



**GUIDELINES FOR APLAC MRA SIGNATORIES:  
REQUESTS TO ACCREDIT IN ANOTHER APLAC  
ECONOMY AND TRANSFERS OF ACCREDITATION**

## **PURPOSE**

While recognising that both duplicate accreditation of a conformity assessment body (CAB) by more than one accreditation body and cross-frontier competition among accreditation bodies undermine the intent of the APLAC MRA, APLAC also recognises that such duplication may be unavoidable from time to time. The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to an APLAC MRA signatory on applying harmonised practices when it is requested to provide accreditation within another economy where there is an APLAC MRA signatory or when requested to transfer accreditation from another accreditation body either within or outside their own economy. This is to ensure that the process is as smooth as possible, that cooperation among accreditation bodies is maintained at the highest level possible and harmonious relations are maintained, and that proper rigour is applied to the granting of new accreditations.

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

## **AUTHORSHIP**

This publication was written jointly by the APLAC Board of Management and 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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**PART A: GUIDELINES FOR AN APLAC MRA SIGNATORY WHEN REQUESTED TO ACCREDIT A CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT BODY (CAB) IN ANOTHER ECONOMY WHERE THERE IS AN APLAC MRA SIGNATORY**

**A1. SCOPE OF APPLICATION**

- A1.1 These guidelines are applicable to those accreditation bodies that are signatories to the APLAC MRA and apply specifically to the accreditation of those types of conformity assessment bodies (CAB) covered under the APLAC MRA. APLAC MRA signatories are, however, encouraged to apply these guidelines to the accreditation of other types of conformity assessment bodies outside of the APLAC MRA, recognising that the cross-frontier accreditation rules of other cooperations of accreditation bodies may take precedence.
- A1.2 This document is applicable only to cross-frontier accreditation and not, with respect to domestic applications for accreditation, to accreditation bodies operating within a multi-accreditation body economy or in an economy where competition law or other legislative requirements may prohibit such cooperative activities.

**A2. INTRODUCTION**

- A2.1 If requested to accredit a CAB in another economy, the foreign accreditation body is expected to do its best to clarify why the CAB has requested accreditation by a foreign accreditation body. If the reason is to meet a foreign specifier's requirements, section 7 also applies.
- A2.2 Cooperation among accreditation bodies should extend as far as possible and include:
- advice to the accreditation body in the other economy of an application received and of the intention to conduct an assessment in that economy;
  - cooperation in the formation of an assessment team;
  - sharing of information on the outcome of the assessment;
  - assistance on surveillance activities;
  - cooperation on relevant proficiency testing programs.

Such cooperation requires the explicit agreement of the applicant CAB.

- A2.3 This document is based on the responsibilities of an APLAC MRA signatory as specified in APLAC MR 002, the text of the APLAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement, and seeks to ensure maximum cooperation among APLAC MRA signatories.
- A2.4 The implementation of these practices should further enhance the confidence that regulators and other specifiers have in the competence of all signatories to the APLAC MRA in relation to endorsed reports issued by accredited facilities under the APLAC MRA.

### A3. VOLUNTARY APPLICATION BY A CAB FOR ACCREDITATION BY A FOREIGN ACCREDITATION BODY

- A3.1 A CAB seeking accreditation from an accreditation body other than one within its own economy will probably choose one or both of the following approaches:
- A3.1.1 Direct contact with the foreign accreditation body (hereafter referred to as AB2) from which the CAB wishes to gain accreditation. With the permission of the applicant CAB, AB2 should advise the domestic accreditation body (hereafter referred to as AB1) that an application for accreditation has been received;
  - A3.1.2 Contact with AB2 through the domestic accreditation body when accreditation is already held with AB1.
- A3.2 The applicant CAB should be required to declare in the application documents for AB2 whether it holds or has held accreditation with AB1, and the applicable scope of that accreditation.
- A3.3 AB2 should also require the applicant CAB to provide evidence of such accreditation and its scope.
- A3.4 The application fee and other fees applicable (if any) should be paid directly to AB2 according to AB2's rules.

