



**CROSS-POSTING OF STAFF
AMONG APLAC MEMBER ACCREDITATION BODIES**

PURPOSE

This document provides a system which APLAC member accreditation bodies may follow in cross-posting their staff members for mutual benefits.

AUTHORSHIP

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 One of the APLAC objectives is to enable members to provide assistance and exchange experts in training, proficiency testing, harmonisation of criteria and practices. This document sets out a procedure that could be used by an APLAC member accreditation body to:
- a. cross-post its staff members to work for another APLAC member accreditation body;
 - b. invite another accreditation body to cross-post staff members to work for it;
 - c. invite another accreditation body to be involved in the short term exchange of staff members.
- 1.2 The cross-posting period should be long enough for the effective exchange of information between the *host* accreditation body and the cross-posted staff, and would be expected to be not less than, say, two months. Cross-posting of staff members between accreditation bodies will, among other things, facilitate:
- a. deepening of mutual understanding among APLAC member accreditation bodies
 - b. harmonisation of practice and procedures among APLAC member accreditation bodies
 - c. demonstration to regulators and other users of the APLAC MRA that APLAC has effective means of enhancing equivalence of accreditation procedures among MRA signatories
 - d. development of promising staff members
 - e. improving accreditation practices through cross-training
 - f. learning the practices and standards of APLAC MRA signatories by new APLAC member accreditation bodies within a reasonable period of time.
- 1.3 This procedure is designed to achieve the said objectives with minimum disturbance to the operations of accreditation bodies, and at minimum cost.
- 1.4 Cross-posting is a demonstration of cooperation between accreditation bodies and may be considered as such during APLAC evaluations.
- 1.5 The cross-posting arrangements described in this document are not intended to be used by accreditation body members to borrow staff from another accreditation body to tide over period of staff shortage.
- 1.6 Use of this procedure is voluntary.

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1. *Home* accreditation body: the accreditation body in a staff cross-posting arrangement which sends one or more of its staff members to work for another accreditation body.
- 2.2. *Host* accreditation body: the accreditation body in a staff cross-posting arrangement which accepts one or more staff members from the *home* accreditation body to work for itself.

3. BASIC PRINCIPLES

- 3.1 Participation in cross-posting of staff members is voluntary. APLAC encourages its member accreditation bodies to cooperate as far as possible in making such arrangements possible. Member accreditation bodies may, however, decline any invitation to cross-post staff to another accreditation body or accept a staff member from another accreditation body, without having to give a reason.
- 3.2 This document only covers cross-posting of full-time accreditation body staff. It may, nevertheless, be used for cross-posting of part-time staff members. Sharing of assessors among APLAC accreditation bodies is not covered by this document.
- 3.3 A cross-posted staff member works for the *host* accreditation body during the cross-posting period. The staff members to be cross-posted should be able to perform useful work for the *host* accreditation body. To achieve this, it is unlikely that staff members below middle management level of an accreditation body would be suitable. This procedure is not intended to be used for the training of junior or inexperienced accreditation body staff.
- 3.4 In the case of a short-term exchange of staff members between two accreditation bodies, each party to the exchange arrangement will take up the role of the *host* accreditation body for the staff member cross-posted from the other accreditation body, and role of the *home* accreditation body for the staff it cross-posted to the other accreditation body.
- 3.5 The *host* accreditation body shall take responsibility for the work done on its behalf by the staff cross-posted to it.
- 3.6 The cooperation arrangement between the *home* accreditation body and the *host* accreditation body shall be agreed between the two bodies. The arrangement should be made in such a way that both accreditation bodies can benefit from the cross-posting, and there would normally be no payment involved in such an arrangement. Where necessary, one accreditation body may pay a specified sum of money to another accreditation body or compensate the other accreditation body through other means.

