply chain. Without a valid CoC, goods receipt blockages, liability risks and disruption to procurement planning loom.

As of October 2026 · amplifa-marketplace.ai/en/glossary/certificate-of-conformity

## Key facts at a glance

01 The Certificate of Conformity confirms that a delivery complies with specifications, standards and customer requirements.

02 It is typically issued by the manufacturer or supplier and does not replace the customer's independent duty of inspection.

03 In many industries such as automotive, medical technology or plant engineering, a CoC is frequently a contractual prerequisite for the release of goods.

04 Typical contents are the order reference, material details, inspection results and the legally binding signature or electronic signature.

05 Confusion with the Certificate of Analysis (CoA) is common: the CoA contains concrete measured values, while the CoC confirms overall conformity.

06 Electronic formats such as EDI-based document delivery significantly reduce the effort and lead time in document management.

## Definition: Certificate of Conformity

The Certificate of Conformity is a formal document with which the issuer – usually the manufacturer or an authorised supplier – confirms the conformity of a product with defined requirements. It serves the customer as evidence for goods receipt inspection, customer documentation and traceability.

### Distinction from the Certificate of Analysis and Inspection Certificates

The Certificate of Conformity is frequently confused with the Certificate of Analysis (CoA). While the CoC declares conformity with specifications in general terms, the CoA contains concrete measurement and analysis values for a lot. Inspection certificates according to material standards, such as 3.1 or 3.2 certificates, also go beyond the CoC, as they are issued by independent inspection bodies or by the manufacturer with elevated formalities. In practice, the customer's requirements catalogue determines which document is required in each case.

### Legal Classification

A CoC is primarily a contractual and quality assurance document, not an official certificate. However, legal conformity requirements – for example under product or machinery safety law – may accompany it. Procurement professionals should note that the CoC does not automatically release them from their own duty of inspection and that liability issues may be regulated contractually on a case-by-case basis. The assessment in each individual case should be reviewed legally.

## Contents and Issuance of a Certificate of Conformity

A reliable CoC is complete, clearly assigned to the order and signed by an authorised person. Incomplete or implausible information frequently leads to queries and extends the lead time until the goods are released.

### Typical Mandatory Contents

A CoC commonly used in practice contains at least the following information: issuer and address, customer reference with order or call-off order number, item and material designation, batch or lot, standards and specifications used, the inspection result statement, as well as the date and signature of an authorised person. For series deliveries, a template CoC with lot reference is frequently used to save effort.

### Process of Issuance and Transmission

Traditionally, the CoC is enclosed with the delivery on paper. Modern processes rely on PDF by e-mail, supplier portals or EDI connections, allowing the document to flow directly into the ERP system and the automatic account assignment in the invoice workflow. Clear specifications in the requirements catalogue and in the terms and conditions of purchase avoid subsequent coordination effort.

### Industry Requirements

Industries such as automotive, aerospace, medical technology or chemicals place extended requirements on conformity documents. In automotive supply, the CoC is frequently part of the production steering process according to APQP and is integrated into the production approval. Procurement professionals should define the required document types early in the requirements catalogue or during the quotation phase.

## Methods and Approach in Procurement

Procurement professionals are best advised to anchor CoC requirements in a structured manner – from the enquiry through supplier qualification to goods receipt. An end-to-end process reduces friction losses and creates a reliable compliance foundation.

### Anchoring Requirements in Enquiries and Contracts

Even in the requirements catalogue of an enquiry, it should be specified whether and in what form a CoC is to be delivered. Supplier contracts then define the format, language, transmission channel and the consequences in the event of absence or defects. In negotiation rounds on commercial terms, the scope of documentation can also be conclusively clarified before later effort arises.

### Inspection and Release at Goods Receipt

At goods receipt, the CoC is usually checked as part of the incoming inspection: do the order reference, material and content match? Digital workflows with mobile approval (P2P) make it possible to complete inspection steps decentrally – for example directly at the ramp. In the event of deviations, a defined deviation workflow is triggered, which documents defective parts and leads in a structured manner to decisions such as concession/use-as-is or return.

### Archiving and Traceability

Conformity documents must be retained in an audit-proof manner for years, typically beyond the technical service life of the product. Document management systems with search functions and access rights facilitate complaint handling and audits. Here it is important to strike a balance between traceability and confidentiality when the document contains confidential test values or customer data.

## Key KPIs around the Certificate of Conformity

The effectiveness of the CoC process can be measured with a handful of key figures. They show whether documents are complete, punctual and error-free, and how they affect incoming quality.

### Document Completeness and Timeliness

A target figure commonly used in practice is the proportion of deliveries with a complete CoC at goods receipt, frequently targeted at over 98 per cent. In addition, it is measured how many CoCs have to be resubmitted and how long this rework takes. Ideally, both figures feed into the supplier evaluation and

thus into supplier segmentation.

### Impact on Incoming Quality and Lead Time

Missing or defective CoCs not only block goods receipt, but also extend the lead time until invoicing and can increase Days Inventory Outstanding (DIO), because goods remain in blocked stock. The rate of defective deliveries – the incoming quality – also correlates in practice with the care taken in documentation.

## Risks and Controls

A CoC is only as valuable as the processes behind it. Unverified documents, fake certificates or inadequate traceability are real risks that procurement should address through appropriate controls.

