



**APLAC**

Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation

**GUIDELINES FOR APLAC MRA SIGNATORIES  
WHEN ACCREDITING LABORATORIES OR  
INSPECTION BODIES WITHIN THE ECONOMY OF  
ANOTHER APLAC MRA SIGNATORY**

## **PURPOSE**

While recognising that both accreditation by multiple bodies and competition between accreditation bodies undermine the intent of the MRA, APLAC members also recognise that such duplication may be unavoidable from time to time. The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for APLAC MRA signatories in applying harmonised practices when one of them is required to provide accreditation services within the economy of another signatory. This is to ensure that the process is as cost-effective as possible, that cooperation between the bodies is maintained at the highest level possible and that harmonious relations are maintained between them.

The procedures are intended to be in harmony with ILAC G21:2002 Cross Frontier Accreditation - Principles for Avoiding Duplication.

## **AUTHORSHIP**

This publication was written by the APLAC Board of Management.

## **OFFICIAL LANGUAGE**

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

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 In the first instance the foreign accreditation body should do its best to clarify why the laboratory or inspection body wants accreditation with a foreign accreditation body. If the reason is to meet a foreign regulator's requirement, section 7 below also applies.
- 1.2 Cooperation between the accreditation bodies should extend as far as possible to include:
- advice of applications received and intentions to conduct assessments in the economy of the other MRA signatory;
  - assistance in the formation of assessment teams;
  - sharing of information on the outcome of the assessment;
  - assistance in surveillance of accreditation;
  - cooperation in proficiency testing programs.

Such cooperation will require the explicit agreement of the applicant laboratory or inspection body.

- 1.3 This document is based on the responsibilities specified in APLAC MR 002, the text of the APLAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement, and seeks to maintain maximum cooperation between the APLAC MRA signatories as described in the APLAC Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (APLAC SEC 001).
- 1.4 It is intended that the implementation of these practices will further enhance the confidence that authorities can have in the competence of all signatories to the APLAC MRA in relation to laboratory test results and inspection reports provided by accredited laboratories and inspection bodies covered by the APLAC MRA.

## **2. SCOPE OF APPLICATION**

- 2.1 These procedures are applicable only to those laboratory and/or inspection body accreditation bodies that are signatories to the APLAC MRA.
- 2.2 This document is not applicable to those laboratory and/or inspection body accreditation bodies operating within the same economies where competition law or other legislative requirements may prohibit such cooperative activities.

## **3. VOLUNTARY APPLICATION BY A LABORATORY OR INSPECTION BODY FOR ACCREDITATION BY A FOREIGN ACCREDITATION BODY**

- 3.1 Laboratories or inspection bodies seeking accreditation from an accreditation body other than one within their own economy may choose one or both of following approaches:

- 3.1.1 Direct contact with the foreign accreditation body (hereafter referred to as AB2) from which the laboratory or inspection body wishes to gain the accreditation. With the approval of the applicant, AB2 should advise AB1 (see below) that an application for accreditation has been received;
- 3.1.2 Contact with AB2 through the domestic accreditation body/bodies (hereafter referred to as AB1) when accreditation is already held with AB1.
- 3.2 The applicant should be required to declare in the application documents for AB2 whether it holds or has held accreditation by AB1, and the applicable scope of that accreditation.
- 3.3 AB2 should also require that the applicant provide evidence of such accreditation and its scope.
- 3.4 The application fee and other fees concerned (if any) should be paid directly to AB2 according to AB2's rules.

#### **4. ASSESSMENT AND APPROVAL OF ACCREDITATION**

- 4.1 *Situation 1: The applicant laboratory or inspection body has been accredited by AB1 and the scope of its application for accreditation by AB2 is within the scope of the accreditation already granted by AB1.*

AB2 may seek confirmation of the facts from AB1 and, if satisfied, grant accreditation without further assessment. Such action is only permitted when AB2's rules make specific provisions allowing for such an action, and if its normal decision-making processes are followed.

If such an action is not permitted, AB2 should follow the processes defined in 4.2, 4.3 or 4.4 below, seeking the process that gives maximum cooperation possible between AB1 and AB2 as defined in clause 1.2 above.