- 3.7 In general, the *home* accreditation body should be responsible for all expenses, including but not limited to salary of the cross-posted staff during the cross-posting period; all travel, accommodation and subsistence costs; insurance and medical expenses; relocation allowance and allowance for working in another economy.
- 3.8 The cross-posted staff remains an employee of *home* accreditation body during the cross-posting period. The *home* accreditation body may agree for the staff to be cross-posted on the conditions for the *home* accreditation body, to support the cross-posting arrangement, e.g., the staff may agree to continue to work for the *home* accreditation body for at least a given period of time after the cross-posting. Accreditation bodies engaged in cross-posting of staff may agree on other methods of sharing costs. It should be noted that the *host* accreditation body and the cross-posted staff do not have any employer-employee relationship during the cross-posting period.
- 3.9 Some economies may have regulations applicable to such cross-posting of staff. It is advisable for the *home* accreditation body and the *host* accreditation body to work together to clarify early in the planning what regulations of the *host* economies may apply, and to obtain the necessary visa well in advance.
- 3.10 APLAC and any person working on behalf of APLAC will take no responsibility for any liability arising from any cross-posting arrangement concluded, based on this guidance document.

4 EXPRESSING INTEREST IN CROSS-POSTING STAFF

- 4.1 APLAC member accreditation bodies interested in posting their staff members to other APLAC member accreditation bodies or interested in accepting staff members from other accreditation bodies could register their interest in writing with the Chair of the Training Committee, together with details of the conditions under which they wish to do so.
- 4.2 The list of interested member accreditation bodies, including whether they are interested in acting as the *home* or *host* accreditation body and the conditions under which they will do so, would be published in the “members only” area of the APLAC website, through the APLAC Secretariat. Member accreditation bodies may set minimum requirements on the qualifications, experience, technical areas of expertise, etc., for accepting a cross-posted staff, and provide the name and contact details of a contact person.
- 4.3 APLAC member accreditation bodies may withdraw from participation in the cross-posting arrangement any time by giving three months advance notice to the Chair of the Training Committee, and the Chair will arrange to amend the list of interested members and update the APLAC website accordingly.

5 ARRANGEMENTS FOR CROSS-POSTING

- 5.1 After determining the need, the purpose, the duration, and the resources required for cross-posting a staff member, and, after identification of the target *host* accreditation body from the list in the APLAC website, the initiating *home* accreditation body should contact the APLAC contact person of the target *host* accreditation body to seek agreement in principle for such arrangement. Relevant details of the staff to be cross-posted, including details of his/her qualifications, work experience and language capability should be provided to the target accreditation body. The target *host* accreditation body may ask for more details before making a decision or may decline to accept such an arrangement. A similar procedure applies if an accreditation body wants a target *home* accreditation body to send a staff to work for it.
- 5.2 The *home* accreditation body should seek the agreement from the staff member to be cross-posted before nominating him/her.
- 5.3 The *host* accreditation body should identify a suitable position for the cross-posted staff. As far as possible, it is recommended that the position should allow the cross-posted staff to make a useful contribution to the *host* accreditation body. Where this is not practicable, the position should at least allow the cross-posted staff to learn first hand information about the operation of the *host* accreditation body and to provide feedback to it. Consideration should be given to cultural and language differences when determining such a post. The details of the position to be offered to the cross-posted staff should be communicated to his/her *home* accreditation body. Any necessary negotiation between the two accreditation bodies should be based on mutual cooperation, benefit, trust and understanding.
- 5.4 To make full use of the cross-posting, the two accreditation bodies should work out a plan on what is to be achieved, and communicate it to the staff member to be cross-posted when planning the cross-posting. If deemed useful, the cross-posted staff could be required to provide a feedback report to both the *home* and *host* accreditation body. Some topics that could be studied are given in Annex I. Any sensitive or confidential information of the *host* or *home* accreditation body, should only be included with the explicit approval of the corresponding accreditation body.
- 5.5 The duration of the cross-posting is to be agreed between the *home* and *host* accreditation bodies but is expected to be not less than 2 months. The duration of the cross-posting should be determined based on the purpose of the cross-posting. If the duration of cross-posting is relatively long, the cross-posted staff may be able to work in different positions at the *host* accreditation body.
- 5.6 The *host* accreditation body should provide the necessary office accommodation and assistance to the cross-posted staff to allow him/her to do productive work. As for any other new staff members, the *host*

accreditation body may have to provide suitable induction training to the cross-posted staff.