### A4. ASSESSMENT AND GRANTING OF ACCREDITATION

- A4.1 *Situation 1: The applicant CAB is holding a valid accreditation by AB1 and the scope of its application for accreditation by AB2 is within the scope of the accreditation already granted by AB1.*

If AB2's rules permit, it could seek confirmation of the facts from the applicant CAB and AB1 and, if satisfied, grant accreditation without a further assessment, provided all the requirements and conditions of AB2 are met. Such action can only occur when AB2's rules make specific provision for such an action, and if its normal decision-making process of AB2 is followed.

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

- A4.2 *Situation 2: The applicant CAB has been accredited by AB1 but the scope of its application for accreditation by AB2 is outside the scope of the accreditation already granted by AB1 although it is within AB1's scope of APLAC MRA recognition.*

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

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 sub-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 17011, 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 if accepted by the applicant CAB, AB2 should sub-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 used 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 sub-contract AB1 or if the applicant CAB does not agree to the proposal, AB2 would have to conduct its own assessment. The applicant should be asked to permit AB1 to send an observer to the assessment, if AB1 so wishes.

- A4.3 *Situation 3: The applicant CAB has been accredited by AB1 but the scope of its application for accreditation by AB2 is outside the scope of AB1's scope of APLAC MRA recognition.*

The assessment would be conducted under the rules and procedures of AB2 but a joint assessment could be organised by negotiation between AB2 and AB1, if this is acceptable to the applicant CAB. The technical assessors would necessarily be provided by AB2.

This situation could be used to provide training to representatives of AB1 when it wishes to expand its scope of accreditation activities, either immediately or in the future.

- A4.4 *Situation 4: The applicant CAB is not accredited by AB1*

The assessment should be arranged by AB2 according to AB2's procedures. Provided the applicant CAB agrees, AB1 should be advised of the application and invited to either observe the on-site assessment, or to work jointly on the assessment of the CAB (e.g. in order to defray assessor costs).

## A5. SURVEILLANCE

- A5.1 When accreditation is granted by AB2 based on any one of the scenarios described in clauses 4.1, 4.2, or 4.3 above, AB2 should, to the extent possible, and with the CAB's agreement, sub-contract surveillance activities, including reassessment visits, to AB1. Surveillance activities and schedules should be agreed between AB1 and AB2 as early as possible in the arrangements under the contract.

- A5.2 When accreditation is granted by AB2 based on the scenario described in clause 4.4 above, the surveillance activity is arranged by AB2 but provision should be made for cooperation with AB1 to the extent possible, and with the CAB's agreement.

## **A6. COMPLAINTS AND DISPUTES**

In the case of a complaint or dispute between AB1 and AB2 with respect to non-adherence to this document, both accreditation bodies should seek a resolution through their own complaints and disputes procedures. If this is not achievable and one or both parties lodge a formal complaint with APLAC, the provisions of the APLAC complaints procedure shall be applied as far as possible.

## **A7. SPECIFIER-MANDATED APPLICATION FOR ACCREDITATION BY A FOREIGN ACCREDITATION BODY**

- A7.1 When a CAB is required by a foreign specifier (e.g. a regulator) to seek accreditation from an accreditation body other than one within the CAB's own economy, the CAB should be encouraged to advise its domestic accreditation body (AB1) of the need to do so.
- A7.2 The applicant would make direct application to AB2.
- A7.3 Under the obligations of the APLAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement, AB2 is required to advise the specifier that requires the accreditation by AB2 of the existence of AB1, of its status as a signatory to the APLAC MRA, and of the mutual recognition that exists between AB1 and AB2. AB2 should, to the extent possible, encourage the specifier to recognise the mutual recognition arrangement that exists, and, if necessary, seek acceptance from the specifier of active cooperation between AB1 and AB2 in the assessment and surveillance of the applicant.
- A7.4 Within any limits imposed by the specifier, AB2 should, as far as possible, apply the cooperative arrangements outlined in sections 4 and 5 above.
- A7.5 The application fee and other fees applicable (if any) would be paid directly to AB2 according to AB2's rules.