- 4.2 *Situation 2: The applicant laboratory or inspection body has been accredited by AB1, the scope of its application for accreditation by AB2 is outside the scope of the accreditation already granted by AB1 but is within AB1's range of competence.*

AB2 should inform the applicant that AB1 also provides accreditation within this scope, and should ask the applicant to consider being accredited also by AB1. If the applicant agrees it would apply to AB1 in accordance with AB1's rules. If the applicant consents, AB2 should inform AB1 that it also has received an application from the same applicant.

Once AB2 and AB1 have received the applications they should arrange for the assessment. Where permitted by the rules of both AB2 and AB1, the assessment could be a joint assessment or, if permitted by its rules, AB2 could contract AB1 to do the assessment also on its behalf, using an assessment team acceptable to both AB2 and AB1.

As required by ISO/IEC Guide 58, AB2 and AB1 shall independently make their decisions on accreditation, based on the assessment findings. As far as possible AB2 and AB1 should inform each other of their accreditation decisions before advising the applicant of the outcome of the assessment.

Where permitted by its rules and accepted by the laboratory or inspection body, AB2 should contract AB1 to conduct the on-site assessment for the additional scope and grant accreditation after receiving an assessment report from AB1 making a recommendation to that effect. The assessment team to be assigned by AB1 should be agreed in advance with AB2 before the conduct of the assessment. If requested by AB2, AB1 should provide relevant information about the proposed assessors to AB2. AB2 is entitled to be represented at the assessment conducted by AB1.

If AB2's rules do not permit it to contract AB1 or if the applicant does not accept the proposal, AB2 would conduct its own assessment. The applicant should be asked to permit AB1 to send an observer to the assessment, if AB1 so wishes.

- 4.3 *Situation 3: The applicant laboratory or inspection body has been accredited by AB1 but the scope of its application for accreditation by AB2 is outside the scope of AB1's normal accreditation activities.*

The assessment will be conducted under the rules and procedures of AB2 but a joint assessment may be organized by negotiation between AB2 and AB1, if this is accepted by the applicant. The technical assessors in that specific field will necessarily be provided by AB2.

This situation is ideal for providing training for representatives of AB1 when it wishes to expand its scope and range of accreditation activities, either immediately or in the future.

- 4.4 *Situation 4: The applicant laboratory or inspection body is not accredited by AB1*

The assessment should be arranged by AB2 according to AB2's procedures. Provided the applicant agrees, AB1 should be advised of the application and invited to observe the on-site assessment.

## **5. SURVEILLANCE**

- 5.1 When accreditation is granted by AB2 based on any one of the situations described in clauses 4.1, 4.2, or 4.3 above, AB2 should, to the greatest extent possible, contract surveillance activities, including proficiency testing and reassessment visits, to AB1. Surveillance activities and schedules should be agreed between AB1 and AB2 as early as possible in the cooperation arrangements.
- 5.2 When accreditation is granted by AB2 based on the situation described in clause 4.4 above, the surveillance activity will be arranged by AB2 but provision should be made for cooperation with AB1 to the greatest extent possible.

**6. COMPLAINTS AND DISPUTES**

In cases of complaints or disputes between AB1 and AB2 the procedures of APLAC SEC 036 will be applied as far as possible.

**7. SPECIFIER-MANDATED APPLICATION FOR ACCREDITATION BY A FOREIGN ACCREDITATION BODY**

- 7.1 When laboratories or inspection bodies are required by a foreign acceptance body (e.g. a regulator) to seek accreditation from an accreditation body other than one within their own economy, they may choose to advise their domestic accreditation body (AB1) of the need to do so.
- 7.2 The applicant will need to make direct application to AB2.
- 7.3 Under the obligations of the APLAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement, AB2 is required to advise the acceptance authority requiring the accreditation of the existence of AB1, of its status as a signatory to the MRA and of the mutual recognition that exists between AB1 and AB2. It should encourage the acceptance authority to recognise the mutual recognition arrangements that exist and seek approval for active cooperation between AB1 and AB2 in the assessment and surveillance of the applicant.
- 7.4 Within the limits imposed by the acceptance authority, AB2 should, as far as possible, apply the cooperation arrangements outlined in sections 4 and 5 above.
- 7.5 The application fee and other fees concerned (if any) should be paid directly to AB2 according to AB2's rules.