- 5.7 The *host* accreditation body should also assign a senior staff member as a mentor to supervise and assist the cross-posted staff and give him/her direction and instruction, just as if (s)he is a staff member of the *host* accreditation body. Periodically, the supervisor should discuss and review the performance of the cross-posted staff to see if any amendment to the program or further training is necessary. The supervisor should also consider whether improvement to the system of the *host* accreditation body could be based on the feedback of the cross-posted staff. Where external training is needed, the cost of the training should be borne by the *home* accreditation body. At the end of the cross-posting period or whenever appropriate, the *host* accreditation body may provide a report to the *home* accreditation body on the performance of the cross-posted staff.
- 5.8 The staff member to be cross-posted should obtain the necessary work visa in the economy of the *host* accreditation body. Both the *home* and *host* accreditation bodies should assist the staff member to be cross-posted in obtaining such visa. Where necessary, the staff, with the help of both accreditation bodies, should also obtain the necessary immunisations.

6 PROTECTION OF INFORMATION, CONFIDENTIALITY AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

- 6.1 During the cross-posting period, the cross-posted staff may have access to privileged information of the *host* accreditation body and its clients. The cross-posted staff should not release such information to any third party without the explicit agreement from the *host* accreditation body and the client to whom such information is related. The *host* accreditation body has the intellectual property rights relating to its organisation, its procedures for handling specific tasks, the job descriptions of staff members, its relationship with its assessors, its documents and any other information. Before disclosing any such information to any third party and adapting them for the use by the *home* accreditation body, the cross-posted staff member shall seek explicit written agreement from the *host* accreditation body.
- 6.2 The *host* accreditation body may require the staff to be cross-posted to sign an undertaking not to release the confidential information of the *host* accreditation body to any third party, or the conditions under which such information may be released and used. (S)he may also be required to sign a similar undertaking of not releasing confidential information of the *home* accreditation body to any third party. The terms of the undertakings should be agreed between the accreditation bodies. It is, however, recommended that the terms of such an undertaking should be carefully drafted to allow meaningful exchange of ideas and harmonisation of practices between accreditation bodies. Examples of such undertakings are given in Annex II and Annex III.

7 POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST

- 7.1 As a precautionary measure to guard against conflict of interest, the cross-posted staff should disclose such cross-posting when he/she is invited to conduct an evaluation of the *host* accreditation body for APLAC within 5 years of the cross-posting.

- 7.2 The *host* accreditation body should not offer employment to a cross-posted staff within 5 years of cross-posting. (This clause should be further discussed in view of the anti-trust laws in some economies.)

ANNEX I – TOPICS THAT COULD BE STUDIED DURING CROSS-POSTING

1. The practices followed by the *host* accreditation body and its interactions with other entities regarding:
 - a. Organisational structure, including the mechanism to safeguard independence and impartiality.
 - b. Transparency of the accreditation system, and mechanisms to solicit and consider views and feedback from stakeholders
 - c. Financial and other resources; sustainability, including freedom of the accreditation process from financial and other pressures
 - d. Accreditation environment in the *host* economy
 - e. Aims and objectives of the *host* accreditation body
 - f. Making use of external resources in accomplishing accreditation functions
 - g. The value of accreditation to stakeholders and how they make use of accreditation
 - h. Accreditation decision-making process and its independence, impartiality and reliability
 - i. Publicising the benefits of accreditation
 - j. Staff and assessor responsibilities
 - k. Reliability of the assessment process, its breadth and depth; rigour of following-up non-conformities identified during an assessment.
 - l. Reporting and reviewing of assessment results
 - m. Surveillance regime and its rigour and reliability
 - n. The efficiency of the system, taking into consideration the resources spent on servicing an applicant or accredited organisation; effectiveness in ensuring the conformity of accredited organisations with accreditation criteria
 - o. How local culture affects the effectiveness, efficiency and operation of accreditation bodies
 - p. Use of external documents; interpretation of accreditation criteria.