## **PART B: GUIDELINES FOR THE TRANSFER OF ACCREDITATIONS FROM ONE ACCREDITATION BODY TO ANOTHER**

### **B1. SCOPE OF APPLICATION**

These guidelines are applicable to those accreditation bodies that are signatories to the APLAC MRA and apply specifically to the accreditation of those types of conformity assessment bodies (CAB) covered under the APLAC MRA. APLAC MRA signatories are, however, encouraged to apply these guidelines to the accreditation of other types of conformity assessment bodies outside of the APLAC MRA.

### **B2. INTRODUCTION**

From time-to-time an accredited CAB may seek to transfer its accreditation from its current accreditation body to another accreditation body.

Ideally, where both accreditation bodies are signatories to the relevant scope of the APLAC MRA, the accreditation granted by the current accreditation body should be recognised by the new accreditation body. This does not, however, absolve the new accreditation body from carrying out due diligence on the status of the current accreditation prior to granting any new accreditation.

### **B3. ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED**

Issues to be considered include:

- (i) Where relevant, the need to respect the APLAC MRA and to implement the cross frontier accreditation policies of the new accreditation body. The guidelines in Part A above will apply as appropriate;
- (ii) The CAB's requested scope of accreditation from the new accreditation body and how this differs (if at all) from the current accreditation;
- (iii) Where in the accreditation cycle of the current accreditation body the CAB's current accreditation stands, e.g. when was the last full initial assessment or reassessment. In some instances the CAB may have outstanding non-conformities from its most recent assessment.
- (iv) Other mitigating circumstances, e.g. the CAB may owe fees to its current accreditation body.

In the case of (iii) and (iv) above, the current accreditation body, being bound by its confidentiality agreement with the CAB, is generally not able to advise the new accreditation body of these matters, even assuming that the current accreditation body knows the name of the new accreditation body.

The handling of this situation places responsibilities on the new accreditation body and the CAB, and to some degree APLAC, so as to ensure that the viability and credibility of the APLAC MRA are not undermined.

#### **B3.1. The New Accreditation Body**

Where applicable, in the first instance the new accreditation body should implement its cross-frontier policy, and take account of its obligations under the APLAC MRA and the process detailed in APLAC MR 010. It should establish why the CAB wishes to change accreditation bodies and should seek permission to obtain relevant information about the CAB's accreditation from its current accreditation body.

Where requests for transfers of accreditation, whether domestically or internationally, are expected to be a regular occurrence, accreditation bodies should have publicly available policies for the acceptance of such applications. These policies should require the applicant CAB to:

- (i) declare any current accreditations, including the scope of accreditation, and from which accreditation body;
- (ii) provide a copy of the last assessment and/or surveillance report and evidence of satisfactory sign-off on any non-conformities raised during the assessment or surveillance visit. This may need to include copies of reports back to and including the last full initial or reassessment.

The new accreditation body may choose to accept the current accreditation and associated assessment reports as the basis for granting its own accreditation (under the subcontracting of assessment provisions of ISO/IEC 17011), noting that the new accreditation body is wholly responsible for such decisions. Care must, however, be taken in such circumstances so as to ensure any differences in the (requested) scopes of accreditation are subject to proper assessment and that the CAB continues to be subject to the surveillance and reassessment provisions of ISO/IEC 17011 and the new accreditation body's own policies. In these circumstances, the new accreditation body would undertake some level of on-site assessment prior to granting the new accreditation.

### **B3.2. The Conformity Assessment Body**

The conformity assessment body is expected to provide full disclosure of its status with its current accreditation body, including any non-conformities not yet "signed off". It should be transparent when detailing the reasons for its wishing to change accreditation bodies and should not use a claim of "confidentiality" unreasonably to avoid providing full and correct information.

### **B3.3. APLAC**

APLAC evaluation teams have a responsibility to check during an evaluation the accreditation body's implementation of its cross-frontier policies and associated procedures.

Also, evaluation teams may check if the accreditation body accepts "transferred" accreditations. If the accreditation body does accept (or is prepared to accept) "transferred" accreditations, the evaluation team needs to check the accreditation body's procedures, particularly in relation to ensuring any such accreditations granted have been through the full rigour of the new accreditation body's accreditation decision-making procedures. This needs to include verifying the integrity of the information supplied to the decision-making body, including whether the full scope of accreditation had been subject to proper assessment.