



**PROCEDURE FOR CONDUCT OF JOINT EVALUATION
WITH ANOTHER REGIONAL COOPERATION BODY**

PURPOSE

Wherever appropriate APLAC cooperates with other regional cooperation bodies, either within the region (e.g. the Pacific Accreditation Cooperation, PAC) or outside the region (e.g. the InterAmerican Accreditation Cooperation, IAAC), when requested, in the conduct of joint evaluations of accreditation bodies. The main body of this document outlines the general principles to be followed for the conduct of a joint evaluation with another regional body. Mutually agreed procedures with specific regional bodies are included as an Appendix.

AUTHORSHIP

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1. INTRODUCTION

From time to time APLAC may be requested by either:

- another regional cooperation body (or a national coordination body, hereinafter included in the term “cooperation body”), or;
- an accreditation body itself,

to cooperate in the conduct of a joint evaluation of an accreditation body that is a member of both cooperation bodies or has a contract of cooperation with one of the cooperation bodies while being a member of the other cooperation body. Wherever possible, APLAC will cooperate to enable APLAC participation in a requested joint evaluation.

2. REQUEST FOR COOPERATION

Any request for cooperation shall be sent to the Chair of the APLAC MRA Council who, in non-routine cases, shall refer the request to the APLAC MRA Council, seeking the Council’s endorsement. (Scheduled re-evaluations of accreditation bodies covered by the specific cases set out in the Appendix to this document are considered routine cases.) Consultation with the MRA Council shall be by email correspondence if the timing of the request is such that it cannot be dealt with during a meeting of the MRA Council. Records of the MRA Council correspondence and decision shall be maintained by the APLAC secretariat.

3. CONDITIONS OF COOPERATION

Once the APLAC MRA Council has endorsed the request, the Chair of the Council (or, if delegated, the Secretary) shall advise the other cooperation body and/or accreditation body that APLAC will cooperate in the conduct of the joint evaluation with the following conditions applying:

- Except where otherwise allowed in the Appendix to this document, the procedures set out in APLAC MR 001 apply for the conduct of the evaluation;
- APLAC shall appoint an APLAC Lead Evaluator to be a member of the evaluation team. Except where otherwise allowed in the Appendix to this document, the APLAC Lead Evaluator shall be the Evaluation Team Leader;

NOTE: There may be occasions when the other cooperation body has more involvement with the applicant accreditation body, in which cases it would be more appropriate for the other cooperation body to provide the Team Leader.

- Except where otherwise allowed in the Appendix to this document, APLAC provides evaluators to cover all technical scopes covered by the (proposed) scope of recognition, namely testing, medical testing (ISO 15189), calibration, inspection, reference material producer, and proficiency testing provider. Evaluators from the other cooperation body will generally be acceptable to APLAC only when the specific scope being evaluated is within the ILAC scope of recognition of an ILAC-recognised cooperation body;
- Except where otherwise allowed in the Appendix to this document, the other cooperation body shall provide their own qualified evaluators with competencies as required by the APLAC Team Leader. When the Team Leader is from the other cooperation body, APLAC shall attempt to provide evaluators with competencies as required by the other cooperation body;

- a failure by the other cooperation body to provide the names of appropriate evaluators at least 3 months prior to the scheduled date of the evaluation will lead to the evaluation reverting to an APLAC-only evaluation.

4. REVERSION TO APLAC-ONLY EVALUATION

The APLAC Lead Evaluator should identify possible “back-up” APLAC evaluators who can be used to complete the evaluation team in the event of the evaluation reverting to an APLAC-only evaluation.

When a joint evaluation reverts to an APLAC-only evaluation, the previously appointed APLAC Lead Evaluator shall assume the role of Team Leader.

When a joint evaluation reverts to an APLAC-only evaluation, APLAC shall notify the other cooperation body and the AB who solicited the joint evaluation about the evaluation becoming an APLAC-only evaluation.

APPENDIX A: PROCEDURES FOR THE CONDUCT OF JOINT APLAC/IAAC EVALUATIONS

Introduction

APLAC and the IAAC have a number of common accreditation body members who are signatories to both the APLAC MRA and IAAC MLA for the same or similar scopes of recognition. In such cases, and where requested by the member accreditation body (the AB), joint evaluations are conducted which produce a single evaluation report for independent consideration by the respective regional decision-making groups. These procedures, intended for use by APLAC and IAAC evaluation team leaders and evaluation team members, describe the particular processes to be followed for conducting such a joint evaluation. The main procedural points set out the general principles to be followed by representatives of both cooperations. The procedures are supplemented by “Notes” which reflect current or historical practice and are intended as a starting point, but the Notes may be modified by mutual consent of the Chairs of the APLAC MRA Council and IAAC MLA Committee, the Lead Evaluator (LE) / Team Leader (TL) representatives for both co-operations, and the evaluated AB.

Procedures

1. It is the responsibility of the (applicant) accreditation body signatory to both the APLAC MRA and IAAC MLA to inform the APLAC MRA Council Chair and the IAAC MLA Committee Chair at least two years in advance of the upcoming evaluation that a joint evaluation is requested. Any changes to the scope of the evaluation should be requested at this time.