2. Outcomes which may be derived from cross-posting
 - a. Increase in the effectiveness of the accreditation body in ensuring the conformity of accredited organisations
 - b. Increase in efficiency through adapting more efficient procedures and techniques
 - c. Recognition of benefits, and applications of accreditation in different economies
 - d. Increased effectiveness in promoting accreditation to stakeholders
 - e. Increased understanding and cooperation between accreditation bodies
 - f. Harmonisation of the accreditation process and procedures, and interpretation of accreditation criteria.

ANNEX II – UNDERTAKING TO BE SIGNED BY THE STAFF TO BE CROSS-POSTED (HOST)

I undertake not to disclose any confidential and propriety information of (Name of the host accreditation body) and of its clients made known to me or observed by me during my cross-posting at the aforesaid accreditation body from _____ to _____ to any third party without obtaining written explicit consent from them.

In case consent has been given by the aforesaid accreditation body to disclose any of its systems, procedures and practices to my employer accreditation body and my employer accreditation body decides to adapt it in any form, I shall bring to the attention of my employer accreditation body that the *host* accreditation body may have intellectual property rights to the information and it should obtain written consent of the *host* accreditation body before using an such information.

At the time of signing this undertaking, I have obtained consent from the *host* accreditation body to disclose the following information (indicated by tick marks) to my employer accreditation body:

- Legal status and organisation structure
- Financing arrangement and coverage of liability
- Mechanism for maintaining independence, integrity and impartiality
- Accreditation criteria
- Interpretation of applicable national and international standards
- Management system
- Role of staff and assessors
- Entry requirements for staff
- System for monitoring performance of accredited organisations
- Training for staff and assessors and monitoring of their performance
- Details of contracts with staff members and assessors
- Application, assessment, result reporting, following-up and closing of findings and accreditation decision making procedures
- Rigour and effectiveness of assessment, reassessment and surveillance
- Relationship with stakeholders
- Procedure for developing a new accreditation service
- Complaint and appeal handling mechanism
- Relationship with accredited organisations
- Promotion of accreditation and accredited service
- Sanction of non-conforming accredited organisations
- Protection of marks and symbols
- Others : _____

Name and signature of staff to be cross-posted:

Date:

Name and signature of a representative of the *host*
accreditation body for authenticating that
agreement has been given to the staff to be
cross-posted to disclose the information identified
with a tick:

Date:

ANNEX III – UNDERTAKING TO BE SIGNED BY THE STAFF TO BE CROSS-POSTED (*HOME*)

I undertake not to disclose any confidential and propriety information of (Name of the *home* accreditation body) and of its clients during my cross-posting to (Name of the *host* accreditation body) from _____ to _____ to any third party without obtaining written explicit consent from the first accreditation body.

In case consent has been given by the first accreditation body to disclose any of its systems, procedures and practices to second accreditation body and the second accreditation body decides to adapt it in any form, I shall bring to the attention of the second accreditation body that the first accreditation body may have intellectual property rights to the information and second accreditation body should obtain written consent of the first accreditation body before using an such information.

At the time of signing this undertaking, I have obtained consent from the first accreditation body to disclose the following information (indicated by tick marks) to second accreditation body:

- Legal status and organisation structure
- Financing arrangement and coverage of liability
- Mechanism for maintaining independence, integrity and impartiality
- Accreditation criteria
- Interpretation of applicable national and international standards
- Management system
- Role of staff and assessors
- Entry requirements for staff
- System for monitoring performance of accredited organisations
- Training for staff and assessors and monitoring of their performance
- Details of contracts with staff members and assessors
- Application, assessment, result reporting, following-up and closing of findings and accreditation decision making procedures
- Rigour and effectiveness of assessment, reassessment and surveillance
- Relationship with stakeholders
- Procedure for developing a new accreditation service
- Complaint and appeal handling mechanism
- Relationship with accredited organisations
- Promotion of accreditation and accredited service
- Sanction of non-conforming accredited organizations
- Protection of marks and symbols
- Others : _____

**Cross-Posting of Staff among APLAC Member Accreditation
Bodies - APLAC TR 003**



Name and signature of staff to be cross-posted:

Date: _____

Name and signature of a representative of the
home accreditation body for authenticating that
agreement has been given to the staff to be
cross-posted to disclose the information identified
with a tick:

Date: _____