



Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation

APLAC MRA COUNCIL – RULES FOR OPERATION

PURPOSE

When APLAC was established, section 4 of the APLAC Memorandum of Understanding mandated the establishment of a standing committee to coordinate APLAC's activities in respect of mutual recognition arrangements among Members. This standing committee is known as the APLAC MRA Council. This procedure sets out the rules for the operation of the MRA Council. It should be read in conjunction with part 2 of APLAC MR 001.

This document replaces section 9 of APLAC SEC 004 (*APLAC Rules of Procedure*) that has been superseded by the APLAC Constitution (APLAC SEC 052).

AUTHORSHIP

This publication has been written by the APLAC MRA Council.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

The text may be translated into other languages as required. The English language version remains the definitive version.

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FURTHER INFORMATION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Purpose	2
Authorship	2
Official Language	2
Copyright	2
Further Information	2
1. Membership	4
2. Operations	4

1. MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 Each Full Member of APLAC may appoint a delegate to the APLAC Mutual Recognition Council (herein after referred to as “the MRA Council”) with full voting rights. Each Full Member may also appoint an alternate delegate.

While each Full Member has full voting rights for general deliberations of the MRA Council, only those Full Members that are also signatories to the APLAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) are eligible to vote on the acceptance of new Signatories and the continuation of signatory status for current Signatories other than for themselves.

- 1.2 The General Assembly shall elect one of its Full Members to act as the Chair of the MRA Council. A Secretary shall be appointed by the Chair with the approval of a majority of Council members. The APLAC Secretary may also be the Secretary for the MRA Council.

2. OPERATIONS

- 2.1 The MRA Council may appoint a sub-committee to coordinate the evaluation of accreditation bodies wishing to join the APLAC MRA. The sub-committee, acting on the Council’s behalf, shall appoint a lead evaluator for each organisation applying to become a Signatory to the MRA. While appointed by the Council, any sub-committee shall operate under APLAC’s rules for such committees. The APLAC MRA Council shall also operate under these rules.
- 2.2 An accreditation body participating in APLAC as a Full Member and wishing to become a Signatory to the APLAC MRA shall submit an application in accordance with APLAC MR 001, on the application form APLAC MR 003, to the APLAC Secretariat, who shall acknowledge receipt and refer the application to the APLAC MRA Council Chair who shall arrange for an evaluation of the activities of the accreditation body by a team of experts.
- 2.3 The activities of an accreditation body that is a signatory to the APLAC MRA shall be re-evaluated at regular intervals.
- 2.4 The report of the evaluation or re-evaluation team, the team’s recommendation and all supporting information shall be submitted to the APLAC MRA Council Chair, with a copy to the APLAC Secretariat: see section 10 of APLAC MR 001.
- 2.5 The team leader for an initial evaluation shall attend the APLAC MRA Council meeting to present the evaluation report and participate in the discussions on the report. Under normal circumstances the team leader shall also attend the APLAC MRA Council meeting to present the report on a re-evaluation, although attendance via teleconference may be considered as an option.

For those team leaders who do not normally attend APLAC MRA Council meetings, APLAC will provide the following funding for their attendance at an MRA Council meeting that considers a report on an evaluation for which they were the team leader: return (discount) economy airfare; 3 nights accommodation; half of the registration fee (applicable for end of year meetings only).

- 2.6 The APLAC MRA Council shall decide on the entry of an accreditation body into the APLAC MRA or whether or not it may remain in the APLAC MRA, subject to the appeal provisions referred to below. Three-fourths of the signatories to the MRA must cast a vote for the ballot to be valid. Abstention votes are counted as valid votes. A positive vote by three-fourths of the sum of those voting “yes” and “no” is required for the ballot to be accepted.

When the MRA Council Chair was the team leader for the evaluation under consideration or when the evaluation of the MRA Council Chair’s organisation is being considered, a deputy shall be appointed to chair that part of the MRA Council meeting.

- 2.7 An accreditation body may appeal an APLAC MRA Council decision not to grant signatory status in the MRA, or to withdraw signatory status. Section 14 of the APLAC Constitution (APLAC SEC 052) details the alternative dispute resolution process to be followed in the event of an appeal. A decision to withdraw signatory status in the MRA may result in immediate suspension of recognition by the other signatories of the equivalence of reports or certificates issued by laboratories, inspection bodies and reference material producers, prior to and during the implementation of the alternative dispute resolution process. Such suspension of recognition shall not be considered as a breach of APLAC MRA obligations (APLAC MR 002, clause 1 (ii) of Arrangement Text).
- 2.8 The chair of the MRA Council may invite appropriate observers to attend meetings of the Council.
- 2.9 The APLAC MRA Council shall report to each meeting of the APLAC General Assembly and the APLAC Board of Management on its evaluation and re-evaluation activities. The MRA Council shall keep the APLAC Secretary informed about its activities by providing the Secretary with agendas and records of meetings, including summaries of conclusions of meetings conducted using electronic media.
- 2.10 In the event of a dispute between signatories or with applicants to the APLAC MRA, the provisions of the MRA apply. The General Assembly may, however, discuss such matters and offer advice to the MRA Council.