### Random Sample Inspections and Audits

Trust is good, control is better: random goods receipt inspections that compare CoC information with actual measured values uncover false information. Supplier audits verify whether the inspection tasks are actually carried out at the supplier as claimed in the CoC. For critical materials, an extended inspection level up to the 3.2 certificate is recommended.

### Risk of Forgery and Unauthorised Issuance

In practice, manipulated documents or documents issued by unauthorised parties keep occurring. Controls such as comparing issuer data with the DUNS number, plausibility checks of test value ranges and verifying signature authority reduce this risk. Suspicious findings consistently lead to blocking the supplier numbers until the matter is clarified.

### Documentation Gaps in the Supply Chain

In deep supply chains, the CoC of the upstream supplier is frequently missing, for example for metals or components from multiple tiers. Contracts should provide for chain documentation or extended declarations of conformity here. This is gaining importance in the context of sustainability requirements such as the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), which demands documented evidence along the supply chain.

## Current Developments and Digitalisation

Conformity documents are being digitalised and integrated into broader compliance and transparency systems. Procurement professionals benefit from shorter lead times and better evaluability – but must meet new requirements for data quality and system integration.

### Electronic Document Flows and Data Models

Structured formats such as EDI or portal connections are increasingly replacing PDFs by e-mail. This makes the CoC machine-readable and allows it to be automatically matched with the order, goods

receipt and invoice. This not only accelerates the release, but also forms the basis for automated supplier evaluations.

### Sustainability and Extended Conformity Evidence

Alongside technical conformity, sustainability evidence is gaining importance – for example information on the carbon footprint or on the supplier's Scope 2 emissions balance. These topics are frequently documented in separate declarations, but are increasingly transmitted together with the CoC in a joint document structure. Suppliers who are advanced in this area regularly perform better in supplier segmentation.

## Typical metrics

| Metric | Typical value |
|---|---|
| **Document completeness (CoC at goods receipt)** | > 98 %<br>*Typical target value for deliveries with a complete CoC; frequently part of the supplier evaluation.* |
| **CoC resubmission rate** | < 2 %<br>*Proportion of deliveries for which the CoC has to be submitted later.* |
| **CoC processing time in goods receipt** | < 1 day<br>*Common benchmark for inspection and release in a digitalised process.* |
| **False documentation rate** | < 0.5 %<br>*Proportion of deliveries with factually incorrect or manipulated information; should be checked by random sampling.* |

## Practical Example

A medium-sized mechanical engineering company sourced machined parts from a supplier whose CoCs were frequently incomplete – without batch reference and without reference to the call-off order. At goods receipt, every second delivery had to be followed up manually, which significantly extended lead times and delayed complaints.

- The CoC requirement with mandatory contents and format specification was added to the requirements catalogue of the enquiry.
- The supply contract regulated the consequences of missing documents, including an escalation stage.
- Goods receipt inspection was linked to a digital checklist and mobile approval (P2P).
- Document completeness was incorporated into the supplier evaluation and thus into supplier segmentation.

## Conclusion

The Certificate of Conformity is more than a formal document: it secures the documented conformity of deliveries with the agreed requirements and supports compliance, traceability and quality assurance. Procurement creates the foundation by defining requirements bindingly at an early stage, ensuring structured processes at goods receipt and using controls to verify the robustness of the documents. Digitalised document flows significantly reduce effort and lead times. Those who integrate CoC data into supplier evaluation and key figures make document quality measurable and actionable. In this way, the CoC evolves from a mandatory exercise into a genuine steering instrument in the supply chain.

## Frequently asked questions

### ? What is a Certificate of Conformity?

A Certificate of Conformity is a declaration of conformity with which a supplier confirms that a product complies with the agreed specifications, standards and customer requirements. It serves the customer as evidence for goods receipt inspection and traceability. It is typically issued by the manufacturer or by an authorised representative of the supplier.

### ? When is a Certificate of Conformity required?

A CoC is required when it is demanded contractually, by standards or by the industry – for example in the automotive industry, mechanical and plant engineering or medical technology. It is also customary for critical materials or for deliveries subject to inspection certificate requirements. Procurement teams are best advised to define this requirement in the requirements catalogue of the enquiry.

### ? What is the difference between a CoC and a CoA?

The Certificate of Conformity confirms in general terms that a product complies with the requirements. The Certificate of Analysis (CoA), by contrast, contains concrete measurement and analysis data for a specific lot or batch. Depending on the scope of testing, both documents may also be issued in combination.

### ? Who issues the Certificate of Conformity?

The CoC is usually issued by the manufacturer or by the supplier itself – by a person with sufficient authority, such as the Head of Quality Management. Essential elements are a clear order reference, defined inspection details and a binding signature or electronic signature. Independent inspection bodies are generally only involved for elevated requirements such as 3.2 certificates.

### ? What happens if a CoC is missing or incorrect?

In practice, missing or defective CoCs frequently lead to blocked stock at goods receipt and to follow-up demands on the supplier. Contracts should therefore define consequences such as refusal of acceptance, default or assumption of costs. Repeated incidents typically feed into the supplier evaluation.

### ? How long must a Certificate of Conformity be retained?

The retention period depends on industry-specific, contractual and legal requirements and can vary considerably from case to case. Periods of several years up to the intended technical service life of the product are frequently agreed. The specific period should be reviewed legally and contractually.


## Find the right suppliers on Amplifa

Verified industrial suppliers in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Describe your requirement and receive comparable offers.

**amplifa-marketplace.ai**