Note: The APLAC MRA Council typically appoints APLAC TLs approximately two years in advance of scheduled evaluations.

2. The Chairs of the APLAC MRA Council and IAAC MLA Committee shall agree, in consultation with the AB, which cooperation will provide the TL for the joint evaluation. Once the appointment of the TL is confirmed by the appointing cooperation in accordance with its procedures, the Chair of the appointing Council/Committee shall, in a timely manner, inform the Chair of the other Council/Committee of the appointment.

Note: The APLAC MRA Council has typically appointed TLs for their scheduled evaluations well in advance of the IAAC MLA Committee appointments. The IAAC MLA Committee has accepted the APLAC TL appointments for their own purposes and thus APLAC has provided TLs for the joint evaluations. In these cases, the APLAC MRA Council Chair informs the IAAC MLA Chair of the TL appointment(s) once ratified by the APLAC MRA Council.

3. The evaluation process to be followed by the evaluation team and the AB shall be based primarily on the documented procedures of the regional cooperation from which the TL has been appointed, unless otherwise mutually agreed between the AB and the TL. APLAC MR 001 (in the case of an APLAC TL) or IAAC MD 002 (in the case of an IAAC TL) shall be the base procedural document adopted, but in all cases the specific requirements of the complementary document shall be considered and addressed in an appropriate manner. If the evaluation scopes include certification body accreditation, the IAAC MD 002 procedures shall be used for these scopes. The TL shall inform the AB which is the primary procedural document being used for the evaluation. Notwithstanding the above, the following shall be applied:

- (a) The key documentation provided by the AB to the evaluation team (e.g. in the APLAC case, Set A as described in APLAC MR 003, and in the case of IAAC it is described in IAAC FM 001, Item 20) shall be made available in English (as the official language common to both cooperations). For re-evaluations, the IAAC procedures require the AB to provide the evaluation team with the documentation at least 3 months before the evaluation;
- (b) In accordance with IAAC MD 002, the TL and the evaluated AB shall agree on the language to be used during the on-site evaluation (i.e. English or Spanish) and determine the needs for translation assistance;
- (c) The evaluation report shall be in English.

Note: The evaluation procedures followed also include the use of relevant forms and templates. Many of these are very consistent between the two cooperations and are considered to be interchangeable.

4. If it is agreed that the IAAC MLA Committee Chair will provide the TL, the APLAC MRA Council shall, in accordance with APLAC requirements set out elsewhere in this document (MR 006), appoint an APLAC LE to the team to effectively act as a 'Deputy TL', even if informally. The responsibilities of the APLAC LE associated with his/her formal appointment by the APLAC MRA Council are to present the evaluation report to the APLAC MRA Council and to ensure that APLAC requirements in accordance with APLAC MR 001 are met throughout the evaluation process, including but not necessarily limited to:
 - Ensuring, through the selection of APLAC Evaluators and Provisional Evaluators as Team Members (TM), adequate coverage on the APLAC scope of the evaluation (see Section 5 below);
 - Ensuring an appropriate level of witnessing of the AB assessments for each of the APLAC scopes of recognition being evaluated;
 - Mentoring APLAC Provisional Evaluators;
 - Ensuring the evaluation report includes all elements required by APLAC MR 009;
 - Ensuring the letter of recommendation from the evaluation team to the APLAC MRA Council includes all elements required by APLAC MR 001;
 - Ensuring that all post-reporting activities required by MR 001 are undertaken, i.e. provision of documentation to the APLAC Secretariat.

Note: The APLAC LE should give particular consideration to Sections 3, 8, 14, 17, 18 & 19 and Appendix C of APLAC MR 001. Section 3 of APLAC MR 011 could also prove of value.

5. The selection of the evaluation team members shall be carried out in a co-operative and consultative manner between the APLAC TL/LE and IAAC MLA Committee Chair (with acceptance by the AB confirmed to each regional cooperation), ensuring all MRA/MLA scopes to be evaluated are adequately covered. Where a particular scope is unique to a particular cooperation (e.g. certification body accreditation under the IAAC MLA, RMP/PTP under the APLAC MRA), that cooperation shall provide the TM for that scope.

Note 1: Typically, APLAC has appointed the TL, who, under APLAC procedures, is responsible (in consultation with the APLAC MRA Council Chair) for the selection of the evaluation TMs. The APLAC TL should wait until the appointment of the IAAC evaluators as TMs has been confirmed, and then select APLAC Evaluators/Provisional Evaluators based on the IAAC TMs at their respective scopes of competency to ensure the evaluation team has the necessary balance of competencies required. It is advisable that the APLAC TL, soon after his/her appointment, establish lines of communication (via the APLAC MRA Council Chair) with the IAAC MLA Committee Chair and Secretariat and provide an early indication of their preferred make-up of the evaluation team and invite appropriate TM appointments from IAAC.

Note 2: In the case that IAAC has appointed the TL, the IAAC MLA Committee Chair, who under IAAC procedures, is responsible for the selection of the evaluation TMs, will designate the team in consultation with the appointed APLAC LE ('Deputy TL').

6. Once the evaluation team and evaluation dates are agreed between all parties, the TL shall ensure the APLAC and IAAC Secretariats are notified of the dates of the evaluation, the TMs and their respective assignments. The TL is then responsible for the conduct of the remainder of the evaluation process in accordance with the regional cooperation's procedures selected.
7. Should any logistical and/or procedural issues arise during the course of the evaluation that requires input from the APLAC MRA Council Chair and/or IAAC MLA Committee Chair, the TL shall ensure both Chairs are informed. Both Chairs shall work together to achieve a mutually acceptable resolution.

Note: There is no substitute for open and consultative communication between the AB, the TL, and the respective Chairs of the APLAC MRA Council and IAAC MLA Committee. All parties share the responsibility to ensure such communication is effective.

8. The final evaluation report, in English, shall be submitted to the APLAC and IAAC Secretariats upon completion, along with a letter of recommendation from the team to the APLAC MRA Council and IAAC MLA Group. Where possible, a member of the evaluation team should be present when the report is considered by the respective cooperation's decision-making group.

Note 1: It would be expected that the letters of recommendation to each of the decision-making groups be broadly consistent in their overall conclusions/recommendations, but may often differ slightly because of differences in the scope of the evaluation for each and/or the differences in the content of the recommendation that is required by each cooperation.

Note 2: The APLAC MRA Council requires the APLAC TL / LE to be in attendance at the Council meeting where the final report and recommendation are being considered. In the case of the IAAC MLA Group meeting, the TL or a TM should attend or participate virtually (e.g. via Skype).

9. Throughout the evaluation process, and particularly with some of the post-on-site evaluation administrative processes, there will be different and/or additional functions required by each cooperation to be performed by the TL and TMs. Examples include, but are not necessarily limited to, feedback on evaluator performance by members of the evaluation team (APLAC MR 004, IAAC PR 004), and answers to written questions on the evaluation report from members of the IAAC MLA Group prior to decision-making meetings. Every effort should be made to identify these in advance and implement accordingly, but all members of the evaluation team shall cooperate when requested to carry out activities required by either cooperation that would not normally be part of their own cooperation's procedures.

Other additional considerations are:

- (a) The TL may use the APLAC or IAAC forms for the evaluation programme and for the evaluation report. If the TL decides to use the APLAC forms (i.e. APLAC MR 009, including the template for the evaluation programme in Annex II), he/she shall ensure, with the assistance and support of IAAC TMs, all requirements documents called up in the following IAAC forms are included:
 - *IAAC FM 004 Evaluation Program Template*
 - *IAAC FM 033 Evaluation Report Template.*
- (b) The IAAC definitions of Nonconformities, Concerns and Comments are identical as those used in IAF/ILAC-A2; however, IAAC requires a response to the Comments and has added some notes about what type of information is required to close each type of finding (see IAAC MD 002, Annex 3, Section C).
- (c) IAAC has deadlines specified (IAAC MD 002, Annex 3) for responding to evaluation findings and for submitting the evaluation report to the IAAC MLA Group.
- (d) IAAC requires the use of *IAAC FM 005: Template for Findings and Responses*. (This similar in structure to Annex IX of APLAC MR 009. IAAC FM 005 should be used in place of this Annex.)
- (e) IAAC requires that the TL provide to the IAAC MLA Secretary the completed IAAC form *IAAC FM 022: List of Witnessed Assessments* by the APLAC/IAAC evaluation team containing the list of assessments witnessed including identification of the CAB and the names of the assessors and experts. (APLAC also has an identical requirement and IAAC FM 022 can be used for this purpose.)
- (f) For evaluations that include certification body scopes, IAAC requires the use of the *IAAC FM 012: Witnessing Report Template*.

Note 1: The TL may download the IAAC forms from the IAAC website (www.iaac.org.mx) under the FM category of documents. All requirements documents are listed in the Mandatory Documents and Forms.

Note 2: "IAAC MD 30: IAF and ILAC Resolutions Applicable to IAAC Peer Evaluations" states some requirements and/or clarifications relevant to peer evaluations.

10. The APLAC MRA Council and IAAC MLA Group shall make their respective decisions independently and in accordance with their respective procedures. However, if there is a pertinent matter discussed/concluded at the decision-making group that first considers the evaluation report and associated recommendation from the team, this should be brought to the attention of the other decision-making group when they consider the evaluation report and letter of recommendation.

Such 'pertinent matters' would be when the decision-making group first considering the evaluation report does not accept the general recommendation from the team (e.g. does not grant/continue signatory status in one or more of the MRA/MLA scopes, particularly those scopes common to both regional cooperations; or when a shortened re-evaluation interval is decided). The Chair of the 'first' decision-making group and the TL shall agree which pertinent matters should be brought to the attention of the 'second' decision-making group, and on the mechanism for doing so. This could be through either the TL or another senior TM / 'Deputy TL' representing the 'second' regional cooperation (and who will be presenting the evaluation report and team recommendation to the 'second' decision-making meeting), and/or through the Chair of the 'second' decision-making group. Notwithstanding this sharing of information, regardless of any prior evaluation decision made, separate and distinct decisions are made by each of the decision-making groups.